



Stepping Stones Pre-School (Clipston)

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	219879
Inspection date	13 October 2006
Inspector	Jan Clarke-Potter
Setting Address	Clipston School, High Street, Clipston, Market Harborough, Leicestershire, LE16 9RU
Telephone number	01858 525113
E-mail	
Registered person	Stepping Stones Pre-School
Type of inspection	Integrated
Type of care	Sessional 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 Pre-School opened in 1993 and operates from premises within the local school in the rural village of Clipston. A maximum of 18 children may attend the playgroup at any one time. The pre-school is open from 09:15 to 11:45 Monday to Friday during school term times. The pre-school also runs a lunch club from 11:45 to 12:45 on Tuesday, Thursday and Friday and afternoon sessions on Monday and Wednesday from 12:30 to 15:00. All children share access to the outside play facilities and the large hall area for physical play.

There are currently 22 children aged from two to under five years on roll. Of these 15 children receive funding for nursery education. The pre-school accepts children from the age of two years six months. Children come from the local and surrounding villages.

Five staff work with the children. Three have appropriate early years qualifications, and two staff are currently working towards an early years qualification. The setting receives support from the Early Years Development and Childcare Partnership.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Children's health is promoted well as the setting takes positive steps to promote the children's good health, and encourages them to begin to take responsibility of meeting their own health needs. For example, children are learning about their personal hygiene and how to keep healthy by washing their hands after going to the toilet and before eating. Positive steps are taken to prevent the spread of infection and appropriate measures are taken when children are ill so that health needs are met. For example, the policy for sick children enables them to be cared for appropriately. Parents give written instructions for the administration of medicines, medicines are stored safely and administration is recorded and shared with parents. Staff respond to accidents appropriately as current first aid certificates are held by two members of staff, the first aid box is up-to-date and easily available and accidents are clearly recorded and shared with parents.

Children are well nourished and have good opportunities to learn about healthy eating because the setting provides children with food that is nutritious and complies with their dietary needs. Staff talk to them about foods which are healthy for them, and encourage them to eat fruit. They talk about the benefits of regular exercise and they discuss why their heart beats fast when they run. Children are not always aware that water is available because it is not easily accessible to them.

Children enjoy varied opportunities to experience physical activity, the staff plan a range of activities that enable the children to develop their confidence and enjoyment for small motor skills. For example children play with a variety of bats, balls, 'sit and ride' toys, they play with the parachute, hoops and go on walks in the locality. However, the availability of climbing and balancing apparatus on a daily basis to help develop children's large physical skills, is limited.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

Children are safe and well cared for in premises that are safe, secure and suitable for their purpose because the setting ensures that the environment gives children access to the comprehensive range of facilities that successfully promote children's development. For example, the premises are welcoming and child-centred. They are clean, adequately heated and ventilated, and well maintained. Children have space to play freely, to be active, or play quietly. Outdoor space is secure, safe and well maintained. Children begin to understand there are rules and boundaries that keep them safe. For example, they are encouraged to be involved in clearing up and not running in the room which ensures that children do not hurt themselves.

Children mostly use a wide range of equipment that is suitable and safe, this is because the setting provides furniture, equipment and toys which are accessible and appropriate for their purpose. They are of suitable design and condition, well maintained and perform to safety standards. Staff check these for safety on a regular basis. Children's safety is promoted because staff take positive steps within the setting and on outings and ensures proper precautions are taken to prevent accidents. For example risk assessments are conducted and staff understand how to minimise risks and children understand and practise the fire evacuation procedure. This is recorded and helps them to know what to do in an emergency. The premises are secure and there is a safe procedure for the collection of children. Children are very well supervised at all times.

Children are well protected because staff have a sound understanding of their role in child protection and are able to put appropriate procedures into practice.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

Children of all ages settle well as they have good relationships with staff supported by a key worker system. Staff use their knowledge of the 'Birth to three matters' framework, to plan a range of stimulating activities for children of this age group that promote all developmental areas. Children progress while staff have realistic expectations and adapt activities so that they can achieve and learn. Staff are busy observing children and supporting them in their play in order to encourage them to make the most of the many different learning opportunities available.

Children thoroughly enjoy their time in the setting. New children settle very well, they become motivated because staff provide innovative and creative opportunities for them to learn in their play. They have an excellent attitude to learning and are happy, settled and purposefully engaged throughout the session. Children become confident, and begin to develop independent working and play effectively on their own or with others. They are learning to negotiate with others and to take responsibility for their actions. Children are fully involved in an interesting range of developmentally appropriate indoor and outdoor activities which generally provide challenge. Children respond with enthusiasm, and ask appropriate questions during the finger puppet story. They show curiosity, imagination and concentration and use all their senses to actively explore a range of new experiences. Overall, all children make good progress in their learning.

Nursery Education

The quality of teaching and learning is good. Staff use their sound understanding of the Foundation Stage to plan and provide a very well-balanced range of stimulating and interesting activities for three and four-year-old children. Staff routinely carry out observations on children that are used to plan individual stepping stones of learning. This gives children a clear route for progression towards the early learning goals. Staff get to know the children well and have realistic expectations of what each child can achieve. Staff provide sufficient challenges for children as they encourage children to think and demonstrate what they know and understand.

During a baking activity they discuss with the children why things melt and why honey goes runny, at the same time encouraging their language skills.

Children make good progress in the personal, social and emotional development which creates a sound foundation for them to progress in the other areas of learning. Children are well motivated and excited to learn, as they choose from the range of activities on offer. They are developing concentration as they persevere with tasks. Children have good opportunity to work with others completing activities in small groups, learning to cooperate and take turns fairly.

Children develop their language for communication as they are beginning to confidently interact amongst themselves and with staff. Children enjoy books and handle them appropriately, there are visits to the library which encourages their knowledge and enjoyment of books which they can share with parents. They listen carefully to group stories for example, 'Goldilocks and the Three Bears'. Children enjoy watching and listening to the story and staff use finger puppets to make the children interact and ask questions. Children readily select books themselves to look at. There are varied opportunities for children to develop and consolidate their early writing skills. A variety of tools and materials available helps to refine and increase children's fine motor control, for example, children make meaning out of marks when they play at librarians in the home corner. They routinely use mathematical language to compare and describe size and shape. For example, they weigh small plastic teddy bears and are able to estimate 'heavier and lighter, little and big'. They use developing mathematical ideas to solve problems. They are learning to count up to 10 objects and show a developing understanding of plus and minus through practical activities and games. For example, staff ask children if they have enough trikes for the number of children. Staff explain the concept of more and less. Children recognise basic shapes and begin to understand how to measure when they compare their bodies during a topic.

Children have very good opportunities to use everyday technology to support their learning. They have easy access to a computer with appropriate learning resources, and use other everyday items and programmable toys to widen their experiences. Children learn why things melt when they are heated, when they bake biscuits. They explore with magnets and prisms, grow seeds and learn how plants grow. They identify features of the weather and learn about living things in the local environment, for example, when the local farmer brought lambs into the group at springtime. They plant bulbs and grows seeds in the summer in individual pots and learn about what you need to make things grow. Children play with junk modelling and are able to make houses as part of a topic. They develop a sense of time and place as they learn all about families and people who live in the local community. They begin to know about their own cultures and beliefs of other people. For example, visitors to the group talk to them about different religious festivals and celebrations in the Hindu and Christian calendar. Children know about the uses of everyday technology and use it to support their learning, as they play educational games on the computer. They listen to a recording of their voice on the tape recorder, play with digital cameras, calculators and programmable toys.

Children are beginning to move confidently and safely, with control and coordination, as they kick balls, learn to throw and catch and ride sit-on toys. They are able to develop a sense of space as they play in the playground. They recognise the importance of staying healthy when they learn about the foods that are healthy during a project. They use a wide variety of small

equipment successfully, although access to larger climbing equipment is limited. Children have lots of opportunities to use tools and materials and play with large and small construction. They use scissors, sticky tape and glue when they make models of a house. They explore colour and texture when they play with dough and paint. They identify and cut and stick basic shapes into a figure. They explore with their senses, playing with wet spaghetti, and crinkly leaves in the Autumn. They use the treasure baskets to explore tactile materials and talk about objects that are crinkly, sharp, slippery and wet. Children explain what they hear, smell, taste and touch, during baking activities and when they play in the sand and water trays. They enjoy moving to music and movement, sing nursery rhymes and action rhymes, and play with simple musical instruments, singing songs together. There are opportunities for children to develop their imagination in role play, when they dress up and pretend the home corner is a rocket ship or a library.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

Children develop a sense of belonging as they form secure relationships with staff. Children settle quickly and staff take account of their different needs while welcoming them into the nursery. Children share care and concern for each other as they help put the toys away. They respond to frequent praise and the guidelines set by the staff. They begin to understand the effect of what they do. Staff discuss situations to help children understand the consequences of their actions, for example children learn that they must be gentle with each other. Staff act as excellent role models, talking to one another and the children with courtesy at all times. Children develop a sense of belonging and as a result begin to understand responsible behaviour, learning to work harmoniously with others. Their self-esteem and respect for others develop as they receive appropriate support and become aware of the wider society.

Children begin to appreciate the diverse nature of society in which we live when they participate in activities about their own and other cultures such as Easter, Christmas, Chinese New Year and Diwali. For example, they eat Chinese snacks, they play with small world figures and dress up. There are a variety of toys and books promoting positive images of disability and different cultures. Children's individual needs are identified and met very well. Staff work collaboratively with parents, and where necessary, other agencies to support individual children. Staff plan ahead for the inclusion of all children. There is a strong commitment by staff, and this is clear from the policies and procedures, and information available to parents. Overall, children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered.

The partnership with parents and carers in receipt of funded education is good. Parents are very well-informed about the Foundation Stage and their child's progress towards the own learning goals. For example, parents are welcomed enthusiastically into the setting and attend meetings to discuss their child's achievements and progress. An open door policy and a comprehensive range of information including the literary books which children can access at any time and share at home, supports this. Parents are encouraged to be involved in their child's learning by contributing to assessments and planning next steps. Parents provide information regarding their children and staff carry out regular assessments to show how the children are progressing which are readily shared with parents. The staff seek parent's views and any particular interests or events that are being held in the child's life. Parents are

encouraged to become involved in their children's learning by sharing their knowledge and skills. For example, parents are encouraged to come in and talk to the children about religious festivals and how some are celebrated throughout different parts of the world. Local farmers bring in baby lambs to show the children and talk about how they live in their local environment. Children's learning is supported as parents have visited a library with the group and have become involved in their reading process. This enhances the children's learning and development.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

Children's care and education is enhanced by effective and efficient organisation. Most policies and procedures are in place and the operational plan is updated annually to promote children's health, safety, enjoyment, achievement and ability to take an active part in the setting. The clear management structure and support promotes good continuity in children's care. Staff deployment is mostly effective. Staff ensure that children are well supported and supervised at all times to ensure their safety. Recruitment and training procedures ensure that staff are chosen for their ability and experience. This ensures good continuity of care, as staff have a high regard for children's well-being. This has a direct impact on the high quality of care provided. The clear induction policy ensures that new staff are aware of health and safety and operational procedures, to protect the welfare of children and maintain consistency. Systems for keeping records are well organised in order to ensure children's health and safety. The setting meets the needs of the range of children for whom it provides, because staff are committed to providing quality care and education for all children.

The leadership and management of the pre-school is good. The registered person is committed and enthusiastically supports the staff and children. Staff are secure in their knowledge and practice, and there are good systems in place for recruitment, induction and appraisal, which ensures that policies and procedures are appropriately applied. Staff are experienced and work well together as a strong team. They act as excellent role models in the way they talk to each other and the children. There are regular meetings between the staff and registered person which helps them to continually improve the quality of the care and education of the children. There are regular staff meetings between staff so that practice is consistent and there is a very good system in place to monitor and evaluate the quality of teaching of nursery education. Overall, the range of children's needs are well met.

Improvements since the last inspection

At the last care inspection the group was asked to improve the organisation of snack time to encourage greater independence. Children's independence has been increased by being encouraged to pour their own drinks and healthy snacks are offered to them. A running snack bar is gradually introduced to further encourage their independence.

At the nursery education inspection staff were asked to further develop the current good systems to ensure that the provision continues to be effectively monitored and evaluated. This has developed very effectively and has become a definite strength of the provision. Staff daily evaluate the sessions and also the children spontaneously, using a tracker observation system.

This helps them to evaluate and plan the next steps in children's learning and to monitor how the activities are meeting the children's needs.

Complaints since the last inspection

The provider is required to keep a record of complaints made by parents, which they can see upon request. The complaints record may contain complaints other than those made to Ofsted. There have been no complaints made to Ofsted since the last 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):

- provide increased accessibility to fresh drinking water
- keep a log to record any complaints made by parents that relate to the National Standards

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):

- provide more challenges for children to develop their large motor skills.

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the leaflet *Building better childcare: Compliments and concerns about inspectors' judgements* which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk