



Stepping Stones Nursery

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	EY338816
Inspection date	17 November 2006
Inspector	Abigail Caroline Cunningham
Setting Address	Stepping Stones Day Nursery, Gledhow Lane, LEEDS, LS8 1RT
Telephone number	01132 668005
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Registered person	Stepping Stones Nursery School
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 satisfactory. The registered person meets the National Standards for under 8s day care and childminding.

The quality and standards of the nursery education are satisfactory.

WHAT SORT OF SETTING IS IT?

Stepping Stones Nursery School opened in 2006. The setting is situated in the Gledhow area of Leeds and operates from four play rooms. There is also an enclosed area for outdoor play. The nursery is registered to care for a maximum of 60 children aged from birth to five years. There are currently 65 children aged from five months to under four years on roll. Of these 10 children receive funding for nursery education. Children attend for a variety of sessions and are drawn from the local area and wider community. The nursery currently supports a number of children who speak English as an additional language.

The nursery is open between 07.30 and 18.30 daily, all year round, except for bank holidays. There are 20 staff including the manager working with the children, 17 hold an appropriate early years qualification and one member of staff is currently working towards a qualification.

The nursery receives support from an advisory teacher and the emphasis is on learning through play.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is satisfactory.

All staff are fully aware of individual dietary requirements and preferences which are discussed in full with parents. The children receive a good range of healthy and nutritious meals and snacks. Children have access to drinks at all times and sample foods associated with other countries to increase their knowledge of the wider world, for example, sweet and sour chicken with rice and spaghetti bolognese.

Satisfactory hygiene practices are in place. Different methods for promoting personal hygiene are used. For example, there are paper towels and liquid soap available in the toilets, staff wear gloves and aprons during nappy changing and the nappy changing mats are cleaned after each use. The staff are good role models and they wash their hands after toileting, nappy changing and before serving food. Five members of staff including the nursery cook have completed food hygiene training. Tissues are easily accessible and as a result the children can independently wipe their own noses.

The staff treat mealtimes as an opportunity to help children enjoy their food and become independent in feeding themselves. As a result, young children have many opportunities to feed themselves using fingers and spoons, for example, while eating cheese sandwiches and pieces of cucumber. The staff effectively recognise the signs of tiredness in babies and young children.

Good arrangements are in place for administering first aid and medication. There are fully stocked first aid kits available and over half of the staff hold a current first aid certificate. Written policies are in place regarding sickness, accidents and the administration of medicines; these are fully implemented and shared with all parents.

Children enjoy exercise and develop a positive approach to this through regular opportunities for physical play, such as accessing the outdoor play area and going out for walks in the local community. They use a satisfactory range of small and large equipment, such as hoops, balls and scooters. They move freely with pleasure and confidence, for example, while running outside and riding on the tricycles. The children handle tools, objects, construction and malleable materials safely and with increasing control, such as paintbrushes, pencils, scissors and dough tools. Children can manage their bodies to create intended movement, for example, while pouring drinks.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is satisfactory.

The environment is warm and welcoming and two of the playrooms have recently been redecorated. Parents and children are warmly welcomed on arrival and children's work is

displayed on the walls in the playrooms. The reception area is informative as the setting's policies and procedures, staff photographs and information about the Foundation Stage are on display.

Children benefit from a suitable range of safety measures, for example, through the use of socket covers and safety gates. Fire equipment is checked annually and the children are developing an awareness of safety through practising emergency evacuations once every two months. The children are supervised at all times, are unable to leave the premises unattended and are never left alone with persons who have not been vetted. The system for managing access to the premises is good, for example, closed circuit television is fitted in the outside play area and in all the playrooms, unauthorised persons are unable to gain entry and there is a record of visitors.

There is a satisfactory range of toys, furniture and equipment available, which meet the needs of all children attending, such as cots and high chairs. All children have independent access to books at all times. All of the resources are in satisfactory condition and are regularly checked. Most of the staff use toys, equipment and materials effectively to ensure children are provided with an interesting range of activities that promote their learning in all areas.

The staff have a satisfactory knowledge of child protection procedures. They are aware of their responsibilities towards the children in their care. Some staff have attended child protection training and the setting's staff induction covers the implementation of the setting's child protection procedure.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is satisfactory.

The children are settled and have positive relationships with others. Young children's emotional needs are well met as they receive plenty of individual attention and cuddles, for example, while looking at books and being bottle fed. The under twos explore their environment through using their senses. This is because the staff caring for these children provide them with regular opportunities to enjoy music and movement sessions and sensory experiences, such as sand, water, dough and natural materials. Children are encouraged to explore and investigate their surroundings, for example, the babies happily crawl in and out of the ball pool. This is because the staff are within reach and they talk to the babies in a sensitive manner.

Activities are generally well organised. Suitable planning is in place for all age groups, however, not all planned activities for the two to three-year-olds take place. As a result, the children in this room become restless and bored at times. Most age groups are involved in an appropriate range of activities, which are suitable for their ages and stages of development. However, staff working with the two to three-year-olds do not have a secure understanding of the needs of children under three and as a result the children are often given inappropriate activities to do, such as overly adult led creative activities and work sheets.

Nursery education

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. Teaching is appropriate for all groups of children. Practitioners understand the children's needs and provide a satisfactory range of activities and experiences. There are missed opportunities in some areas of learning for the children to develop their skills and understanding, such as communication language and literacy and mathematical development. Regular meetings are held to discuss topics and activities with all staff, however, the planning is not currently monitored to ensure there is a balanced curriculum over time.

The main member of staff working directly with the funded children has recently been appointed and is gradually implementing improvements. She has a sound knowledge of the Foundation Stage and has a good range of teaching methods and a clear understanding of how young children learn and progress. However, the other main member of staff who is working with the funded children has not attended any Foundation Stage training. Both members of staff are enthusiastic and work well together, as a result all areas are well stocked and planned focussed activities take place. Assessment records clearly show the children's approach to learning and their achievements and progress, however, these do not identify what needs to be included in planning for children's individual next steps in learning.

All children separate from their main carer with confidence and talk freely about their home and community. They have the confidence and ability to manage developmentally appropriate tasks, such as dressing up as Peter Pan. Some three-year-olds and all four-year-olds are able to stand up for their own rights, for example, they clearly explain when they would like to do something without any help from others. More able children independently manage their own personal hygiene and can dress themselves.

The children listen to others in small groups when the conversation interests them, for example, while blowing bubbles and blowing up the rubber gloves. However, some children do find it difficult to listen to the other children's points of view. All children are able to draw lines and circles using gross motor movement. More able children are beginning to form recognisable letters and are naming and sounding letters of the alphabet.

The children are developing very good counting skills and enjoy participating in counting songs and rhymes. They can name and match colours. Four-year-olds are able to use numbers in everyday situations and can recognise numerals from one to four. They can use language to compare size and shape and use vocabulary correctly, such as triangle, circle, square, big and little. There are limited opportunities to extend and challenge children's learning through practical problem solving activities, such as setting the table for lunch.

The children are developing a satisfactory knowledge of the world in which they live. The staff help the children to become more aware of their environment and the natural world, for example, they provide some first hand experiences, such as producing a shopping list and going out to the local supermarket to buy the items off this list. Children use their imagination well, they enjoy dressing up and playing in the home corner. The children enjoy creating items with the box craft and know that different media can be combined, for example, the use of boxes, glue, wool and sticky tape. Overall, children make sound progress towards the early learning goals given their capability and starting points.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is satisfactory.

The staff have a consistent approach to managing children's behaviour, which is reflected in the setting's behaviour policy. The staff are skilled in encouraging good behaviour and helping children understand what is expected of them, for example, they are calm and clear regarding boundaries. The staff use positive techniques well, such as praise and encouragement. They encourage the children to be kind and caring towards others and to be proud of their achievements, for example, by using the pride vine. As a result, the children are well behaved, they share, take turns, cooperate at tidy up time and use manners.

There are satisfactory systems in place to support children with special educational needs and children who speak English as an additional language. The staff know the children well and as a result the children's individual needs are well met. The children develop a positive attitude to others and an understanding about the wider world and community. This is achieved through celebrating festivals, such as Diwali. The children have access to a satisfactory range of resources which show positive images, such as dolls, jigsaws, books and small world play figures.

Partnership with parents and carers is satisfactory. Staff give good attention to meeting babies' and young children's individual needs for eating, changing and sleeping, and exchange this information with parents, such as through daily slips. The parents receive clear and detailed information about the educational provision through regular newsletters and notice board. Further information is available through the setting's policy file which is easily accessible to parents. Parents have good opportunities to share what they know about their child through regular discussions with staff. They are well informed about their child's achievements and progress. For example, they are invited along to parents evenings. There are some opportunities for parents to be involved in their child's learning, for example, question of the day and self registration. However, they are unable to add their comments or observations to their child's profile. Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered.

Organisation

The organisation is satisfactory.

The environment is generally well organised, staff know their roles and responsibilities and effectively implement routines to give children a broad range of experiences. Staffing ratios are satisfactory and over half the staff have relevant childcare qualifications. Satisfactory recruitment and vetting procedures are in place, for example, references and checks are undertaken, ensuring that all adults caring for the children are suitable to do so. The staff are mostly well deployed, however, babies and young children are not always grouped effectively. Occasionally they are cared for in groups which are too big, for example, during lunchtime there were 13 babies being looked after in the same room. All the required documentation is in place, easily accessible and stored securely, such as the lost and uncollected child policy. A good system is in place to record the staff's, children's and visitors' attendance and this is accurate and up to date.

The leadership and management of the nursery education is satisfactory. The staff team are committed to improving care and education and have some opportunities for staff development,

such as attending training and staff meetings. A small number of staff have attended Foundation Stage and 'Birth to three matters' training. However, there is no formal staff appraisal system in operation. The staff regularly work with an advisory teacher from the local authority to improve their practice. All staff are fully involved in planning and assessment records and are always updated by key workers. Overall the provision meets the needs of the range of the children for whom it provides.

Improvements since the last inspection

Not applicable.

Complaints since the last inspection

Since registration there have been two complaints made to Ofsted that required the provider to take action to meet the National Standards. The complaints related to Standard 2: Organisation. On two separate occasions an unannounced visit was made by a childcare inspector to the provision to discuss the concerns. Appropriate actions were agreed to meet the National Standards. Ofsted are satisfied that the provider remains qualified for registration. 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.

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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 children under two are cared for in groups of no more than 12
- continue to increase opportunities for staff development and improvement, for example, through staff appraisal
- strengthen partnership with parents, ensure that parents can easily access their child's assessment record and are able to add their comments to these
- improve the staff's knowledge and understanding of the needs of children under three, for example, by using the 'Birth to three matters' framework

- provide a suitable and sufficient range of activities for children aged two to three-years which are appropriate for their stage of development and based on their individual needs.

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):

- ensure that all staff working with the funded children have a secure knowledge and understanding of the Foundation Stage curriculum
- ensure assessment records identify individual plans for the next steps in learning
- monitor the curriculum planning, to ensure that there is a balanced programme over time
- provide opportunities for children to listen to others and solve simple mathematical problems.

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