



## Steps Community Nursery

Inspection report for early years provision

<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	300918
<b>Inspection date</b>	05 October 2006
<b>Inspector</b>	Karen Cockings
<b>Setting Address</b>	Paces Centre, Packhorse Lane, High Green, Sheffield, S35 3HY
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<b>Registered person</b>	Steps Community Nursery
<b>Type of inspection</b>	Integrated
<b>Type of care</b>	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](http://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 satisfactory. 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?

Steps Community Nursery opened in 1998. The nursery operates from the Paces Campus, which is situated in High Green, to the north of Sheffield. The campus also houses a centre for conductive education and a range of other community facilities. The nursery serves the local community and the surrounding areas. Children are cared for in a designated area of the building where there are four rooms available for children's play. Children are grouped in rooms according to age. They also have access to an enclosed outdoor play area and an indoor physical playroom.

The nursery is registered for 55 children under five years. There are currently 110 children on roll, aged between six months and five years. This includes 56 children who are in receipt of nursery education funding. The nursery supports a number of children with learning difficulties and a number who have English as an additional language.

The nursery is open every weekday, for 50 weeks each year, between 08.00 and 18.00.

Steps Community Nursery is a registered charity and a company limited by guarantee. The nursery is managed by a volunteer board of trustees, which includes parent representatives. A team of 21 staff work with the children, 17 of whom have a relevant early years qualification. The nursery receives support from the local authority and has been successful in achieving the Bronze Award through the Sheffield Kitemark quality assurance scheme.

## **THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION**

### **Helping children to be healthy**

The provision is good.

Children are well protected from illness and infection because they are cared for in a suitably clean environment, where staff follow effective hygiene procedures. For example, they consistently wear disposable gloves when changing nappies and ensure that separate bedding is used in cots. Tables are cleaned thoroughly before they are used for snacks and meals and staff follow regular routines for washing and sterilizing toys and equipment. Certain areas of the nursery, such as the floor coverings in some rooms, are badly marked but there are plans to replace these when funding is available. Notices are displayed to alert parents to cases of infectious illness in the nursery.

Children learn about the importance of hand washing and move towards independence in attending to their personal care. Notices are posted above bowls in the playrooms to remind children and suitable equipment, such as steps in toilet areas, help children to manage this themselves. Staff use signing well to reinforce messages and encourage younger children with hand washing routines.

Children have opportunities throughout the day to be active, which contributes to their overall good health. They spend a period of time outdoors at each session, if the weather permits. They enjoy running and moving in different ways between the tables and trees. They have access to a varied selection of wheeled toys which they carefully steer between obstacles. Suitable equipment is also used indoors to promote active play and to help children learn new physical skills. For example, children use the climbing frame and balancing beams with enthusiasm and enjoyment. They learn how to hold out their arms to help them to balance and carefully change direction. Staff plan interesting outdoor activities, such as making dens with large boxes and using pipes and containers to explore the flow of water. They sometimes work with other organisations who are promoting sports, to plan special events, such as involving children in a multi-sports session. Babies and toddlers develop physical skills and confidence as they use furniture and equipment to help them to stand and walk. Hand-eye coordination and manipulative skills improve as they reach out and handle the toys around them.

Parents provide packed lunches for their children or may choose to order meals from the community café housed in the same building. The nursery has worked with the café to devise a well balanced menu for the children and this is on display for parents. Nourishing options are offered by the nursery at snack times to promote healthy eating patterns. Snacks include fresh and dried fruits, toast and crumpets, with a drink of milk or water. Staff make good use of

opportunities to raise children's awareness of healthy foods. For example, children talk at circle time about foods that are good for them and foods that are not. Children are keen to say what they like and staff help them to think about the effects of unhealthy foods on their bodies. Older children are often involved in food preparation activities, such as making bread and helping to chop up vegetables to make soup. Such activities increase children's understanding of how foods are prepared and of healthy eating. They also encourage the development of independence and self-help skills.

### **Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe**

The provision is satisfactory.

Children are cared for in secure playrooms where staff understand their responsibilities for keeping children safe. Managers are very aware of security issues regarding access to the nursery area and ensure that appropriate monitoring systems are in place. For example, doors to playrooms are secured and staff carefully supervise children's movements to toilet areas and to the outdoor space. Staff in the office are generally able to monitor the arrival of visitors to the nursery and a record is kept. Babies who are not yet mobile are kept safe in an enclosed area of their room with suitable equipment to help them to sit and play safely. Staff regularly check on sleeping babies and also use a listening device.

Children learn to avoid accidental injury as staff remind them of dangers and teach them how to use the environment and equipment safely. For example, they learn to take care with knives and peelers when helping to cut up fruit and vegetables. They know that they walk downstairs carefully, holding on to handrails, and they understand that they must wait until the first person has moved on before they use the slide. Staff review accident records to identify potential hazards and take appropriate action to address them. For example, they notice that toddlers are currently tempted to use the small chairs for climbing and so remove them to provide a safer play space for them.

Effective precautions are taken to protect children from the risk of fire. Appliances are routinely checked and regular drills held, to ensure that staff and children are conversant with the procedures to follow in an emergency. The nursery ensures that appropriate safety equipment, such as radiator guards, socket covers and finger shields, are in place to maintain a safe environment for the children.

A varied range of toys and play materials is available, many of which are stored on low level shelving so that children can access them safely and independently. Staff make routine checks to ensure that equipment is safe and suitable for children's use.

Staff have a secure understanding of their responsibilities with regard to child protection. Some have completed additional training in this area and there are guidance materials readily available should there be concerns. There is a good understanding of the importance of checking all staff who work with children, but weaknesses in the systems for informing Ofsted of changes to the management committee mean that all aspects related to children's overall safety have not been fully considered.

## **Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do**

The provision is good.

Most children are happy and settled in the nursery. Staff sensitively support those who are a little anxious or are not yet feeling secure. Babies and toddlers receive lots of cuddles from staff who make efforts to get to know them well. Older children arrive confidently and are familiar with routines as they find their name labels and hang up their belongings. Many give reassuring messages to their parents as they are about to leave, telling them that they will have a good time in nursery. They greet friends happily and quickly settle to play.

Staff plan and provide a broad range of activities to support children's play and learning in all areas of the nursery. The 'Birth to three matters' framework is being used well to develop a suitable programme of activities for the younger children. Staff are enthusiastic about it and keen to improve and extend what they are offering. For example, staff in the baby room have observed how much children enjoy exploring the textures of different materials, such as paint, jelly and baked beans. They now plan to extend the messy play area so that they can easily provide more sensory experiences for babies.

Children begin to form good relationships with each other as they learn how to share and take part in group activities. Older and more able children are able to negotiate turn taking as they play games together. They listen to each other and to adults at circle time. Positive interaction between staff and children helps to create a happy atmosphere where children can play and develop confidence as they learn new skills.

### **Nursery Education**

The quality of teaching and children's learning is good. Children make good progress towards the early learning goals in most areas because staff have a secure understanding of the Foundation Stage curriculum. They use a varied range of teaching methods, including adult-led and child-initiated activities, which help to keep children interested and engaged. There are opportunities for children to play independently and in small groups and to take part in whole group activities, such as circle time. Most older children enter the setting confidently and happily leave their parents and carers. They are used to the routines of the day and understand what is expected of them. They seek out others to play games with them, talking together as they play to establish rules and agree how to share resources. Children begin to develop independence in managing their personal care, such as hand washing and putting on aprons before messy play.

Children are very confident in their use of language. During role play they communicate well with each other, negotiating roles as they decide, for example, who will be the shopkeeper and the customer in their shop. All participate eagerly in rhyme and singing sessions and they listen intently to stories. They know how to handle books and many like to gather in the book corners, looking at their favourites. Some pretend that they are the teacher, holding the book as they have seen the staff do and 'reading' to their friends. They begin to recognise their own names. Some younger children need a little help to link sounds to the first letters of their names, while older children confidently find their name labels and write their names legibly on their pictures.

Through a variety of activities and resources, children develop good counting skills and learn to recognise numbers. For example, children accurately count the number of dots on dominos and confidently match numbers and colours. Children sing number rhymes together and match patterns as they play a game of pairs. Some are able to do simple calculations, working out how many pieces are left when some are taken away. They learn about shape and measurement as they use construction toys. Staff help children to gain an awareness of size, taking them to the mirror to see whether the tower they have built is bigger or smaller than them. There is more limited evidence of counting being used as part of daily routines to help children to use number in practical contexts.

Children are becoming skilled in their use of the computer. Older children competently use the mouse to select a suitable programme and to identify the correct order in a sequence of pictures. They learn about the world around them as they go on outings to local farms and look at nearby bridges as part of a project related to the 'Three Billy Goats Gruff'. Visits to the nursery by other adults, such as the community policeman, help them to understand about different roles and how people help us. They think about how others live. For example, they imagine living in a hot country where they have to carry buckets of water from the well and they re-enact this in the outdoor area. Staff identify the presentation of simple science as an area for further development.

Children explore a variety of media. They enjoy using play dough and utensils in different ways. Younger ones like to roll and pat the dough into different shapes, while older children use it as a basis for their imaginary play, pretending that they are baking cakes and using tools as the birthday candles. There is free access to paints, easels and drawing materials. Children's displayed work shows that they experiment with different techniques, such as bubble painting and stamping. They have access to a variety of musical instruments and interesting musical activities are planned. For example, staff organise a carnival band and the children dress up and form a procession with their instruments.

A range of tools and activities requiring good hand-eye coordination allow children to demonstrate good levels of skill and control. For example, they use a variety of utensils as they play with the dough and as they cut out pictures to create a collage. Children's large motor skills improve as they practise balancing, climbing and moving their bodies in different ways.

Staff use effective methods to support children's learning. They ask challenging questions to make children think and present new activities well, explaining clearly what children should do. They help children to consider the range of activities available and where they might choose to play. Resources, such as puppets, rhyme dice and picture cards are used well to help children to focus on activities and encourage their participation. Children help to make some resources, such as models of small roundabouts and seesaws, and enjoy using them in their play. Staff make regular observations of children and use these effectively to inform their planning systems and to identify the next steps in children's learning. They manage children's behaviour well and acknowledge children's achievements, which helps to build children's confidence.

## **Helping children make a positive contribution**

The provision is good.

Children are given a warm welcome into the nursery and develop a sense of belonging as they become familiar with routines and make independent choices about their play. They see their work displayed around the setting and enjoy looking at photograph albums and recalling past experiences. Staff get to know children well and show them that they are valued by listening to what they have to say and asking questions about their interests, likes and dislikes. They find out about the normal sleep and feeding patterns of babies so that care can flow with children's needs.

Staff work closely with families and with other professionals to support children with learning disabilities. Additional funding is sought where necessary to provide children with the levels of support they need. Effective measures are taken to encourage children with communication and language difficulties. For example, staff use signing and picture cards with children or plan small group activities to promote listening skills. Plans for children clearly identify the next steps in their learning and review the progress made.

Children develop a sense of responsibility as they help to tidy toys away, happily singing their tidy up song along with staff as they do so. They are eager to help with routines, such as wiping the tables before snack. Staff manage children's behaviour positively and acknowledge their achievements. For example, they let children know that they appreciate their 'good listening and nice sharing'. As a result, children feel good about themselves and learn to play cooperatively together.

Children's home and family backgrounds are acknowledged. Staff know, for example, if children are from a bi-lingual family and try to use occasional words from both, where possible. They invite parents into the setting to share books and videos in their own language or to teach children new skills, such as how to count in French. This shows children and families that they are valued and broadens children's learning experiences. There are resources and displays around the setting showing positive images of different cultures and lifestyles. Activities and outings are planned, which teach children about the diversity of the wider society. Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered.

The partnership with parents is good. The nursery makes extensive efforts to communicate information about the service generally and about children's progress. The welcome booklet provides a range of useful information to new parents and this is supported by well used notice boards and displays. Some particularly important policies, such as the behaviour policy, are displayed and included in the brochure. Parents comment positively on the daily feedback given and information is also shared more formally on children's care sheets. Acting on the recommendations made at the last inspection, staff have made concerted efforts to develop their systems of sharing development records with parents. The new record system, 'My learning journey', is used throughout the nursery and is a personal, interesting document for parents to read and to treasure. They are invited also to share their own comments on children's progress. Efforts have also been made to increase parents' awareness of how the nursery plans activities for children. For example, a parents evening was used effectively to present information about the 'Birth to three matters' framework and how the nursery was taking steps to implement it.

The Paces Campus produces its own questionnaires which are distributed to all users. Any comments or concerns which relate to the nursery are considered and followed up. A suggestions box is also available at the setting and parents are encouraged to become members of the Board of Trustees.

## **Organisation**

The organisation is satisfactory.

The nursery environment is organised well overall to promote children's safety and well-being. Staff work effectively together to create a welcoming atmosphere and to ensure that children's needs are met. There are clear systems in place for the recruitment and vetting of new staff. However, changes to the Board of Trustees have not been notified to Ofsted so that suitability checks can be made. This is a breach in regulations and means that children's welfare is not fully safeguarded.

Staff use their knowledge and understanding of child development to create an environment where children can play and learn. There is a commitment to the further development of skills through training. For example, relevant staff have completed 'Birth to three matters' training and are beginning to use it successfully to improve the provision made for the younger children at the setting.

Policies and procedures are in place to support the smooth running of the provision but some are in need of review and updating. Suitable arrangements are made for sharing these with parents, ensuring that they are kept well informed about the operation of the setting. Record keeping systems are maintained effectively to promote children's care, safety and well-being.

Leadership and management of the nursery education is good. The setting is committed to the development of positive relationships and steady improvement of its provision. Through a well established induction and appraisal system, training needs are identified and staff encouraged to develop their practice. Specific training, such as child protection, first aid, Foundation Stage and 'Birth to three matters', is prioritised. The manager and deputy are currently attending leadership and management courses. Both are involved in the monitoring of staff practice and take responsibility for overseeing the implementation of planning and assessment procedures. This ensures that systems are being used effectively to help children to make progress in their learning and development.

There is a strong commitment to the further development of the provision and identification of areas for improvement. This is reflected in the nursery's successful completion of the first stage of a local quality assurance scheme and in their willingness to participate in other evaluative studies.

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

## **Improvements since the last inspection**

At the last care inspection, it was recommended that the nursery keep a record of times of arrival and departure in daily registers. A new system has now been devised, which includes



these details. Registers are kept readily accessible in each playroom. Clear attendance records help to safeguard children's welfare, particularly in the event of a fire or other emergency.

It was also recommended that the role of Ofsted be included in the complaints procedure. Information about how to contact the regulator is now incorporated into the policy. This helps to ensure that parents know what steps to take if they have unresolved concerns. However, the policy now needs to be updated in order to reflect the most recent guidance regarding complaints and the new address details for Ofsted.

The nursery education inspection recommended that more opportunities be provided for children to develop increasing control by constructing with large materials and using small equipment, such as balls and hoops. Staff have introduced more opportunities for children to access materials for model making and for using large items and smaller equipment, such as piping, large boxes and balls. Use of such resources help children to develop increasing control and improve physical skills.

In addition, it was recommended that a system should be established for the sharing of children's development records with parents. Significant changes have since been made to the recording of children's development, providing a more user friendly document, which is shared effectively with parents. This helps to keep them well informed about their children's progress.

### **Complaints since the last inspection**

Since 1 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:

The quality and standards of the care are satisfactory. 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):

- ensure that all significant changes are notified to Ofsted

- review and update complaints and child protection policies and procedures to reflect recent changes
- continue to develop the planning and provision of resources and activities for younger children, in line with the 'Birth to three matters' framework.

### **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 explore ways of providing more opportunities for children to carry out simple experiments and investigate how things work
- make more use of daily routines and activities to reinforce mathematical ideas and improve understanding of numbers.

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](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)