

Stepping Stones

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	301673
Inspection date	26 March 2007
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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 satisfactory. 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 is located in the village of Hoddlesden, close to Darwen. It opened in 1994 and operates from a single storey building. A maximum of 26 children may attend the nursery at any one time. The nursery is open each weekday from 08:00 to 17:30 all year round. Children have access to a secure outdoor play area.

There are currently 39 children from 0 to under five years on roll. Of these, 22 children receive funding for nursery education. The setting supports children who have additional needs. Children come from a wide catchment area.

The nursery employs seven staff and the proprietor also works in the nursery as a manager. Seven staff including the manager hold appropriate Early Years Qualifications. One member of staff is working towards a Level 3 qualification.

The nursery receives support from a teacher from the Early Years Development and Childcare Partnership (EYDCP).

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is satisfactory.

Children are cared for in premises which are safe and clean. There are policies and procedures in place to keep the environment clean, which are used by staff. Children are developing good hygiene practises as they wash their hands and blow their noses with increasing independence. However, the toilet area is very small and toilets and nappy changing facilities are open. This means children are at risk of cross infection from each other as they use the toilet and nappy area. This also impacts on children's dignity.

Children are kept free from illness through the sick children policy. Staff have good awareness of identifying children who are developing symptoms of being ill and contact parents promptly to take children home. Children's continued good health is impeded as there are inconsistencies between the settings medication policy and what happens in practise. Children's continued good health is impeded by the unclear policy and the permission for administration referring to more than one medication, also staff do not consistently use the recording procedures around administration of medication and parents are not consistently informed when children have had medication administered during the day.

Most children are developing gross motor skills as a result of having freedom of movement. Babies, toddlers and older children all have frequent opportunities to play outdoors. The garden is spacious and has a range of equipment which allows most children to develop their physical skills, such as climbing or pedalling. However, pre-school children have limited access to large play and outdoor equipment which challenges them. This impedes their development of climbing pedalling and balancing skills.

In the pre-school area children are developing competence in using tools, such as scissors and trowels, as they cut and dig holes in which to place seeds. Children are developing an awareness of how exercise affects their body as they discuss being hot from running and get drinks to cool their bodies down.

Children are developing an awareness of different types of food as the setting offers them tastes of many different fruits. Babies are nourished very well as the setting prepares home made food which contains many fresh vegetables. Children remain refreshed as they get drinks of water from the water dispensers situated in each room in an area easily accessed by children.

Babies rest and sleep in line with their individual needs. They sleep in line with the routine provided by parents before admission.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is satisfactory.

Children are kept safe in the setting. There are well used procedures in place to ensure that this remains so at all times. For example, children are kept entirely safe in the outdoor play area as the staff check for hazards every time before the children go outside. Staff in the setting are knowledgeable about reducing risks. Children are developing an awareness of safety as they wait for staff to move from room to room. Staff hold a good knowledge of how to select age appropriate equipment and do so with care, especially for babies. Their individual knowledge of where a baby is at developmentally ensures that they have constant access to safe toys.

Older children are encouraged to consider younger children's needs as they move around the nursery and do so with only gentle reminders from staff.

Children are kept safe on outings as staff have a good understanding of how to risk assess areas when planning outings. Children's safety is enhanced on outings as a result of the increased ratio of staff to children.

Children's continued safety is maintained as staff implement the setting's policy on who collects children with vigilance and care. Their confidence to refuse to allow an unknown adult to collect children without further checks keeps children safe.

Children are well protected by staff's embedded knowledge and understanding of their role in safeguarding children. This is enhanced further by all members of staff's strong knowledge of the procedure and confidence to act in the event of a concern about a child, including where there is an allegation about a member of staff or volunteer.

Children are safe in the setting as they are cared for by adults who are vetted and who have appropriate qualifications.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

Children have access to resources and activities which promote their development. Babies and young children are cared for in a way which encourages them to be confident, independent and develop good levels of self-esteem. Staff caring for babies know them well and act quickly to meet their individual needs.

Children become competent learners as staff join them in activities and encourage them to persist with a jigsaw or add to a painting.

All children are developing an awareness of what is right and wrong as staff gently explain how another child may feel when conflict arises. Apologies are encouraged from one child to another. Children enjoy time spent playing together with staff. Staff listen to and challenge them to take the next step, such as to add further parts to a construction or use a different colour when painting.

The setting uses frameworks, such as the 'Birth to three matters' and the Foundation Stage curriculum effectively to plan what children will be doing. Staff make observations on what children can do and are starting to use these to plan the next steps for children. In the baby and toddler rooms staff make effective use of regular observations to inform the overall planning of how toys and equipment are used to enhance children's development.

Nursery Education.

The quality of teaching and learning is good. Staff have a clear understanding of the Foundation Stage and use knowledge to plan activities for children. All staff who work in the pre-School area take responsibility for planning what will be available to children. They are confident in what they expect children to achieve as a result of those planned activities. They make observations on what children can do. However, staff do not yet make a written record of the planned next steps for individual learning. This impedes the rate at which children learn as all staff do not consistently know what is planned for every child. Good records are kept of what

children can do and work to support this is collated into a folder which is presented to parents as the child leaves.

Pre-school children enter the nursery confidently. They leave their carers rapidly and go off to play. Children are developing friendships. They are kind and considerate to each other. Older children engage in collaborative imaginative play and can negotiate successfully about who will play the role of the mum. All children persist with what they are doing and can sustain activities for increasingly long periods of time. Children expect staff to play with them and staff do so willingly. This enhances children's delight in learning.

Staff are starting to plan the environment to allow children constant access to areas of continuous play. This begins to assist teaching and children's learning as every indoor area is accessible and meaningful to children. For example, most equipment in the pre-school is stored at child height meaning children can choose equipment they want to play with. Children are developing friendships and are increasingly able to wait their turn in a shared activity, such as a game or jigsaw.

Children are becoming confident communicators and readily ask questions of visitors. Many are beginning to ascribe meaning to marks and listen to stories with interest and understanding. Their creativity is developing well as they build aeroplanes and produce exciting textured paintings. Children use imagination with assistance from an adult as they use water and paintbrushes in a variety of ways, initially as water for seeds but developing it into paint and enjoy covering the outdoor floor area with it. They work as a group to ensure that the whole of the area is properly covered. Children respond to the many opportunities to sing and make music with delight. They join in songs at circle time. All children know the songs and respond with excitement to the selection of known songs such as 'little rabbit foo foo'. Children have a repertoire of songs they know fully. Children enjoy stories in the very well resourced and comfortable book area. Children are developing good understanding of the construction of stories and are inspired by the written word. All children understand that print carries meaning. Children's enjoyment of books, stories and computers is enhanced by the very effective use of a comfortable and well resourced library area. Children enjoy the comfort of the room and select books as an aid to relaxation as well as for looking at with staff.

Children are developing the concept of numbers as they join in songs at story time. They are able to count the number of objects in pictures correctly. They show increasing confidence with numbers as they independently count the number of objects on a tray or tell that they cannot see a number five in a game. Older children are starting to calculate as they identify that three is less than five. Children show natural curiosity and begin to use tools, such as scissors, for a purpose. They delight in showing visitors their recently completed sunflower seeds and can talk confidently about waiting for the light and water to make the seeds grow. This enhances their knowledge and understanding of the world around them. The nursery plan celebrations of festivals, such as Eid, but children's understanding of different cultures and festivals is impeded as they have few opportunities to develop and awareness of religious and cultural difficulties. Children are developing a good level of competence in understanding and using computers as they have regular use of the setting's computer. Children use the computer regularly and are developing increasing skills in using the mouse and specific programmes.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is satisfactory.

Children are happy and settled in the centre, they separate well from parents or carers. Care at the start of the session is planned effectively to welcome and settle children quickly. Older children enter the setting excitedly and greet staff warmly. Staff are consistently alert to pick up on individual children's needs as they arrive which means children are well supported and happy. The setting has a clear policy on how it will seek information from parents to ensure individualised care is given to children. However, this is not used in practice in the whole nursery. The staff in the baby room liaise effectively with parents as to their child's routines, food needs and likes but this is not consistent in the whole setting. The setting does not follow its policy of recording information on culture, family structure and likes and dislikes. This leaves older children at risk of experiencing care which does not take account of individual likes and needs.

Children have access to some range of activities which encourages their understanding of diversity, for example, playing with multi-cultural jigsaws and celebrating different festivals. However, children have limited opportunities to play with toys and equipment which celebrate difference and this impedes children's understanding of different cultures.

There is a robust policy for meeting additional need. There is a clear system in place where the ability of the setting to meet children's additional needs is discussed prior to admission. The setting then defines and plans training for staff if it is required. Staff work effectively with other professionals, such as nurse practitioners, to plan individual care for children. As a result, children who have learning difficulties or disabilities have them met effectively and their parents are part of the overall plan. Staff in the setting are confident to recognise when children are experiencing difficulty and make good use of observations to share with parents before seeking further help. This supports children with additional needs very effectively.

Children behave well. They are developing strategies for making friendships taking turns and settling disputes as staff are competent role models who talk about being kind to each other and feelings. Children are developing a strong moral code as they engage in the life of the nursery and are encouraged to help smaller or less able children. Older children willingly help younger ones to put their coat on or assist with putting shoes on. Children are given individual support to succeed in situations that they find difficult, such as meal time. Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered.

Parents are welcomed into the setting. There is written information about how care is offered that is given to parents in a variety of ways, for example, by a notice board, policies available on request and through discussion. Information on how care is provided is of an acceptable standard. However, although there is specific permission for areas of care, such as outings or medication, they are general and do not fully describe what parents are consenting to.

In the baby room information on how their child has spent the day and had their needs met is communicated to parents through the use of a written record sheet. This informs parents of how their child has been cared for on a day to day basis. Children in all areas of the setting take work home regularly. They also have work collated into a record which is taken home at the end of the placement. Parents speak warmly of the service they receive for their children, especially in the baby room.

In nursery education the partnership with parents is good. Parents are given high quality information on how the Foundation Stage curriculum is provided. This is given in the form of

a brochure which covers each of the six areas of early learning but also by staff talking directly to parents. In the pre-school parents are provided with information about their child's progress towards the early learning goals and the child's record of achievement evidences their progress towards them. These records are shared with parents during parents' evenings which are held regularly.

There is a written policy and procedure for dealing with complaints. The setting has devised how it will make available to parents, on request, appropriate information on complaints made about the setting.

Organisation

The organisation is satisfactory.

There are some recruitment procedures in place to ensure that safe, suitable practitioners work with the children. However, these are not used consistently and were not fully available for inspection. The mainly qualified staff team make use of opportunities for training which develop children's care and learning. For example, staff have attended induction training and training in relation to the Foundation Stage curriculum, first aid and Safeguarding Children. Training is planned to ensure that any requiring updating, such as first aid, is done in a timely fashion. Staff are deployed according to their skills and experience. Some records in the setting support safe care of children, for example, times of arrival and departure and records of what children can do. However, records relating to accidents, incidents, fire practises, medication and incidents are not consistently kept which impacts on the care of children. There are procedures in place for sharing records with parents.

The roles and responsibilities of the manager and provider are developing and there is a plan to ensure that areas of responsibility are understood by all staff in the setting. The setting has some systems for managing difficulties before they have an impact on children, for example, a written plan is in place in the event of staff illness or emergency. Staff are beginning to be supported through both formal staff meetings and there is a plan to implement appraisal meetings.

Leadership and management for nursery education is good. All staff have knowledge of the Foundation Stage curriculum and are involved in planning for children's activities. Staff are confident to put their understanding of the Foundation Stage into practise when planning for children. The setting has a robust checking system to ensure that all areas of the Foundation Stage are being covered when activities are being planned for children. All staff take responsibility for children's learning. They work as a team to plan and deliver experiences which meet children's individual learning needs. The key worker system ensures that staff are clear which children they hold individual responsibility for. Staff make written observations on what children can do. They use these observations to plan next steps for children and challenge children to take that next step, though this is not yet recorded. The setting is starting to be able to assess its own strengths and weaknesses as staff can discuss what they would like to develop in the setting though they have not taken part in the completion of the settings self-evaluation plan.

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 it was recommended that improvements were made to the consistency in the adults who cared for babies, that low level cupboards were made inaccessible to children in the baby room and that parental permission was consistently sought before administering medication to children, with parents acknowledging the recording of administration. Since that time the setting has reorganised deployment of staff to ensure that two staff offer much of the care for babies and are designated key workers for them. The low level cupboard has been made safe for access by children as it now only contains toys and equipment for children. Each of these actions has increased the safe care of children.

Although the administration of medication procedure has been reviewed and changes implemented, these changes do not fully support safe care. Staff now consistently acquire written consent for administering medication prior to its being given to children. However, parents do not consistently see or record their acknowledgement of the record of administration and this leaves children vulnerable to accidental overdosing of medication. This is an area for further work and is addressed in the being healthy part of the report.

In the Nursery Education inspection the setting was asked to improve the provision for children to experiment with materials when taking part in making models, free painting and collage and ensure that all children have access to role play which includes resources to encourage mark making and writing skills. Since that time the setting has reviewed the planning of creative play and have acquired increased materials for children to make models, paint freely and with constant access and have increased opportunities for children to create collages. All art and collage material is out at child height and children have continuous access to a wide range of creative material for collage and model building. In addition plans for both medium and short term activities show a focus on these areas. Children in the setting now spend large parts of their day involved in making models, creating exciting collages using a variety of materials, for example, feathers or breakfast cereals and children of all ages paint as they wish.

The role play area has been developed to include a range of resources, such as a travel agents or a café. In specifically planned activities children have opportunities to make marks. They write what is ordered in the café or record an order in the travel agents. In addition children use a range of equipment for mark making. As well as the continuous access to painting and drawing children use, for example, a paintbrush with water to paint the exterior of the nursery.

Each of these actions has improved the quality of care and education the nursery provides to children.

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):

- review the written policy and procedure for administration of medication to ensure that it is clear, that permission for administration is specific to the medication and that parents consistently see and acknowledge the record of administration
- review the children's toilet and nappy change area to ensure that risk of cross infection is minimised
- increase children's access to use of toys and equipment which reflect cultural difference (this applies to nursery education also)
- fully implement the setting's policy on gathering information on children's individual needs in order to fully facilitate care which meets individual needs
- ensure that the policies and procedures on recruitment and selection of staff, records of accidents incidents and fire practise and equipment checks are used fully and consistently and the records are available for inspection

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):

- improve the challenge of equipment for older children to ensure that their physical development is maintained (this applies to care also)
- further develop the planning for children to include individual children's next steps

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