Stepping Stones Children's Centre

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number: EY332198
Inspection date: 27 February 2007
Inspector: Angela Howard

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Registered person: Stepping Stones Children's Centre
Type of inspection: Childcare
Type of care: Full day care

This inspection was carried out under the provisions of Part XA of the Children Act 1989, as inserted by the Care Standards Act 2000.
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

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.

WHAT SORT OF SETTING IS IT?

Stepping Stones Children’s Centre registered in 2006 and operates from the Sure Start building in Maltby, in the borough of Rotherham. The facility operates from a large purpose built full day care room and crèche room. There is access to a fully enclosed outdoor play area. Children may attend a variety of sessions from the surrounding areas.

The centre provides a broad range of family support services alongside local health services. They offer parent and toddler and a dads group and a range of courses to support parents and carers. Such as baby massage, healthy eating and read with me. Other activities are organised off site, such as aqua natal, hydro therapy, active tots and family support on a one to one basis.

A maximum of 35 children aged birth to five years may attend the centre at any one time; of these, not more than six may be under two years. The centre is open each weekday from 08.00 to 18.00, all year round, excluding bank holidays and one week at Christmas. There are currently 20 children on roll.

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The head of the centre oversees the operation of the full day care and crèche facilities. There are six day care staff who work with the children, of which all hold early years qualifications.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Children’s health is clearly supported by staff who have a good knowledge of health and hygiene procedures. The setting is very clean and effectively well-maintained. Staff implement good hygiene practices, such as using antibacterial spray to ensure tables and changing areas are suitably clean. Children are becoming confident in their own personal care; for example, they all wash their hands before snack and staff talk to them about washing germs away. This results in children learning about the importance of personal hygiene. A detailed, well-written policy to exclude children who are ill is routinely shared with parents. This ensures that cross-infection is minimised.

Children are beginning to understand the importance of a healthy diet. They enjoy a very wide range of nutritious snacks and meals, which develops their awareness of healthy eating. However, children do not have free access to fresh drinking water. Therefore, they do not learn about their own bodily needs. For example, that they may need a drink after physical activity. Snack and meal times are an opportunity for children to enjoy their food and are a social occasion where children sit with their peers and staff, joining in conversations. They enjoy cereals and fruit for breakfast, omelette, beans and finger salad, chilli and rice and beef stew with crusty bread and home made puddings, like Manchester tart and chocolate sponge, at lunch times. At snack time children enjoy a wide variety of fruits and vegetables, such as cherry tomatoes, carrots, apples, oranges and melon. Children’s needs are met very well as staff find out from parents about children’s individual care, such as dietary needs and sleeping routines. They use the information to make sure children eat, rest and play according to their needs.

Children access fresh air and exercise daily. They enjoy energetic games like riding bikes, climbing the slide steps, throwing and catching balls and bean bags. They delight in digging in the sand and jumping in the puddles, laughing and giggling as they twirl the umbrellas around when playing out in the rain. This results in children gaining good control of their bodies and improves their physical skills.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

Children are cared for in a very safe, child-friendly environment. Staff complete daily risk assessments and address any potential hazards effectively in order to maintain security and safety, both indoors and out. For example, the use of socket covers, safety gates, high level fences, coded locks on internal doors and a secure entrance means that children can move around freely and safely. Children are successfully learning how to keep themselves safe. They are well supported by knowledgeable staff who allow them to explore and investigate their own limits in a safe manner. For example, very young children practice getting on and off low level chairs successfully with an adult sat close by.

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Children access a visually attractive learning environment which is enhanced with photographs and children’s art work. Resources are of good quality, age appropriate and presented in an appealing and interesting manner. Resources are checked on a regular basis to ensure they remain safe and conform to safety standards. This gives children the opportunity to self-select equipment and enjoy a wide variety of different play experiences safely.

Children are very well-protected as the staff have a good understanding of the Local Safeguarding Children Board procedures. The designated child protection officer ensures all staff fully understand their roles and responsibilities and that they are able to put appropriate procedures into practise if necessary. There are clear, well-documented child protection policies in place which are shared with parents. This ensures children’s welfare is safeguarded.

**Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do**

The provision is good.

Children arrive at the setting happy and relaxed. They receive a very warm welcome and are eager to play and explore the stimulating environment. Each child receives an individual greeting from staff and the resources are set out attractively to encourage children to participate. Children make informed choices about their play and choose from a very wide range of good quality activities which provide challenge, direction and motivation. For example, they have access to a wide variety of activity based and sensory play resources. Such as exploring for mini beasts in the compost with magnifying glasses, they mix powder paint, use glue and a wide range of collage materials to make pictures and make patterns in the sand with tools. Babies are becoming competent and independent learners; they show wonder as they look through water blocks, paint and create experimenting with different mediums. They become confident in what they can do as they successfully post shapes, link bricks and discover their own facial expressions as they study their reflections in the low level mirrors.

Children’s curiosity is stimulated as they independently select from well-planned activities, both inside and out. There is a good range of resources that are used imaginatively to interest children and develop their overall skills. For example, children's imagination is successfully stimulated in the well-stocked garden centre role play area. They write notes, answer the telephone and tend to the plants. At story time props are used, which encourages children to participate enthusiastically and re-tell the story. Their language skills are fostered in daily play, for instance, whilst babies play with the jack in a box, they say that he is ‘all gone’ and ‘here he is again’. When they pretend to hide they shout 'I'm here' and as they realise it is singing time shout 'I am coming'. This ensures children make good progress in their learning, are self-assured in their play and confident to try out new experiences.

Children relate extremely well to the staff. They share a very warm, kind and caring relationship with each other. This is due to the staff showing that they value what each child has to offer. All staff are actively involved in the children’s play throughout the session to sustain their curiosity, imagination and concentration. Children respond very well to the adults' calm and quiet approach, and their clear explanations and support.

Staff implement the 'Birth to three matters' framework successfully to enhance the experiences of younger children. They regularly evaluate the activities and children’s achievements and use

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the information in planning. This results in children making good progress in all areas of their development.

**Helping children make a positive contribution**

The provision is good.

Children’s individuality is respected and valued. Children are very happy and content and show a strong sense of belonging. They arrive showing an eagerness to play and explore the environment. They are familiar with daily routines and form extremely warm and affectionate relationships with staff and each other. This is due to staff providing opportunities for children to play together in a very caring, inclusive environment. Staff work very closely with parents and carers to find out about children’s individual needs to help them feel apart of the setting. This results in children developing self-confidence, a belief in themselves and healthy self-esteem.

Children are able to freely select resources as the environment is organised to promote their independence. Staff have a good knowledge of the setting’s equal opportunities policy and the code of practice regarding caring for children with specific needs. Good communication with parents, outside agencies and staff ensures that children are well cared for, included and are making good progress. Children’s awareness of equal opportunities and diversity is fostered effectively through discussion and the use of a good range of play resources.

Children’s behaviour is good and reflects the high expectations of staff, who provide them with clear and consistent boundaries and explanations. As a result, children are aware of what is expected of them and are learning right from wrong in a warm and caring environment.

Staff have built up a strong relationship with the children and their families to ensure that relationships are positive and meaningful. This clearly helps to promote children’s welfare and development, enriching and enhancing their experiences. Children clearly benefit from the positive partnership that has developed with parents throughout the centre, as it supports links with home and increases their sense of belonging. Information regarding children’s progress is shared formally and informally. The easy, informal, daily discussions ensure that all information relating to the children is successfully exchanged. This results in children being happy and well cared for.

**Organisation**

The organisation is good.

Comprehensive and robust recruitment procedures are in place. This ensures children are cared for by suitable staff who are appropriately vetted. The deployment of caring sensitive staff increase children’s feelings of safety and security because it ensures children are cared for by a key person who builds trusting relationships with the children and their families.

The premises are very well organised. Space is used effectively to maximise children’s play opportunities and experiences. Children are comfortable in the predictable environment and move around with confidence. This contributes well to the child’s overall well-being. Children’s feelings of security and well-being are increased by the effective deployment of staff. Very
good staffing levels throughout the nursery enable staff to spend much time in direct work with children. The staff are enthusiastic and clearly enjoy their work with the children. Their commitment to improvement ensures the continuing development of the provision. This results in successful outcomes for children. Overall, the provision meets the needs of the range of the children for whom it provides.

The centre provides a broad range of family support services which are well-used by the community. For example, the parent and toddler, dads and time out parent groups are well attended and are increasing the confidence of mothers and fathers. Other groups established out in the community, such as, aqua natal, hydro therapy and active tots are forging strong links with the community and support parents and carers. The training courses offered, for example, weaning cook and eat, read with me, baby massage and speech language increase parents confidence and skills and therefore contribute to improving outcomes for children.

The centre staff have established successful links with local health services, such as midwives and community nursery nurses and often work in family homes offering a one to one service. This helps make services accessible for parents and carers. It promotes an all-round approach to the welfare of parents and their children. Due to the services being in their infancy management have only just begun to evaluate the services so that they can develop further services and monitor the impact on children.

**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 complaints record may contain complaints other than those made to Ofsted.

**THE QUALITY AND STANDARDS OF THE CARE**

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. |

**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):

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• ensure children have access to fresh drinking water at all times.

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

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