



Stepping Stones Co-op Nursery Limited

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	EY334496
Inspection date	05 December 2006
Inspector	Eileen Rochford
Setting Address	Unit 26, Werdohl Business Park, No 1 Industrial Estate, Consett, Co Durham, DH8 6TJ
Telephone number	01207 580006
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Registered person	Stepping Stones Co-Operative Nursery Ltd
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?

The group has been registered since June 2006 and operates from three rooms in a specially adapted unit on an industrial estate. A maximum of 43 children may attend at any one time. The group offers full day care for children aged birth to five years. The group is open each weekday from 07.30 to 18.15 for 52 weeks of the year. Older children share access to a secure enclosed outdoor play area with younger children having a separate area.

There are currently 47 children on the roll up to five years of age, of these, 13 children receive funding for nursery education. The nursery currently supports children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and also children who have English as an additional language.

The nursery employs 22 members of staff, of these, 15 hold an appropriate early years qualification.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Children thrive because of the good interaction with staff and the positive role models they provide. Older children in the setting are becoming increasingly independent in their personal care, for instance, when accessing the toilet with and without staff support. Their understanding of hygiene is demonstrated as they wash their hands after toileting, before eating snacks and meals. They discuss dental hygiene when cleaning teeth after meals. Older children take responsibility for their own hygiene practices and discuss the importance of preventing cross infection throughout the day.

Children are offered a balanced diet. All meals throughout the nursery are served to children in a social setting, encouraging them to develop social skills. Snacks are freely available throughout the day to all children with the youngest children understanding this routine and accessing as they require. Children are offered a choice of milk or water with snacks, which older children are encouraged to pour themselves. Children are able to access water throughout the day, with staff supporting babies to ensure that the correct beakers are used.

Children enjoy a wide range of physical activities within both the indoor and outdoor areas, including a range of bikes, balancing beams, bats and balls. They develop confidence in their physical skills as they use the equipment, moving and negotiating space well, such as manoeuvring bikes around the paved areas. Children discuss the physical activities available and make their preferred choice, which is supported by staff. Older children are beginning to understand the impact of exercise on their bodies. They are aware of the need to drink more water after running and talk about exercise keeping them warm in cold weather.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

Children are cared for in a safe, warm and welcoming environment which is very effectively organised with well defined areas for play within the three areas of the nursery. The premises are made welcoming with attractive displays of children's work and photos of activities completed, giving them ownership of the environment. Equipment within the setting meets the needs of the range of children attending. For example, there is larger furniture within the area used by pre-school children, with smaller furniture within the areas used by children up to three years. Children enthusiastically select their own toys and equipment from clearly labelled boxes which are stored at children's level. This encourages children to develop their independence from a very early age. Staff promote children's understanding of their environment through outings within the local community and through visitors to the group.

All safety issues are addressed and there are very good procedures in place to ensure children are safeguarded at all times. For example, risk assessments are undertaken prior to outings and staff are effectively deployed to monitor children's safety at all times. Routines develop children's understanding regarding their own safety. Staff develop children's awareness so that they understand that they need to tidy equipment from the floor to ensure others do not fall over.

Older children are very aware of safety throughout the setting. For example, they talk about ensuring floors are kept clear, equipment is stored safely to prevent falls and trips, and that water and liquids are wiped up to prevent slips.

Children are well protected from possible abuse or neglect. Staff have attended child protection training and show a good understanding of the procedure to follow should they have any concerns. They are clear about the signs and symptoms to look out for and the records they must keep. However, policies and procedures do not include action to be taken in the event of allegations against staff.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

All children enjoy their time in the group. They are settled, happy and confident because staff are welcoming and give them lots of attention. They benefit from very sound relationships with staff and their peers which increases their sense of trust. They are confident communicators using a variety of methods, both verbally and through body language. Children happily play together throughout the setting, sharing and taking turns, with older children supporting younger children in their play. For example, older children talk with younger children as they move to the toilet area. Staff are implementing the 'Birth to three matters' framework with all the younger children. Staff have a very sound understanding of planning for the various ages ranges within this framework. In the baby room, staff have embraced this approach and incorporate its ethos into all aspects of children's play. Heuristic play sessions are very well organised. For example, staff consider the varying stages of children's development and create individual areas to ensure children are able to maximise the experiences. They use a wide range of natural materials which children investigate enthusiastically.

The rich, stimulating environment provided within the group allows children to experience a wealth of activities and so develop a breadth of skills. Space within areas for all children are very well organised, taking into consideration the needs of all children. Younger children within the nursery are encouraged to develop their imaginative and sensory skills through the rich, stimulating resources provided. For example, staff introduce real fruit and vegetables into the shop. This encourages children to develop senses of touch and smell as well as shopping together. Staff make exceptional use of both the indoor and outdoor areas. Older children are able to move freely between all areas, accessing activities which are appropriate to their needs. Younger children are encouraged to take part in large physical activities at some time within the day. Children freely access resources from storage areas which are at the child's level. For example, children collect paints and brushes as required to allow them to complete pictures.

Nursery Education

The quality of teaching and learning is good. Staff who are very sound in their knowledge of the early learning goals ensure that, through detailed planning, children are able to experience a wide range of activities. All areas of learning are covered and set out how children of differing abilities will be challenged.

Staff record children's progress over time. Observations and assessments are used to help staff assess what children can do. However, these should be clearly dated, to identify children's progress. These are very effectively used to inform planning and ensure children are sufficiently challenged in their learning. Staff ensure that, at all times, the needs of the children are paramount. They quietly, calmly and confidently rearrange activities at children's request, at all times taking the lead from the children within the group.

Children work very well together; they develop a sound understanding of their peers, form friendships and play confidently in small groups. Children have developed an understanding of others' feelings and talk about what makes people happy and sad. They are aware of the baby crying and relate this to events from home, "my baby cries". Children show a sense of belonging. Their behaviour is exceptionally good with children, developing a sound understanding of right and wrong. Staff within the group are positive role models; they manage behaviour with a positive approach and deal with situations as they arise in a calm and consistent manner. For example, talking about what they are not do and why, that it does not make people happy to throw toys around. Then concentrate on what makes people happy.

Within the nursery environment children are skilful communicators. They use a range of methods to communicate with staff and children. Children are confident in their speaking and listening skills; they initiate favourite songs in front of whole groups at circle time and listen to each other. Children develop pre-reading skills; they understand that print carries meaning, use books from front to back and are beginning to read from left to right. Self registration encourages children to begin to recognise their own name. The exceptional story telling skills of staff expand and develop children's interest in stories and books. For example, children re-enact the story of 'Goldilocks and the Three Bears' in the home corner, maximising the well resourced area. Most children count to 10 and some beyond, for example, as they count the number of children present at snack time. Children have a very sound understanding of shapes within the environment. They count sides on a shape and recognise the shape.

Children develop a range of investigation skills through the rich environment available. They use a range of materials to investigate their natural environment. For example, they collect rain water to measure the amount of rain within the week. Children have a sound understanding of colour. They investigate with the concept of shades, adding white and black paint to make colours lighter and darker, and discuss varying proportions of colours to make various shades. Technology is available throughout the setting and children have developed confidence and competence within this area. For example, they are able to select programmes from the range available then, with some staff support, load and run the programme. They have excellent "mouse" skills and older children support younger children in this area.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

All children within the setting are highly valued as individuals. They develop a positive attitude to others and gain a good understanding about the wider world and community through a range of activities, visitors to the group and outings. For example, a visit by the fire officer and a visit to the local park. Children have limited access to play resources which show positive

images of culture, ethnicity, gender and disability. Staff offer children the opportunity to celebrate a range of festivals, for example, Chinese New Year and Divali.

The individual needs of all children who attend are met. The setting has effective arrangements to care for children with learning difficulties and disabilities. Children are fully integrated into the group in line with their inclusion policy. Staff ensure that their individual needs are met with staff liaising with appropriate professionals and parents. Children behave exceptionally well from the youngest to the oldest child within the setting. Older children begin to understand right and wrong through consistent boundaries, praise and the age appropriate methods staff use to manage behaviour, including explanation and distraction. For example, talking to a child about the consequences of throwing toys. Staff encourage children to resolve their own differences, which helps them learn to take turns and share. Their clear guidance, for instance, a gentle reminder to share toys and equipment, helps them to begin to accept the needs of others.

Partnership with parents and carers is good. Children benefit from the very good relationships and informal contact between their parents and staff. However, there is limited information on the Foundation Stage curriculum which is not available for parents. Their very effective communication through monthly newsletters, daily chats, detailed notice boards and termly progress reports helps staff and parents work together. This enables parents to become involved in their child's learning, both at the group and at home. Staff ensure that parents are kept informed at all times.

Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

All areas of the nursery are very well organised. Comprehensive, detailed and effective recruitment and induction procedures are in place which are overseen by the manager. These ensure that children are cared for by suitable staff who are appropriately vetted and qualified. Commitment to staff training and development, together with support from various agencies, has enabled practitioners to reflect on their practice. This in turn has informed and developed practice throughout the setting. Staff have received training on the 'Birth to three matters' framework and the Foundation Stage. Staff have positively embraced both these approaches to childcare and education. This has had a positive impact on practice throughout the setting.

All the required documentation is in place, very well maintained, organised and stored to ensure confidentiality. Staff and management are supported through the wide range of comprehensive policies and procedures which are fully implemented within the setting. These are regularly reviewed by all staff at team meetings.

The quality of leadership and management is good. Management and staff are aware of their roles and responsibilities, which results in smooth running sessions. The manager continually seeks to improve the quality of the nursery education through evaluation and monitoring of planning. This allows areas to be identified for development as well as what is working well. Key staff involved in the delivery of the Foundation Stage have attended appropriate training.

This has led to very good organisation of resources and planning of the curriculum. There is a strong commitment to ongoing training and professional development and staff work very well together as a team. As a result, the children make good progress towards the early learning goals.

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 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 complaint 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):

- develop child protection policy to include allegations made against staff
- develop range of resources which reflect the cultural diversity of society

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):

- include detailed information for parents in the information booklet to ensure they are well informed about the educational provision
- ensure all children's assessment records are dated.

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