



Stepping Stones Nursery School

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	120124
Inspection date	24 January 2007
Inspector	Maureen Croxford
Setting Address	Milford Baptist Church, New Road, Milford, Godalming, Surrey, GU8 5BE
Telephone number	01483 427325
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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 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 Nursery School is committee run and has been registered since 1990. It has been established in the village of Milford for many years. It operates from large rooms within the Baptist church hall building, in the centre of Milford and serves the local area and surrounding villages.

There are currently 14 children on roll, including six educationally funded three-year-olds and two four-year-olds. Children attend for a variety of sessions. The nursery has procedures in place to support children with learning difficulties, and physical disabilities. There are currently no children attending, for whom English is an additional language.

The nursery opens Monday to Friday, from 09:00 to 12:00. A team of four early years' practitioners work with the children, three of whom hold a recognised childcare qualification. The nursery receives support from a mentor from the local authority.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Children learn to follow good health and hygiene routines. Their good health is promoted as staff remind them to wash their hands after using the toilet and before snack time. Staff ensure that all surfaces and equipment are clean and hygienic.

Children are learning about healthy eating through planned topics. Snack times are used as purposeful periods and time is planned for children to be able to enjoy them as social occasions. Children are provided with a midmorning snack of water, milk, fruit and biscuits. Parents supply drinks for their children if they wish.

Staff create opportunities for children to enjoy a wide range of physical equipment with confidence and ease. Children develop a positive attitude to physical exercise and benefit from the very well planned sessions in the large hall and small, fully enclosed garden. During the inspection, the children enjoy a music and movement session. All children are developing a good sense of spatial awareness, as they move around the setting with confidence. They are able to follow simple instructions and move in time to the music.

Staff have a very good understanding of how young children develop, which contributes to their good health and physical development. They plan suitable activities for younger children to gain control of their bodies and acquire greater physical skills.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

Children feel very welcome as staff greet them and their parents at the entrance to the provision. They are happy and settle quickly into their activities. The premises have good safety features such as locked front doors and a secure, fully enclosed play area. This ensures that children are unable to leave the premises unsupervised. Good use is made of all available areas.

Staff ensure that children feel valued as their artwork is attractively displayed in the provision. Children proudly show their artwork and discuss their achievements, for example, a four-year-old explains a collage to the inspector, which is attractively displayed.

The premises provide appropriate space to offer a wide range of activities, which promote the children's development. The garden area offers children a very safe area for outdoor play. The staff also take children on walks in the adjacent playing field. The appropriate deployment of staff and the well laid out room ensure that children are safe at all times.

Children are able to access their own resources and toys with ease and in safety, as staff set out a good variety of equipment before the children arrive. Hazards to children are reduced as staff carry out regular risk assessments of the premises to minimise identified risks. All equipment is checked and cleaned regularly and staff ensure it conforms to safety standards to protect the children.

Clearly defined procedures for the emergency evacuation of the building are understood by staff, who carry out regular fire drills. Children learn to keep themselves safe as staff discuss the provisions rules with them. They are discovering that the provision has boundaries and limits, for example, they understand that they should run inside.

Children are protected because staff understand their role and responsibilities in safeguarding children. Appropriate procedures, which staff put into practice when necessary, are readily available to parents. The manager is the designated person and staff understand the importance of confidentiality.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

Children enjoy a stimulating range of resources and experiences provided by staff who plan for both the younger children and the curriculum for the educationally funded children. Staff have developed a good system of planning and use the Birth to Three Matters framework, enhancing the quality of experiences offered to all children.

Children benefit from staff working closely with parents and outside agencies, including a mentor from the local authority. Staff know the children and their families well. Children benefit from consistent routines between home and the nursery. This helps to secure their sense of belonging and emotional well-being.

Staff build strong relationships with children and offer them praise and encouragement when appropriate. They interact very well with the children, including reassurance, cuddles, meaningful conversation and good eye contact. All children are provided with many opportunities to use their senses, for example when making bread. They enjoy exploring a wide range of textures, such as sand, water, compost and dough.

Nursery Education

The quality of teaching and children's learning is good. Children make good progress towards the early learning goals and engage in a wide range of experiences and activities covering all areas of development. This is clearly recorded by staff who use photographs, children's work and written observations to evidence the progress that children make. Planning and profiles link very well into the stepping-stones.

The staff are well qualified and experienced, and use their good knowledge of the Foundation Stage to plan a stimulating curriculum. As a result, children enjoy many exciting experiences to aid their learning. Parents are given clear information about the Foundation Stage of learning

through open days and a written prospectus. Staff make observations and monitor children's progress taking into account what children can do and how they will be sufficiently challenged.

Children play well together and develop very good relationships with staff and their peers. They co-operate during play taking turns and negotiate which equipment they wish to use, for example when printing, they share the sponges and paint. They are encouraged by staff to be polite and well behaved. Children are interested in their activities and show good levels of perseverance and concentration, for example, during story time, when a member of staff reads about 'Curly the Pig'.

Staff extend their understanding, for example, explaining to the children that 'girl pigs are called sows'. Most activities and resources are easily accessible to children, which enables them to make choices about their play. Children are beginning to select resources for themselves and work independently, for example, scissors and paintbrushes. However, they are not always encouraged to develop their personal independence, for example, pouring their own drinks at snack time.

Children practice early reading and writing skills, through the provision of writing materials in several areas of the nursery. They have good access to a wide range of books and listen avidly to stories. The provision runs a library scheme and children are able to choose books to take home to share with parents and carers. Staff extend their vocabulary, which results in children exploring the meaning and sound of words. Staff encourage all children to mark-make such as labelling their art work. Some children understand that print carries meaning and is read from left to right. A four-year-old 'reads' a book to the inspector, turning the pages one at a time, from front to back, pointing at familiar words.

Most children count confidently. They use appropriate language to describe and compare size and quantity. They are beginning to solve problems. A three-year-old is able to share six pieces of pizza between two children equally. Staff encourage children to count in their everyday activities, such as, counting the number of children and staff present. Children show an interest in numbers and enjoy singing simple number rhymes.

Children investigate and find out about living things for example, growing bulbs and seeds. Staff take children for walks to explore the local environment and identify features in the natural world. Children are beginning to develop their information technology skills as they use simple electronic toys and everyday equipment such as telephones.

The children's manipulative skills are well developed and they successfully use a wide range of tools and materials in the many creative activities offered. They use a range of different sized paintbrushes when painting a group collage of a tractor. Children move confidently and safely as they travel around the provision. Most children are able to adjust speed and change direction to avoid obstacles in the large hall. Children show increasing control when using equipment for balancing and peddling.

Children receive many opportunities to explore texture, colour and shape. Many opportunities are offered which allow children to use their imagination in role-play, art and music. They enjoy singing simple songs and listening to music.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

Staff make children feel valued and respect them as individuals. They use a wide range of resources including books, role-play and dolls, which reflect diversity to help children appreciate and value each other's similarities and differences. Children benefit from the well-planned activities, such as the celebration of the Hanukkah, Divali, Thanksgiving, St David's Day and Christmas. Good displays, planning and photographs show that children are offered many opportunities to find out about other cultures and religions.

Clear procedures are in place to support children with learning difficulties, physical disabilities and English as an additional language including working with parents and outside agencies. Staff ensure that all children are included in the activities which develops their self-esteem and sense of belonging. Staff have experience of caring for children with special needs and working with individual learning plans.

Children benefit, as staff are consistent in applying the provisions behaviour management procedures, which are shared with parents. Staff use appropriate methods, including explanation and distraction. Children are beginning to recognise the difference between right and wrong. As a result, they know what is expected of them and show high levels of confidence and self-esteem. This is a positive approach. Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered.

The partnership with parents and carers is good. Parents receive clear information about the provision and children's activities, through clear, written and information displayed around the provision. Systems are in place to ensure that all parents' comments and concerns are investigated. However, the current telephone number and address for Ofsted is not clearly displayed for parents.

Staff and parents share information informally on a daily basis as staff make time to talk to parents. The provision holds regular open days, at which parents are given information on Birth to Three Matters, the Foundation Stage and the early learning goals. Staff offer parents regularly opportunities to discuss the progress of the children who receive nursery education at informal meetings, using the children's assessment records.

Organisation

The organisation is satisfactory.

Most staff hold appropriate childcare and teaching qualifications, and all have experience of caring for children. Staff deployment and knowledge of child development is good. Staff work well as a team and have a clear understanding of what is expected of them on a daily basis, which helps to promote positive outcomes for children.

Children make good progress in their learning due to the good knowledge and experience of the staff who extend activities naturally. Children are well occupied and engaged with many worthwhile play opportunities. Staff organise the daily routines and layout of the room appropriately.

All legally required documentation is in place and shared with parents, where appropriate, including records, register, accident and medication records. The manager has a sound understanding of the requirements of the registration and inspection process. Most policies and procedures are readily available to staff and parents.

The leadership and management of the nursery education is satisfactory. The provision is committee run and the manager is responsible for the day-to-day running of the nursery. She has ensured that all those working with children in receipt of funding for nursery education have a sound knowledge of the curriculum guidance.

The quality of teaching is monitored informally by the manager, which helps to ensure consistency. However, there is no formal staff appraisal system in place to ensure that training needs of all staff and the nursery are met. The setting meets the needs of the range of children for whom it provides.

Improvements since the last inspection

At the last inspection, the provision was asked to further develop the operational plan, and the existing child protection and equal opportunities policies. The manager and staff have reviewed the operational plan and as a result, parents and carers are offered further information with regard to child protection and equal opportunities. Staff are aware of their responsibilities, which ensures that they actively promote equality of opportunity and that all children are protected.

The provision was asked to ensure that all entries in the accident book include children's surnames. The procedure for recording of accidents has been reviewed and includes all required information, which is necessary to promote the welfare and care of the children.

The provision was asked to ensure the procedures to check the suitability of staff to work with children. The recruitment procedures have been developed and ensure the suitability of all staff, including gaining Criminal Records Bureau clearances. Appropriate arrangements are in place to protect children from persons who are not vetted. This ensures that all adults having unsupervised access to children are suitable to do so.

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):

- develop further the information available to parents with regard to concerns and complaints
- develop the monitoring of staff practice and the appraisal system to ensure that the training needs of both staff and the provision are met.

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):

- increase opportunities for children to develop their personal independence.

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