



Stephens Early Years Centre

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	131571
Inspection date	22 November 2006
Inspector	Sylvia Dindar
Setting Address	Oakley Road, Southampton, Hampshire, SO16 4LG
Telephone number	023 8078 4069
E-mail	
Registered person	Kay Alison Doswell
Type of inspection	Integrated
Type of care	Full day 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?

Stephens Early Years Centre opened in 1990. It operates from a dance studio in Shirley, Southampton and serves the local community.

There are currently 54 children on roll, aged from two to five years. This includes 34 children who are in receipt of nursery education funding. The early years centre is an inclusive setting and supports a number of children with learning difficulties or disabilities. It also supports children who speak English as an additional language.

The centre opens five days a week during school term time. A breakfast session runs from 08.30 to 09.00, a morning session from 09.00 until 11.30, lunch session from 11.30 to 12.30 and an afternoon session from 12.30 until 15.00.

There are nine full-time staff members who work with the children, of these six staff members have early years qualifications and the other three staff members are working towards a relevant qualification. The early years centre receives support from the Head of Special Educational Needs for Southampton and has accreditation from the Pre-school Learning Alliance.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Children learn about healthy eating, at snack times they choose from a range of healthy snacks and drinks, such as a variety of dried and fresh fruit and crackers, milk and water. All staff have training in food handling and maintain good hygiene standards when preparing and handling food. Lunches are provided by parents and these are stored in the large fridge so that they maintain their freshness. Posters and pamphlets through out the pre-school re-enforce the healthy eating message. Children who have special diets are particularly well supported and excellent systems and routines are in place to support those children who have allergies so that they eat food that is safe and allow them to maintain their good health.

All staff have training in first aid and have specialist training in the administration of specialist drugs so are able to respond confidently in an emergency. Staff gather appropriate written information from parents before any medication is administered. Clearly recorded medication records are shared with parents to ensure that children receive appropriate medical care when needed.

Children are protected from cross infection as stringent cleaning routines are in place. They are reminded to wash their hands after toileting and before eating food and are provided with soft soap and separate towels to minimise the spread of infection. Good systems are in place when notifiable infectious diseases are identified and all parents are made aware of the signs and symptoms so that they can respond and care for their children appropriately when they are ill.

Children enjoy daily physical activities both inside and outdoors. They develop their large motor skills as they learn to climb and balance on the climbing frame and slide. They enjoy moving their bodies to music, responding to rhythms. They march in time to the sound of music. They practise hopping and skipping and move around confidently, developing spatial awareness. They stretch tall and curl in to balls as a response to the songs that they listen to. At story time this is further encouraged as they find a space to sit comfortably and show and awareness of others. Children regularly visit the local park and go for walks, enjoying fresh air and exercise.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

Children are cared for in an environment where they are welcomed immediately as staff are ready to greet them and their parents. Staff casually chat with parents whilst children quickly settle and go off to find their friends, eager to commence their play. The environment is very

carefully planned to provide a spacious exciting and stimulating inclusive environment for every child.

Children have access to an excellent range of good quality toys and equipment which are regularly checked to ensure that they are safe. Daily risk assessments ensure that all hazards are identified and safety features put in place, so that all children begin to move around the environment with confidence and ease. Professional advice and specialist equipment is provided where needed to ensure the continuing safety and development of all children. Children who need support in walking are provided with walkers so they can move around with confidence. Children are beginning to learn to keep themselves safe as they are encouraged to tidy up.

The safety of children is monitored as staff show good supervision and are deployed effectively. Doors are normally kept locked and are very closely monitored on arrival and collection of children to ensure that children do not leave the premises unattended. When playing outside the gate is locked ensuring a secure play area for children. Children's safety is paramount when using large physical equipment. For example, staff ensure that crash mats are provided.

Children are safeguarded as staff are knowledgeable and are able to identify the signs and symptoms of abuse. Robust systems are in place to support children and their families and ensure that any concerns are responded to appropriately.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

Children enjoy their time at the pre-school; they are greeted and welcomed by staff. They are excited by the activities on offer and settle quickly and commence their play straight away. Through out the pre-school all children are able to learn at their own pace and feel a sense of belonging as they are well supported by knowledgeable staff who know them well.

An excellent range of strategies is used to communicate with children and develop their language skills. All children are encouraged to take part in group games, where they learn to communicate and socialise with each other and develop confidence. For example, in the under threes room, a bright light easy to manage beach ball is used to attract children's attention as they learn to roll it to each other and learn each others names.

Children's independence is promoted as all children have opportunities to self select their own activities and make decisions for themselves. They have opportunities to pour their own drinks at snack time, however this is not always managed successfully as the equipment used is large and cumbersome so that sometimes spillages occur. Children feel secure as they become familiar with the simple routines of the day, for example, children, know that before snack times they sit and look at books.

Under threes enjoy a range of activities planned around the Birth to Three Framework. Staff make and adapt a range of resources so that children can use all their senses. For example, children show interest and enjoy discovering the cones and bark in the mesh bags. Their sense of smell is stimulated by spices and essential oils. They enjoy manipulating the dough and learn how to make the dough into shapes. Staff talk to them about how it feels and about shape and

colour. Their language is developed as staff engage children's eye contact and clearly speak to children. They listen to what children say and respond to the words or sounds that they make so children are acknowledged and affirmed. Staff are alert and watch children's body language as they know that for some children this is the major way in which they communicate, they respond appropriately. Children form strong bonds with their key workers. However, care is taken in ensuring children spend time with all staff so that they do not become over reliant on one adult.

Nursery Education

The quality of teaching and learning is good and children are making good progress.

Children are cared for by staff who are knowledgeable about the Foundation Stage of learning. They plan and organise a broad and balanced curriculum which covers the six areas of learning. They plan for individual children's needs by carefully observing and recording what children achieve and use this to plan the next stage of the children's learning. Staff understand that children's learning patterns are fluid and that for some reason children may not be ready to attain the identified target, so they are flexible, re-evaluate and plan again, to ensure that children remain motivated to learn.

Children are keen to learn and are able to freely choose from the activities on offer. They learn through incidental play as well as more structured activities. They practise writing and maths skills routinely at specific times. At these times children are asked by members of staff if they would like to do their focused work and all agree as they know the routine. These activities are set at a developmentally appropriate level for individual children; however most children do not show the same excitement or level of engagement as they do when freely playing. This is evident as children do not approach the areas unless invited by an adult.

Children enjoy the free play activities and take control of their own learning as staff provide excellent resources for children. Some children show great concentration as they practise their writing skills and begin to write recognisable letters as they write in a journal in the home corner. Children are sociable, when a friend comes along and asks what the child is doing the child asks her to join her and they play alongside each other. They discuss the way numbers are written, one child shows the other by writing a number five in the air.

Children are learning to take turns and share. For example, a number of children are interested in playing with the doll's house and small world people. They negotiate and work out when they can have a turn, when this proves difficult with some children. They engage the help of an adult knowing that they will help them sort it out and they do. Children's imagination is captured through the well presented home corner, for example, children enjoy dressing up in the princess slippers and wander around the setting engaged in an imaginary conversation on the realistic mobile phone.

Children are beginning to link sounds to letters. The letter of the week is P for puppet and staff encourage children to put their fingers up to their mouths to feel the air as they pronounce it, using their senses to re-enforce the learning. They enjoy books and have a wide range to choose from. Children enjoy creative activities, they begin to use simple tools such as glue

sticks to stick the picture of their puppet on the card. Children enjoy pretending to be puppets, encouraged by the staff. They flop down and let their bodies go limp and then become animated as they come alive. This topic is carried through as children are able to access the puppet theatre and make up their own stories.

Children take an interest in the world about them. For example, they watch the new building being erected next door. They take an interest in the machinery and products used. Staff talk to children about its size and shape and some children begin to use mathematical language to express their ideas. They take walks to the local park, gather leaves and talk about how the seasons change and create collages from them.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is outstanding.

All children are very positively included in the setting and every effort is taken to ensure that they get a high level of opportunity so they can reach their full potential. Children learn at a rate that is appropriate for their age and stage of development. Close observation and careful planning ensures that challenges are realistic and achievable so that children are motivated to learn.

Staff go to great lengths to provide an environment where children's individuality is recognised and accepted.

Children learn about cultures and beliefs other than their own as they celebrate and talk about a range of festivals. An extensive well organised, multicultural library service is provided so that children access story books in dual languages. Children learn to understand that text is written in different ways.

Children with learning difficulties and disabilities receive an exceptionally high level of quality care. Robust systems of evaluating and monitoring children's development ensure that children with additional needs are promptly identified. Experienced, dedicated and well trained staff consult with parents and a wide range of professionals, such as, speech and language therapists. They all work very closely to ensure a joined up approach which means that children receive a tailored programme to meet their diverse needs. All children within the group are encouraged to use Makaton and this approach further enhances the communication skills of all children. The group intentionally provides realistic and very positive feedback for parents in the form of a daily diary and this is used for a basis for discussion and keeps parents fully informed of their child's development.

Staff consistently use a range of positive methods to manage children's behaviour. They accept the realistic boundaries set and understand that for some children some rules are different according to their level of understanding. Children are very helpful; they hand out the food at snack time and help to clear away. They have a sense of fair play; for example, when some children don't help to tidy up they are keen to remind them. Children have very good relationships with staff who give the children the attention they need. They listen to them carefully as they share information and respond to children positively. They take an interest in the children's family life so that all children feel acknowledged and affirmed. Staff recognise

the achievements that children make and praise and encourage them, building their self esteem. Children's social moral spiritual and cultural needs are fostered.

The partnership with parents of children who receive funding for nursery education is outstanding. All staff ensure that parents are provided with a wealth of good quality information about the setting and about nursery education. Parents are exceptionally well informed about their child's achievements and progress. This is achieved through frequent meetings with parents both formerly and informally. Information displayed on the notice board informs parents of the plans and activities offered. Information related to this is available for parents to take so they can re-enforce what their child has learned when they are at home and this includes a well established book scheme.

Families are welcomed from different backgrounds and all are equally valued. All parents receive written information in their first language, the group also sign post some parents to translation services when appropriate. The setting clearly understands the challenges that face some parents and provides extra support when needed. Children are very well cared for as staff build firm trusting relationships with their parents and work extremely effectively in partnership with them.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

The setting meets the needs of the range of children for whom it provides care.

Children are safeguarded as the organisation has stringent and robust recruitment procedures in place. All necessary checks are carried out and clearance sought before the commencement of employment. New staff and volunteers are strongly supported and complete a in depth induction programme and new staff are further supported through the in house training that is provided. Children are well cared for because staff are deployed effectively, supervising children well throughout the setting. Well planned daily routines and activities mean that children, throughout the nursery, are kept fully occupied and stimulated. Children benefit as the group have a range of policies and procedures which under pin the group's good practice, these are regularly reviewed to ensure that they remain effective.

Leadership and management of the setting is good. The setting is owned and managed by a practitioner who is exceptionally highly qualified and experienced in early years. The setting is fully committed to continually reviewing and improving the quality of nursery education and care. Staff are proactive at assessing their own strengths and weaknesses. Staff appraisals have a strong focus on their personal development and achievement. Funding is made available for staff to complete appropriate training to meet the needs of the provision and to improve their own personal development, raising the standards across the board for the children who attend the setting. Children benefit from the staff's sound and secure knowledge of child development. They are provided with a well balanced curriculum, which ensures all the stepping stones are covered through out the year. Daily activities and routines are evaluated and information is gathered and used to ensure that children continually make good progress in all areas of learning.

Improvements since the last inspection

At the last care inspection the group were required to develop a registration system that includes the arrival and departure of children, this is now in place so Ofsted are able to ensure that ratios are being maintained. They were also required to develop staff's knowledge and understanding of child protection procedures. Staff have undergone training and have a clear understanding of their roles and responsibilities in safeguarding children.

At the last education inspection the group were asked to consider improving the organisation of snack time to enable children to further increase their independence, children now are involved in laying tables, hand out snacks and encouraged to clear tables when finished, developing their independence.

Complaints since the last inspection

Since the last inspection 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:

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 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):

- further develop children's independence when pouring drinks ensuring that children can manage the equipment

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):

- improve the appeal of the focused activities so that children are effectively engaged in all play

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