



Stepping Stones Day Nursery

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	509576
Inspection date	12 December 2006
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Registered person	Tracy Anne Griffiths
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 satisfactory.

WHAT SORT OF SETTING IS IT?

Stepping Stones Day Nursery opened in 1997. It operates from a converted house in a residential area of Eling. The premises are divided into units for children under and over two years old. Children have access to an enclosed rear garden for outside play. Children attending come from a wide surrounding area.

The nursery is registered for 30 children and currently have 64 children on roll, from three months to under five years old. This includes funded three-year-olds and four-year-olds. The setting supports children with learning difficulties and or disabilities.

The nursery is open from 08:00 to 18:00 on Monday to Friday, 50 weeks of the year. Children attend a variety of sessions.

There are seven full-time and six part-time staff working with the children. Most of the staff have early years qualifications to NVQ level 2 or 3, and four are currently working towards a recognised qualification, two of which are level 4 or above. The setting receives support from a teacher from the Hampshire Early Years Development and Childcare Partnership (EYDCP) and they have achieved The Preschool Alliance accreditation.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Children are cared for in an environment where good hygiene procedures are implemented effectively throughout the nursery. Children learn to be independent and the importance of washing hands through the regular daily routines. Thorough systems are in place for nappy changing. Key staff undertake regular training and cascade information to staff to ensure they maintain these high standards of care helping to prevent the possible spread of infection.

Children are well cared for if an accident occurs as all staff hold a first aid certificate and a fully stocked first aid kit is available at all times. Systems are in place to secure parental consent so that staff can seek medical treatment or advice in an emergency. Good systems are in place for the safe administration of medication and to deal with accidents and emergencies. Detailed records are kept and these are shared with parents.

Children are encouraged to develop a healthy life style. Meal times are sociable occasions when staff encourage children to try new foods and talk to children about the types of foods that will help them grow and maintain their good health. They are offered a range of freshly prepared foods and snacks. They develop good table manners and become skilful in the use of cutlery. Menus are displayed so parents are kept well informed about the menus on offer.

Children are keen to go outside because it's an exciting place to be. They benefit as they get plenty of fresh air and exercise. They enjoy riding on bikes and scooters, and have opportunities to climb on the climbing frame and bounce on the trampoline, developing their large muscles and building strong bones. Children have opportunities to play with bats, balls and develop their hand eye co-ordination.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

Children are cared for in a well-maintained, warm, clean and safe environment. The building is secure as an added precaution, a gate is placed in the hall to prevent children from reaching the door. Babies are cared for in a separate room on the first floor, with a separate sleep room. All other children are cared for on the ground floor. The layout of the playrooms are planned to allow for separate areas for different types of play and children rotate around the rooms in their peer groups to give them opportunities for a wide range of play experiences. They have access to a range of well maintained quality toys and equipment which is regularly checked and updated. Staff carry out regular risk assessments and safety checks in order to protect children. Babies are monitored whilst they are sleeping. Staff have taken further precautions

to minimise risks, such as, putting a gate across the top and bottom of the stairs, fitting socket covers and ensuring that all hazardous materials are kept out of reach of children. Evacuation procedures are displayed and practised regularly so that staff are aware of their responsibilities and children develop confidence and understanding of the emergency evacuation procedure. Children learn to take responsibility for their own safety, for example, they are reminded that they may fall if they swing or climb on the furniture. Children's welfare is further protected by clear policies and procedures for child protection. Staff have undertaken training and are confident about procedures to be followed.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

Children enter the nursery confidently; they are welcomed by staff and settle very quickly into familiar routines. They know where things are and have a sense of belonging. Children form good relationships with staff and play well alongside other children and are developing good social skills. Staff plan and provide a broad range of age and stage appropriate activities for all children which cover all areas of their development. All children have opportunities for imaginative play. Babies are particularly well cared for in their own base room and children feel secure. Soft music brings a sense of calmness to children. Staff use the Birth to three matters framework to provide interesting and age and stage appropriate activities for children. Babies and toddlers enjoy sensory play and are keen to explore the bottles which are filled with glitter, different coloured fluids, pasta and rice. They begin to make music with them and are excited by the sounds they make. They explore their environment with ease as they have clear pathways to move around and low furniture is placed to aid them in standing. Toy boxes are stored so that children can self select the toys safely and have free choice. Babies communicate well with each other, for example, when playing with the cars and lorries, they babble, squeal with excitement. They make use of facial expressions and smile and frown. to let their feelings known Their language is developed as staff talk to them constantly and respond to the sounds they are making and children feel acknowledged and affirmed. They are emotionally secure and enjoy cuddles when being fed. They enjoy the close contact with staff whilst sharing a book.

Children in the two to threes room are very sociable and they enjoy playing in the home corner, they use their imagination and copy adult roles as they cook and prepare meals. They learn about colour and size as they match the right coloured envelope to the letter, then post it through the letter box. They play with dough and discuss the colour and are learning to share the tools and the dough. Children are absorbed in their play as they manoeuvre the lorries and excavators around the mat.

Nursery Education

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. All staff have a good understanding of the Foundation Stage curriculum and plan a range of activities which cover the six areas of learning. However these plans do not take into account children's individual stages of development. Children's progress is monitored and written observations are made, however these are not done consistently and staff do not use records to plan and ensure that individual children are continuing to make progress.

Staff use appropriate teaching methods to involve and engage children. They use appropriate questioning techniques that make them think. For example, when painting they ask children to identify the colours and encourage children to add another colour, asking them what happens. Children are thrilled to find out that they have made brown.

Children are keen to learn and have a positive attitude to learning. Rooms are planned so that children use different areas for different types of play. For example, children enjoy being in the pre-school room and are keen to access the computer. They carefully handle disks, with finger and thumb and ask an adult before they load the programme in. They are confident in using the mouse and have access to a range of programmes which develop their language and number recognition and encourage them to think for themselves. Children's maths skills are further developed as children use the compare bears to count, sort out into groups, and compare size. Children talk about shapes and colour as they use the hammer, nails and wooden shapes to form pictures. For example, children show pleasure when they realise that two red semi circles make one circle and use them to represent a face. They are able to identify triangles circles and squares. Children have further opportunities to use maths in counting children at circle time. When another child arrives the children are encouraged to work out and add to the numbers. Children take part in creative play, however this is often a focused activity and adult initiated which means that children have little opportunity to develop ideas for themselves and be spontaneous. Children have limited chance to play with the home corner as they do not regularly access the room in which it is placed. However they do access the play house outdoors, they enjoy taking on the adult role and pretending to make cups of tea.

Children's language is very well developed because they get many opportunities to express themselves. For example, most are keen to take part in an activity where they use their imagination and create the next part of a story, learning that stories have a beginning middle and an end. They enjoy rhymes and songs as a group. Some children spontaneously make up their rhymes and share them with their friends as they chat sociable at mealtimes. For example, a child says 'Luba luba stick it in your tuba' and they both giggle. They understand that print carries meaning as they identify their names on their coat pegs. They have opportunities for writing and are beginning to make recognisable letters as they form their name through joining dots. Books are used to cover a range of topics. For example, they enjoy a book about feelings, staff encourage children to 'show me sad', 'show me happy' ensuring that the meaning of the word is re-enforced. Children's language is further developed as staff ask children about their emotions, 'what makes you sad?' and 'What makes you happy?' Children share books in the cosy reading corner, one takes on the role of the adult and mimics the action of the adult.

Children are confident and feel secure. When they have visitors they are curious and ask what they are doing. Children make enquiries about the lap top being used. Some children relate it to the one they have at home. They recognise the letters on the keyboard and are able to link the sound of the letter to their own name. They introduce themselves to the visitor; and exchange information. They talk about the nursery and have a sense of ownership. They proudly show off their work and the photographs displayed and what they were doing. They chat to their friends about their home, and about the things that are important to them, like putting up the Christmas tree. Children Have a strong sense of community as they regularly go on outings. Children are involved in topics about 'People that help us' and invite different members of the community in. Children are excited when the librarian arrives and reads them a story.

They learn about other cultures and beliefs through a range of topics, such as Chinese New Year.

Children manipulate and handle small tools with confidence, such as pencils, glue sticks, crayons, chalks and sticky tape. They learn how to use scissors properly and use templates to draw around. Children construct in a number of mediums for example, they make a collage out of tissues, glitter and card. They construct towers with Duplo and wooden bricks. They make up the tracks for the railway and complete puzzles. They explore malleable materials such as dough and make simple shapes with cutters; they talk about how it feels, the colour and the smell and whether they need more.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

Children are confident and have good self-esteem, because they are cared for by staff that know them well and understand their different characters. Staff collect information from parents and carers to ensure that individual needs are met, such as dietary, cultural and religious needs. Staff use this information to care for children in line with their parents wishes. Babies and toddlers take home a daily record sheet providing information about their day ensuring the continuity of care between home and nursery.

Each child feels valued and included as staff spend time listening and talking to children. A key worker system is in place and children form good bonds with adults. Babies feel secure because they are provided with consistent care. Familiar comforters are brought from home to help them settle, they are nurtured and cuddled when fed. Independence is encouraged from an early age for example, in the baby room, toddlers help tidy up, and most know where things go and do this happily. Babies and toddlers take home a daily record sheets providing information about their day. Parents feel able to approach staff and discuss their child's care and welfare. Children become increasingly independent in self care skills as they move up through the nursery. Pre-schoolers begin to confidently dress and undress themselves, toilet and feed themselves.

Children behaviour is good they develop good social skills; they learn to take turns and share. Staff use a range of consistent positive behaviour management techniques that allow for children's differing levels of understanding and developmental needs. Children receive lots of praise and encouragement. Children are given stickers for manageable achievements which make them feel good about themselves and raise their self esteem. Children benefit from consistent daily routines. Children are polite and learn to be considerate of others and older children are becoming confident in voicing their own opinion because they know a sense of fairness and kindness prevails throughout the nursery. Parents are informed about children's behaviour and support is given where needed. Significant incidents are recorded and shared with parents.

Children develop a sense of community as they visit local schools and take walks and familiarise themselves with the local environment. Children celebrate festivals within their own cultural traditions and learn about those of other cultures. They play with a good range of resources

that reflect positive images of culture and disability. Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered well.

The partnership with parents and carers is good.

Parents are kept well informed about the policies and procedures, topics and activities provided and how these relate to the Foundation stage curriculum. This is done through parent's packs, regular newsletters and clear information boards. They are invited to twice yearly open evenings where they can more formally talk about their child's education and development. They are welcomed into the nursery and staff chat about what their children have been doing on a daily basis. The parents are encouraged to chat to their child's key worker whenever they wish. They agree a number of procedures with staff such as the administration of medicines, and consent for emergency medical care. They are provided with information about the nursery topics, and become involved in their child's learning as ideas are shared with parents about how the nursery topics can be extended at home. Parents are asked to evaluate how the nursery operates and when parents share concerns or make suggestions these are then acted upon speedily.

Organisation

The organisation is satisfactory.

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

Children are well cared for as staff are well deployed. Staff get to know children well because they spend time in different parts of the nursery. This means that when staff are off sick and need to cover for each other, there is little impact on the children and ratios are maintained. Well planned daily routines and activities mean that children throughout the nursery are kept well occupied and stimulated.

Appropriate procedures are in place for the recruitment and vetting of staff. However, these systems are not sufficiently developed to ensure the complete suitability of staff in relation to staff health. New staff are supported as a thorough induction programme is in place. These procedures ensure that staff are aware of their roles and responsibilities. They are pro-active in their own development and are keen to attend courses and develop new skills. An annual appraisal is used to celebrate individual strengths and looks at ways of developing areas of weakness and improving practice. Good use is made of the well planned annual training day. For example, the staff reflect on their practice and explore from a child's perspective what it is like for a child in their care, giving them a heightened awareness of the importance of free choice for children.

Leadership and management is satisfactory. The nursery employ two qualified managers who job share and who over see the day to day running of the nursery. Each manager has specific roles and responsibilities defined and are supported by the proprietor. Staff turn over is low within the nursery, and all staff and management are committed to improving and providing care and education of a good standard as they regularly review what they are doing. Systems are in place to observe and record what children do, however, these record systems are not kept up to date and information gathered is not used to plan for the next stage in children's learning. Therefore it is unclear if children are reaching their full potential.

Improvements since the last inspection

At the last Nursery education inspection the group were asked to consider the following;

Encourage children to use the computer more often, this had been addressed as more time had been planned for children to develop their IT skills as a result children confidently use the computer.

Review the use of story time. children now have separate story time and stories are more relevant to the age group keeping children engaged and interested.

Allow children further opportunities to use their imagination freely whilst undertaking art and craft activities. Children are provided with more resources and less emphasis is made on the end product making this a more meaningful activity for children. However, children have few chances to develop a creative idea from beginning to end.

At the last care inspection the nursery were asked to ensure that children's information was stored confidentially. This is now stored in the office in locked filing cabinets and children's privacy is protected.

Review system of recording children's progress to show progress through the stepping stones towards the Early Learning Goals. These have been reviewed and changed but are not kept up to date and are not used effectively to plan the next stage in children's learning.

They were asked to record children's progress. These are completed daily for younger children and shared with parents.

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

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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):

- further develop the employment procedures to ensure the suitability of staff

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):

- further develop the opportunities for children's free choice in play allowing for children natural spontaneity to be imaginative and creative
- ensure that individual children's records are kept up to date and used to inform the planning in the next stage of their learning

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