



Stepping Stones Day Nursery (Bolton Ltd)

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	315937
Inspection date	11 December 2006
Inspector	Susan Janet Lee
Setting Address	Methodist Church, Chorley Old Road, Bolton, Lancashire, BL1 6AH
Telephone number	01204 456 778
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Registered person	Stepping Stones Day Nursery (Bolton Ltd)
Type of inspection	Integrated
Type of care	Full day care, Out of School care

ABOUT THIS INSPECTION

The purpose of this inspection is to assure government, parents and the public of the quality of childcare and, if applicable, of nursery education. The inspection was carried out under Part XA Children Act 1989 as introduced by the Care Standards Act 2000 and, where nursery education is provided, under Schedule 26 of the School Standards and Framework Act 1998.

This report details the main strengths and any areas for improvement identified during the inspection. The judgements included in the report are made in relation to the outcomes for children set out in the Children Act 2004; the National Standards for under 8s day care and childminding; and, where nursery education is provided, the *Curriculum guidance for the foundation stage*.

The report includes information on any complaints about the childcare provision which Ofsted has received since the last inspection or registration or 1 April 2004 whichever is the later.

The key inspection judgements and what they mean

Outstanding: this aspect of the provision is of exceptionally high quality

Good: this aspect of the provision is strong

Satisfactory: this aspect of the provision is sound

Inadequate: this aspect of the provision is not good enough

For more information about early years inspections, please see the booklet *Are you ready for your inspection?* which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk.

THE QUALITY AND STANDARDS OF THE CARE AND NURSERY EDUCATION

On the basis of the evidence collected on this inspection:

The quality and standards of the care are good. The registered person meets the National Standards for under 8s day care and childminding.

The quality and standards of the nursery education are good.

WHAT SORT OF SETTING IS IT?

Stepping Stones Day Nursery was registered in September 1996. The provision operates from a Methodist Church on Chorley Old Road in Bolton. The setting is run by a limited company. Children have access to a large hall, four playrooms, bathroom facilities and an outdoor play area.

The provision is open Monday to Friday from 08.00 until 18.00 all year round. The children attend on a variety of placements. The setting is registered to provide care for a maximum of 60 children at any one time. There are currently 86 children on roll. Of these, 27 children receive funding for nursery education. The nursery currently supports a number of children with additional needs and also a number of children who speak English as an additional language. The nursery also provides a holiday club which is open Monday to Friday from 08.00 until 18.00 during school holidays to care for children who have previously attended the nursery.

There are 18 members of staff who work directly with the children. Of these, 17 staff hold an appropriate early years qualification.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

The children are cared for in a well maintained environment. They stay healthy because staff exercise good hygiene practices to minimise the risk of cross infection. For example, visitors are asked to remove their shoes when entering the baby room as the babies play at floor level and staff follow good standards of hygiene when changing nappies to help protect very young children. The sick children's policy ensures that appropriate measures are in place when children are ill. Accidents are dealt with quickly and effectively; ensuring that the children are safe and free from harm.

Children's dietary requirements are successfully met as staff gather information from parents about their children's dietary needs and this information is taken into account when planning snacks and meals. The children develop an awareness of healthy eating as the menu is well balanced and includes lots of fresh fruit, vegetables and home cooked meals to aid their growth and development. Meals also include lots of different tastes, textures and aromas to aid children's sensory development. Parents are able to provide packed lunches if they so wish and staff encourage them to provide healthy options and encourage them not to include chocolate, sweets and crisps. Meal times are relaxed, social occasions. The children are able to eat at their own pace and staff sit with the children and chat to them whilst they eat.

Babies are able to move around freely and practise their large physical skills, such as sitting, crawling and walking. They benefit from routines that are consistent to their home experiences as staff follow their individual sleep and meal routines; providing a secure and familiar environment. Very young children also experience closeness as they benefit from lots of close positive physical contact and interaction with staff during personal care routines. Toddlers have lots of opportunities to enjoy and develop their physical skills as they play out twice a day and visit the park; which contributes to their good health and physical development. Children in receipt of nursery education also have lots of opportunities to learn and discover about their bodies and develop their control and coordination as they have access to outdoor play and energetic play in the hall on a regular basis. They move about freely and with confidence. They explore different ways of moving and adjust their speed and direction to successfully negotiate pathways. The children engage in activities that require hand eye coordination and show increasing control in using one handed tools. For example, the children are adept in using the dust pan and brush to sweep sand from the floor.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

Children are cared for in a warm, welcoming and child-centred environment. Children's artwork, posters and information for parents is displayed to make for a bright and stimulating environment. There is lots of space available for children to move around freely and play in

comfort. Staff organise space effectively to accommodate separate active and quieter activities. There is a good selection of equipment and furniture available to allow babies and older children to play, rest and eat in comfort. A wide range of resources are available to help children make progress in all areas of their development. Toys are stored at child-height enabling the children to freely choose what they want to play with; allowing them to add to their play, initiate their own ideas and develop choice and independence. Staff check equipment and resources on a regular basis to minimise risks to children.

Comprehensive risk assessments have been conducted and are observed at all times. Staff responsible for risk assessments also audit the accident records on a regular basis to identify any hazards to children. Staff have a good understanding of safety and reasonable steps have been taken to ensure that most areas are safe and secure; however, the radiators in the hall get quite hot and pose a risk to children. Staff practise the emergency evacuation on a very regular basis with the children so that they develop an awareness of what to do in emergencies, such as a fire. Children are protected on outings as staff follow very good procedures. For example, they do a risk assessment prior to the trip taking place, ensure a high staff-to-child ratio, use a mobile telephone to maintain contact with the setting and take a first aid box, spare clothes and drinks to cover any eventuality. Staff are vigilant and supervise the children well; enabling them to play safely and independently. They encourage children's learning in keeping themselves safe through example, daily routines and play activities. Staff sweep up sand and mop water from the floor to prevent the children slipping and the children help with these tasks. Younger children pretend to be fire fighters and staff talk to the children about the dangers of fire.

All the required policies and procedures are in place and staff have a secure knowledge of child protection matters and procedures ensuring children's welfare is safeguarded.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

All staff are caring and enthusiastic practitioners. Effective systems are in place regarding observation and planning. Most staff have attended training in relation to the 'Birth to three matters' framework. They have a good understanding of the framework and use this well to provide lots of interesting and stimulating activities for children under three years of age. As a result, children are happily engaged and actively occupied. Staff also place lots of emphasis on children's personal care routines and know that these times are just as important as planned activities. The children also benefit from activities outside the setting as staff utilise local amenities such as the park and library to widen children's experiences.

The playrooms are calm and relaxing and support children's care, learning and development. The individual group rooms and the sensitive key person system allows staff and children to get to know each other well. Each child has a key person who works closely with their parent and is responsible for their daily care routines; enabling the children to feel secure and ensuring they receive consistent care from familiar adults. Staff share warm close relationships with the children, who are happy, secure and content in their care.

Babies benefit from a range of toys that are colourful, tactile and that make noises to develop their sensory experiences. They make connections as they explore and investigate their surroundings and toys. They play on a rocking horse and move their bodies back and forth to make the horse rock to and fro. They enjoy closing their eyes as they rock. Babies make meaning and find a voice as staff nurture their attempts to communicate. When the children babble or use single words staff listen and respond in gentle tones to reinforce early speech patterns and to help the children feel acknowledged. Toddlers enjoy being creative as they draw pictures and make music. They sing Christmas songs with staff as they play. The children draw pictures and staff talk to them about their creations. Staff value what the children do and do not place emphasis on an end product. Children are able to repeat their play as many times as they wish as they consolidate their new skills. Staff are spontaneous to children's interests and take the children's lead. A group of children pretend to be fire fighters. Staff help them to make fire hoses with construction materials and then go with them to put out the 'fire'.

Staff deploy themselves well to enable them to offer good care and support to the children. They offer lots of positive physical contact by means of hugs and cuddles. The children enjoy being together as they experience closeness and quiet times with staff.

Nursery education

The quality of teaching and learning is good. Effective systems are in place regarding planning and assessment. Staff observe the children at play and use this information to inform planning regarding children's next steps of learning and also to chart their developmental progress. Staff are given time to complete the children's developmental profiles each week and these records show a clear picture of children's progress. The profiles are used to complete transitional records when the children move onto school.

All staff are qualified and have attended training in relation to the Foundation Stage. They have a good understanding of the Foundation Stage and use this well to plan and provide a wide range of interesting and stimulating activities and experiences for the children; helping them to make good progress towards the early learning goals. The areas of continuous provision are well resourced and the children are able to freely choose what they would like to play with to enhance their play. Staff plan focussed activities but give equal importance to all activities on offer. They prepare well for activities and stories and use props effectively to enhance children's learning and to encourage their imagination. Staff deploy themselves well and offer good care and support to the children and they are fully involved in children's play. The children are able to explore and investigate at their own pace and are able to return to activities to consolidate their learning.

Staff dedicate much time to children's personal, social and emotional development. The children display high levels of involvement and are engrossed for long periods of time at their chosen activities. They are curious and eager to explore. The children make attachments with staff and other children and clearly feel safe and secure. They develop good self help skills as they independently help to tidy up, use the bathroom and put on their hats and coats when they go out to play. The children are confident speakers and they use language well to express their feelings, explain what they are doing and to ask questions. They enjoy anticipating what will happen at story time. The children develop a love of books. They have favourite stories and

visit the library on a regular basis. The children have lots of opportunities to learn that we write for a purpose as they have access to mark making materials in a variety of indoor and outdoor activities and role play situations. Younger children are able to form recognisable letters and older children are able to write their own name.

The children learn about mathematical concepts, such as number, shape and space through a host of daily routines and play activities. They develop early counting skills as they use and talk about number in a host of play activities; for example, singing, story time and in imaginative play. Older children have a good awareness of the total number of objects. They count apples and cakes in the home corner and a child counts 10 cones in the outdoor play area. The children develop good calculation skills as staff support them well in problem solving. For example, the children help to tidy the home corner; they count five cakes and work out they need to find one more to complete the set. Children observe and use positional language well in their play. They develop an awareness of capacity as they talk about their buckets being full and empty when playing in the sand.

The children have lots of opportunities to explore textures and materials, such as sand, water, dough, paint, glue and gloop. They show an awareness of change as they talk about different weather conditions. The children use a wide range of construction materials to make small and large scale models. They benefit from having the use of a range of interactive resources. The children particularly enjoy playing on the computer. They are able to use apparatus and complete simple programmes and they delight in printing off the pictures they have made. The children develop a sense of time as they follow the setting's daily routine and they know what happens at given times of the day.

The children are able to express their own thoughts and ideas as they engage in a host of creative activities and have access to a wonderful selection of creative tools and materials. They show a deep interest in what they do. Two children spend a long period of time completing their pictures. They concentrate deeply and this shows on their faces as they look closely at what they are doing and then one of the children puts their tongue between their teeth as they concentrate on a more difficult task. The children enjoy singing and dancing to music; they build a repertoire of songs and have some opportunities to explore sound. They are able to re-enact their own experiences and develop their understanding of the world as they have access to a lovely range of small world resources and participate in an array of role play situations.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

Staff gather a wealth of information from parents about their children's individual needs to enable them to be in a position to best meet these needs. The children develop an awareness of their local community through trips out. The setting provides a good range of resources that reflect diversity helping the children to develop an awareness of the wider world. The children celebrate their own and other festivals; helping them to value each other's similarities and differences and to develop an understanding and respect for other people's cultures and traditions. Staff promote inclusion well within the setting and children who speak English as

an additional language are well supported. Staff work closely with parents and other professionals to meet children's additional needs.

Staff have a good understanding of the behaviour management policy and use it consistently in practice. They act as good role models to the children. They are patient and sensitive, treat them with individual care and concern, use please and thank you and encourage the children to share and take turns. As a result, children develop an awareness of what is expected of them. Good supervision enables staff to observe any minor altercations as they occur and deal with them successfully by distracting the younger children and helping the older children to negotiate and problem solve together. Staff praise the children at every opportunity for their efforts and achievements; helping to develop their confidence and self-esteem. The children develop a good sense of belonging. They enter with ease and confidence and go happily to play with their friends. They develop a sense of pride and feel valued as they are able to display their own pictures on the wall. They are able to make decisions and are involved in daily routines. Children are at the heart of all decisions made in the setting. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered.

The child's key person works closely with parents to settle their children; helping to build a trusting three way relationship. They discuss all the policies and procedures with the parents and discuss their child's individual needs; helping to forge good working relationships and a shared understanding from an early stage. Effective systems are in place to keep parents informed about the setting and their children's activities. Parents are happy with the service provided, levels of care and activities afforded. The partnership with parents of children in receipt of nursery education is good. A good source of information is shared with parents regarding nursery education and effective systems are in place to gather information about children's starting points. Staff meet with parents twice a year to discuss their children's developmental progress; staff are also available upon request should parents wish to discuss their children's development at any other time. Parents are fully involved in their children's learning both at home and at the setting. For example, they are invited to help with specific areas of learning with their children at home and they also help with activities within the setting. Parents feel that they are well informed about their children's achievements and progress.

Organisation

The organisation is outstanding.

The registered persons are also the managers. They are both qualified and have lots of experience of working with children. They keep themselves fully up to date with current and forthcoming legislation. The managers are deeply committed to ensuring that all children receive the highest quality of care and education. A robust vetting procedure ensures children are well protected and a thorough induction procedure ensures staff have a clear understanding of their roles and responsibilities. The managers are committed to the staff's continual professional development and they have a very high regard for children's well-being as they enable staff to attend training on a regular basis to further develop their childcare practice. Eight staff have a valid first aid certificate ensuring they have up to date knowledge of what to do in the event of an accident or minor injury. All staff are fully involved in the setting's activities. For example, the cook has been involved in developing a display about healthy eating.

The records of children's attendance and observations during the visit show that high staff-to-child ratios are maintained to positively promote and enhance children's care, learning and play. Staff work extremely well together as a team and they organise space, time and resources exceptionally well to maximise opportunities for children and to meet their needs effectively. As the managers have the highest respect for their staff there is not a high staff turnover and this provides continuity of care for the children.

All required policies and procedures are in place and these work very well in practice to positively promote children's health, safety, enjoyment, achievement and ability to make a positive contribution. All required documentation is in place. This is well organised and securely stored to maintain confidentiality.

The leadership and management of nursery education is outstanding.

The registered persons work with the staff and children on a daily basis. The management team have well defined roles and responsibilities. They have a clear vision which is shared by all the staff. Managers and teams meet weekly to ensure that there are very good lines of communication. Excellent systems are in place to monitor the delivery of nursery education. The managers ensure that staff have the knowledge and expertise they need to deliver good quality nursery education. They truly value staff's ideas and contributions and they inspire staff so they have confidence and autonomy to try out new ideas. The management team are committed and strive to continually develop the provision of good quality education for the children in receipt of nursery education.

Overall, the provision meets the needs of the range of the children for whom it provides.

Improvements since the last inspection

At the last inspection recommendations were agreed in relation to planning, assessment and documentation. Staff have implemented development records for the younger children. Planning in relation to nursery education now takes into account the differing needs of the children. Medication records are signed by parents to acknowledge medication administered and the staff register includes the full name of staff and the date.

Complaints since the last inspection

Since April 2004 there have been no complaints made to Ofsted that required the provider or Ofsted to take any action in order to meet the National Standards.

The provider is required to keep a record of complaints made by parents, which they can see on request. The complaints record may contain complaints other than those made to Ofsted.

THE QUALITY AND STANDARDS OF THE CARE AND NURSERY EDUCATION

On the basis of the evidence collected on this inspection:

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The quality and standards of the nursery education are good.

WHAT MUST BE DONE TO SECURE FUTURE IMPROVEMENT?

The quality and standards of the care

To improve the quality and standards of care further the registered person should take account of the following recommendation(s):

- minimise risks to children indoors (radiators in the hall).

The quality and standards of the nursery education

To improve the quality and standards of nursery education further the registered person should take account of the following recommendation(s):

- continue to develop opportunities for children to explore sounds and how they can be changed.

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the leaflet *Complaints about Ofsted Early Years: concerns or complaints about Ofsted's role in regulating and inspecting childcare and early education (HMI ref no 2599)* which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk