



Stepping Stones 2 Pre-School

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	EY259694
Inspection date	13 March 2007
Inspector	Sara Haigh
Setting Address	St. Annes Road, Denton, Manchester, Lancashire, M34 3BP
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Registered person	Lorraine Arnold
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 satisfactory. 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 2 Pre-school operates from a single storey pre-fabricated building in the Denton area of Tameside. The group has sole use of the building, which is a single room with toilet and kitchen facilities situated at one end of the building. A safe and secure grassed outdoor play area is also available for use to the front and side of the building.

Stepping Stones 2 Pre-school has been registered since February 2003 and is registered to provide care for 16 children aged two years to under five years. There are currently nine children aged three years and nine children aged four years on roll, all of whom are funded. Children attend for a variety of sessions. The pre-school operates Monday to Friday term time only. The provision is open from 09.30 to 13.25 on Monday, Wednesday and Friday where children are able to stay for lunch which is provided by parents. It is open from 09.30 to 12.00 on Tuesday and Thursday.

Three full time staff work with the children. Children with learning difficulties attend the group and are supported by the designated Special Educational Needs coordinator within the staff group.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is satisfactory.

Children's health is protected because staff follow an effective hygiene policy and procedure to ensure that areas used by the children are adequately cleaned. For example, all tables are cleaned before snacks and children are routinely reminded to wash their hands before eating and after playing outside. As a result, children's awareness of good hygiene is being promoted. Children are encouraged to use tissues to wipe their nose, these are readily available for children to help themselves. There are clear procedures for dealing with accidents, such as fully stocked first aid boxes and all staff with first aid certificates. This ensures children receive appropriate care and attention in the event of an accident or emergency. Children are well taken care of in the case of illness as the setting follows a clear sick child and administration of medication policy that is shared with parents.

Children enjoy healthy snacks, which include fresh fruit and crackers to promote their growth and development. Children are offered a choice of water, milk or cordial to drink at snack and lunch times. However, fresh drinking water is not freely available to children at all times. Staff consult parents about children's dietary requirements and ensure they are all aware of these, so children remain healthy.

Children enjoy a wide range of activities which contribute to their good health. They have regular opportunities to play outside and use a range of equipment with increasing skill and control. For example, they are learning to roll old car tyres and balance on large logs. They are learning to coordinate and control their bodies as they practice hopping on one leg and then jumping with their feet together. Children engage in many activities which successfully nurture their hand eye coordination and support early writing skills, such as learning how to use play chop sticks and using small tools and equipment.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is satisfactory.

Children are cared for in a warm, child friendly environment, which gives them a sense of belonging. They are warmly greeted by staff and their work is attractively displayed around the setting. Staff make the most of the provision by organising space and resources to allow children to move around different activities. However, the current storage arrangements for toys and equipment both inside and outside pose a potential hazard to children if left unsupervised.

Children move freely around the provision and are always within sight of a member of staff. Children are developing confidence in trying new challenges, such as going up and down the large slides, closely watched by staff to ensure their safety.

Children are kept safe due to effective security measures, the entry system is secure and visitors are signed in and out of the building. Children are learning about keeping themselves safe, for example, when they practice emergency evacuation procedures every month.

Children are protected as staff understand their responsibilities to safeguard children. All legally required documentation is in place and contains all the relevant information. This promotes children's health, safety, enjoyment and achievement and ability to make a positive contribution.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is satisfactory.

Children enjoy attending the pre-school and they enthusiastically take part in what is planned for them. There are warm and affectionate relationships between the staff and the children, as a result the children are happy and settling well. Staff support children throughout the session, working alongside them and engaging with the children in a variety of activities and experiences. Children begin to distinguish between right and wrong as the staff set good examples to the children, such as reminding them about sharing and kind hands.

Staff plan a range of activities, stemming from and maintaining the children's interest. They are developing incorporating the 'Birth to three matters' framework alongside the Foundation Stage when planning activities. This ensures that activities meet the needs of all the children attending. Staff use a variety of teaching methods, which include small groups, large groups and individual one to one support. Children confidently make choices about their play, activities and resources from the range made available by staff. Creative materials such as paints and glue are generally accessed during planned, adult initiated activities. Children learn to match, recognise and name colours as they discuss their cups at snack time and they benefit from regular opportunities to play in water and sand. However, the organisation and accessibility of resources hinders children in making independent choices in their learning and play.

Nursery Education

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. The manager has a sound knowledge of the Foundation Stage and uses this to provide a balanced range of activities across the six areas of learning. This ensures children make progress through the stepping stones. Children are motivated to learn through experiences and activities which come from their interests and enthusiasm. For example, after expressing a sustained interest in a book about space children use binoculars and magnifying glasses to search the outside area for clues from a visiting space man. Long term plans are displayed around the setting and weekly plans show how the activities relate to the stepping stones. Staff record planned and incidental observations of the children which form their individual development records. The systems are not yet fully developed to show clear links between children's assessments and plans. As a result, children's next steps are not clearly identified to inform the short term plans and to ensure staff know what children are expected to learn.

Staff place strong emphasis on children's personal, social and emotional development. As a result children settle well and develop relationships with staff and each other. Children are

becoming familiar with the daily routine which is displayed in pictures and symbols, they are beginning to anticipate what comes next, such as snack time and story time.

Children's language skills are developing as they gain confidence to speak in various situations. Some children choose to read a story to the whole group at circle time. They enjoy the wealth of stories that they experience and have firm favourites. Most children can recognise their name and all children enthusiastically join in with sounding out the initial letters with accompanying hand signs as they prepare for snack. Children freely access various mark making activities and some can write their own names. Children learn about numbers as they talk about their age and make the numbers with cutters in the play dough. They have opportunities to explore and investigate the natural world as they plant flowers outside and independently add water to buckets of soil. Children develop their design and making skills as they use conventional construction toys to make crowns and jewellery.

Children enjoy using the computer and are developing their mouse skills. Further opportunities for increasing their fine motor skills are provided with glue spatulas, chunky chinks and various sized brushes. Children enjoy opportunities to explore the wide range of outdoor equipment and activities to develop their coordination and large motor skills. In warmer weather, all learning and play activities take place outside. During adult led activities children are given the freedom to explore different art materials and their individual creativity is encouraged and valued. They express their imagination and creativity as they find out what they can do with paint and other media and act out real experiences in the role play area.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

Children develop a sense of belonging and feel at ease in the setting, as they are warmly welcomed by friendly, familiar staff. They are confident and develop a high self esteem and positive self image. Children are helped to feel special and good about themselves, because staff take time to get to know them and show respect for their needs and home background. Children are aware of the daily routine and have some opportunities to take responsibility within this, such as, helping to tidy up. The planning, equipment and resources promote children's awareness of other cultures and the world around them. Children learn about religious festivals and celebrations throughout the year such as, Chinese New Year, Mother's day and Hanukkah. Staff promote equality of opportunity as they ensure all children are able to access and engage in the range of activities on offer, provide toys and resources that reflect our diverse society and use language that does not reinforce stereotypes. As a result, children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered.

Children with additional needs are provided with good support. Staff work closely with parents and other professionals to ensure children's needs are met and they are fully included in the life of the setting. The setting makes links with the local schools and visits are arranged to help children make a smooth transition to school. Children behave very well. Staff provide clear and consistent boundaries to help children know what is expected of them and use distraction, praise and encouragement appropriately to promote good behaviour.

The partnership with parents and carers is good. Staff recognise and value the role of the parents as their child's first educator and an effective settling in procedure is in place, thus maintaining consistency for children. Parents are kept informed about their children's progress and achievements through daily verbal feedback and relaxed parents meetings. The setting makes links with home by encouraging children to take home special teddy bears with their belongings and to record their activities in a diary. Parents speak highly of the provision. They are pleased that their children are happy to attend and they value the warm and friendly staff who form good relationships with the children.

Organisation

The organisation is satisfactory.

Children benefit from an experienced and consistent staff team who have worked together for some time. Children and families benefit from this continuity. The staff team work hard and communicate well with each other; they have high regard for children's well-being. They attend training to further develop their childcare practice, knowledge and skills. The setting has regular visits from their early years advisor. The whole staff team share a clear sense of purpose and vision for the future. Sound policies and procedures form a satisfactory operational plan to support staff and promote positive outcomes for children. However, the current registration system does not show the hours of attendance for both children and staff. The provision also offers sessions for children aged two years; these were not observed during the inspection as they were not operating.

Leadership and management of the pre-school is satisfactory and contributes to children's progress towards the early learning goals. The manager works directly with the children and is able to monitor the nursery provision on a daily basis. Areas for improvement have been identified and all staff are committed to the improvement of care and education for all children. The manager is a good role model and secure in her knowledge of the Foundation Stage. Staff respond well to the standards that are set, which ensures children receive appropriate care and education.

Overall, the provision meets the needs of the range of the children for whom it provides.

Improvements since the last inspection

At the last inspection the provider was asked to ensure parents are aware of how to make a complaint. Parents receive all the necessary information at admission regarding reporting any concerns they may have. This information is also displayed on the parent's notice board which includes the address and telephone number for Ofsted.

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):

- ensure fresh drinking water is available to children at all times
- ensure that reasonable steps are taken to ensure that hazards to children on the premises, both inside and outside, are minimised
- organise resources so that they are readily accessible to children (also applies to nursery education)
- ensure the system for registering children and staff shows hours of attendance.

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):

- continue to develop the observations, planning and evaluations to ensure clear links are made and that children's next steps are identified and inform the planning (also applies to care).

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