



Stepping Stones Nursery

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	106045
Inspection date	17 January 2007
Inspector	Anne Legge
Setting Address	Axminster Community Primary School, Stoney Lane, Axminster, Devon, EX13 5BU
Telephone number	01297 33005
E-mail	
Registered person	Stepping Stones Management
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 Nursery is based at Axminster Primary School in East Devon. The nursery is located in a classroom in the early years section of the school, next to the reception class. There is an enclosed outside play, activity and teaching area, shared with the reception class children. The school grounds, including a swimming pool, wild life area, playground, school hall and playing field, are available for use by Stepping Stones.

The nursery is registered to care for up to 24 children, aged from three to five years. There are currently 24 children on roll, including 22 funded three- and four-year-olds. Children can attend from the term of their fourth birthday, as the nursery offers a bridge between other local pre-schools and school entry. Sessions are held during term-time from 13:00 until 15:30, with some children collected from local pre-schools and supervised over the lunch period from 12:00. The group welcomes and supports children with learning difficulties or disabilities.

Two staff regularly work with the children, both of whom have appropriate child care qualifications. A third staff member is employed if numbers are above 16, and another qualified person is available for emergency cover. There are additional lunch-time staff. The nursery works closely with the school.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is satisfactory.

Children regularly access fresh air and enjoy daily physical activities, which promote their good health. They have weekly use of the school hall for throwing and catching games or climbing activities, and they enjoy moving to music in their classroom. They run freely in the school playground and use their own play area in good weather, for active games and to climb and balance. The door to the garden is often left open, to allow children access to fresh air. Children attending during the lunch period usually benefit from healthy eating. They bring packed lunches, which are mainly well-balanced, or enjoy nutritious school meals, containing plenty of fruit and vegetables. Staff encourage children to eat the healthier items from their lunch boxes, before they have less nutritious foods. Children have access to fresh drinking water during the afternoon, and they all sit and drink water before engaging in physical activity.

Children receive appropriate care when they are unwell or injured. Accident and medication records are comprehensive and shared effectively with parents. There are good systems for obtaining consent for administering medication, when children arrive from other pre-schools. Both permanent staff members have current first aid qualifications. Children are not consistently protected from infection, as staff do not clean tables before children sit at them to drink. Children wash their hands after using the toilet, but they do not learn good hygiene routines regarding washing hands before drinking, or handing cups to other children and adults. There are good systems for cleaning the premises before and after sessions, to provide a clean environment for children's play.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

Children are safe in emergencies, as they regularly discuss and practice evacuation procedures, so that they are familiar with routines. They learn to identify hazards and reduce risks to themselves, as staff carefully explain, for example, why they should not put toys in their mouths, or how to walk safely on a slippery path. They are very well protected from abuse or neglect, as staff have a thorough understanding of all child protection issues and procedures, and are committed to further training, to extend their knowledge in this area.

Children play in secure premises, where they are protected by locked doors and gates. Toilets are shared with the reception class, but children cannot leave the area unsupervised, as high door handles have been fitted. Access to the school building is securely controlled. The outside play area is fully enclosed and monitored, and staff supervise children carefully when they use the school grounds. Staff have a good understanding of all safety issues and regularly risk assess the areas used by children, to ensure that they are not harmed. Unused electric sockets

are covered and notices are used to remind cleaning staff to replace them. Children select from a good range of toys and resources, which are clean and in good condition. Effective systems are in place to ensure that all equipment is checked regularly, and cleaned, repaired or discarded, as appropriate. Children access resources safely, as they are stored within easy reach. All toys and equipment are suitable for children's ages and stage of development.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

Children arrive at the nursery from several different morning groups, or from home, and settle very quickly. They enjoy a good variety of activities, and sessions are well-organised, to provide plenty of opportunities for both free play and adult-led tasks. The group aims to prepare children for school, and sessions become increasingly structured during the academic year, as those attending approach school-age. Children develop excellent independence skills, as they manage their clothing and personal care, or take responsibility for tidying up. They successfully organise their own play, often for extended periods, and demonstrate very good concentration.

Nursery Education

The quality of teaching and learning is good. Staff effectively promote children's learning, as they interact skilfully with them, using questions and discussion, to challenge or extend their thinking. They know children well and observe their achievements, although they do not keep detailed records of progress through the stepping stones. Staff have an excellent understanding of children's development and use assessment information successfully, to adapt or extend activities, and meet their individual learning needs. Children make good progress in all areas of learning, as they take part in interesting topics and activities, which cover the whole curriculum over time.

Children count and discuss numbers, in a wide range of practical tasks, effectively developing their understanding of numerals and number patterns. They count children present, or bricks as they tidy up, and discuss how many more are needed to complete sets. They recognise numerals in the playground or when looking at books. They use and recognise shapes, such as when discussing the pattern on a turtle picture. Children recognise and learn to write their names, using cards to self-register and attempting to name their own work. They develop an understanding of letter shapes and sounds, as they play 'I spy' or learn actions for individual letters. They enjoy sharing books and respond appropriately to stories, predicting what will be on the next page or discussing characters.

Children develop their creativity, as they experiment with excellent resources, such as rice, netting and straws, to design and make collages. They become very imaginative in their role play, spending long periods pretending to repair the home corner, then organising a party. They use paint, for example, to print patterns with carrots, and they draw and colour freely. They enjoy moving to music. Children engage in a variety of physical challenges, including climbing and balancing on large equipment in the school hall, or completing obstacle courses in the classroom. They use large and small spaces well, controlling their movements indoors and enjoying their freedom in the large school playground. They develop good co-ordination in their use of small equipment, such as scissors, pens and glue spreaders. Children experiment

with tools and materials, as they make rotating sea wheels, with excellent adult support and encouragement. They learn about nature and climates, as they engage in topics about animals from around the world, discussing creatures which live in jungles or the sea.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is satisfactory.

Children are settled in the nursery and behave very well. They know the high expectations of staff and understand the daily routines, which help them to feel secure. Children respond well, as staff listen carefully to them and make them feel valued. They enjoy some praise for their efforts, but staff do not consistently model polite ways to address others, as they sometimes give instructions in an abrupt manner and without saying 'please'. Children who may have learning difficulties or disabilities are carefully monitored and there are effective systems in place to support those with identified additional needs. Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered. They learn to respect individual and cultural differences, as they celebrate a range of festivals, including Diwali and Christmas, or use good resources, such as multi-cultural dressing-up clothes or dolls with disabilities.

Partnership with parents and carers is satisfactory. Parents receive information about the Foundation Stage curriculum in their introductory handbook, and letters are issued about topics for the term. Other curriculum information is displayed in the classroom, for parents to read, so that they are aware of their children's activities. However, there is no detailed assessment information, which shows clearly how children make progress through the stepping stones, or which identifies targets to be achieved. Parents have regular access to some examples of children's work and limited information about their achievements. They also receive a summary of progress in all areas of learning, when their child moves from the setting into school, but this is not available regularly, during their time at the nursery. Consequently, systems for sharing information about children's progress do not enable parents to fully support their child in achieving the next steps in learning.

Organisation

The organisation is satisfactory.

Children are cared for by well-qualified staff, who regularly attend relevant training, to update their knowledge and skills. Staff ratios are satisfactory and children receive good individual attention when numbers attending are lower, or when a third staff member is employed. Children play in a safe, secure and mainly clean environment, where space and resources are used effectively, to offer a good variety of activities. Time is used appropriately and sessions are planned thoughtfully, to give children a wide range of indoor and outdoor play experiences. The nursery meets the needs of the range of children for whom it provides.

Children's care is underpinned by appropriate policies and procedures, but many of them are out-of-date, as there are no effective systems for regularly reviewing and updating them. The complaints procedure does not reflect recent changes to regulations. Leadership and management are satisfactory. Staff informally evaluate activities and comment on each other's performance, but there are no rigorous systems for monitoring the quality of the nursery

education, appraising staff or identifying ways to improve aspects of the provision, such as information for parents.

Improvements since the last inspection

Since the last inspection, staff have improved systems for recording accidents and medication, so that children's confidentiality is protected. Registers are now appropriately detailed, with children's times of arrival and departure. Assessment systems have been improved, but they still lack clarity concerning children's progress towards the early learning goals. Parents do not yet regularly receive good information, which enables them to be involved in helping their child move to the next stage of development.

Complaints since the last inspection

Since the last inspection there have been no complaints 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 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 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):

- protect children from infection, by ensuring that tables are clean and that they always wash their hands before pouring and consuming drinks
- help children to learn polite behaviour, by consistently providing good role models, especially when explaining how they should behave
- establish effective systems for ensuring that children's care is always supported by current and comprehensive documentation, including up-to-date complaints procedures.

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):

- regularly provide parents with detailed information about their child's progress towards the early learning goals, so that they can be fully involved in the achievement of future targets
- implement systems for monitoring the quality of nursery education, including regular staff appraisals, the systematic evaluation of activities and staff deployment, and the identification of areas for improvement, to ensure that children are consistently supported in 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