



## Stepping Stones Nursery

Inspection report for early years provision

<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	EY333206
<b>Inspection date</b>	09 January 2007
<b>Inspector</b>	Margaret, Ann Sandfield
<b>Setting Address</b>	Cinque Ports Avenue, Hythe, Kent, CT21 6HS
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<b>Registered person</b>	Claire Taylor
<b>Type of inspection</b>	Integrated
<b>Type of care</b>	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](http://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 opened in 2006 and operates from a classroom within Hythe Bay Church of England Primary School, Kent. A maximum of 20 children aged between two and five years may attend the nursery at any one time. The nursery is open each weekday from 09.00 to 15.00 term time only. All children share access to one room and a secure enclosed outdoor play area.

There are currently 41 children aged from two to under five years on roll. Of these, 34 children receive funding for early education. Children who attend come from the local area. The nursery supports a number of children with additional needs and also supports a number of children who speak English as an additional language.

The nursery employs five members of staff; of these all staff, including the manager hold appropriate early years qualifications. The nursery receives support from the Local Authority.

## **THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION**

### **Helping children to be healthy**

The provision is good.

Children's health is supported well as there is a clear policy and procedure to follow. In the case of sick children, the procedures would help prevent the spread of infections. Children are actively reminded to cover their mouths when coughing and are praised for doing so. All staff employed to work with children hold a current first aid certificate. There is a suitable, easily accessible first aid kit. All accidents are recorded and shared with parents. As a result, children's welfare is being adequately safeguarded.

Children have regular breaks timetabled into the routine. Staff use an imaginative routine to prevent children from becoming thirsty. Beside each drinking container is an individual photograph of one of the children on a name labelled mat. Therefore, children can independently help themselves to drinks of water throughout the session. A well planned snack time encourages children to try a variety of segments of fresh fruit, which they finish cutting up themselves. Staff talk to children about the different fruit and children are generally given choices. As a consequence, eating represents a social time for children and adults and helps children to learn about healthy eating. Snacks and drinks are provided in accordance with children's dietary needs and parents' wishes. Children and staff follow good practices before preparing food. These sound hand washing routines help reduce the risk of cross-contamination and help children remain healthy. Children learn the importance of good hygiene and personal care. This fully supports their own good health and prevents the spread of infections to others.

Children enjoy a wide range of activities. These effectively contribute to children's good health. Each day children are offered a variety of energetic physical activities indoors and outdoors, weather permitting. All children enthusiastically and excitedly play with a wide range of outdoor resources. This includes ride on toys, bats and balls and balancing equipment, as well as large climbing apparatus and lots of opportunities for imaginative play. This helps children to develop control of their bodies. They learn about how exercise has a positive effect on their health, whilst stimulating their creativity.

### **Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe**

The provision is good.

All children are cared for in one self contained classroom in part of Hythe Bay Primary School. There is a secure and safe entrance system via the primary school's reception area. The premises are warm, welcoming, safe and clean. There is plenty of natural light and good ventilation. There is a secure outdoor play area for children. This is accessed via the emergency exit doors. It consists of a large playground with several large fixed play apparatus. They share this area with the reception class of the school, but not necessarily at the same time. The staff monitor and supervise children sufficiently to prevent any incidents/accidents. Children in the nursery are able to move around freely and independently, as staff complete written risk assessments

before each session. Children can use the toilet independently once they are competent. The nappy changing area allows for dignity and privacy. Children self-select activities from a suitable range of equipment and resources, which meet safety standards. These routines provide all children with a safe environment in which to relax and play confidently and safely.

The provider has all the required procedures and documents in place to ensure children's welfare is being safeguarded and promoted. The staff follow clear, sound procedures to ensure children are kept safe when being collected from the setting. The records of information on individual children include a record of the names of persons who can collect the children. Any changes for a particular day are recorded on a white board for all staff to be aware. The member of staff recording the information also verbally shares this information with other members of staff. They have a concise lost child procedure. Staff and children regularly practise the fire drills and record the event. Staff have an adequate knowledge and understanding of how to recognise and deal with child protection issues.

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

The provision is good.

Children settle readily. They are extremely enthusiastic and confidently choose their own activities and resources during child initiated sessions. Children enjoy helping themselves from the wide range provided, which meets their needs and interests. Many of the containers are picture/word labelled enabling children to make informed choices. This also helps children to understand that words have meaning. Younger children and children with additional needs are given much more adult support and encouragement. They have an interactive circle times and staff use Makaton signing throughout this activity. This enables all children to be included and understand what is expected of them. Makaton signing is frequently used during much of the session. This enables all children to become fully integrated. The daily routine is displayed in Makaton picture symbols with English words. The picture symbol is removed once that activity has been done, so all children know what else is to come. This is re-enforced during an interactive circle time. Children reflect on what activity they have played with, what they have discovered and with whom they have been playing.

Throughout the session children are developing their communication and language skills extremely well. Staff ask children open-ended questions. They are encouraging children to learn that meal times and snack times are social occasions. Staff and children chat together sharing experiences in a relaxed and easy way. Staff encourage children to think for themselves, make decisions and begin to explore ideas. They are also encouraged to use their reasoning skills and their imagination. Staff build on children's confidence and self-esteem, giving them a feeling of self-worth. Play is planned around topics. The weather topic is running as a thread throughout the session. Child initiated activities are also linked with their topic. This re-enforces children's learning on a practical level naturally through their play.

Staff have a clear knowledge and understanding on the Birth to three matters and plan for individual children's needs well. This is clearly documented and evaluated. Planning is shared with parents and there are displays of art work and photographs of children at play. This enables parents to see how their children's needs are planned for and how they are being met. High ratios of staff further help support children's needs and enables lots of opportunities for staff

to interact and play with them. Children are effectively developing and progressing. Young children are playing together nicely, communicating, talking and listening. Key worker systems ensure staff know them well and provide meaningful activities that meet their needs and interests. Children are benefiting from an increasing range of multi-cultural resources to help them learn about equality and diversity through play. They enjoy playing with the range of resources that is available. There are several books, dressing up clothes and oriental dolls. All children are encouraged to participate in the full range and types of play regardless of gender, culture or ability.

## Nursery Education

The quality of teaching and learning is good. It meets the needs of all the children currently attending extremely well. It impacts positively on the way children respond, learn and progress. Staff are clear about what is expected of them and work exceedingly well as a team. Staff have a sound understanding of the Foundation Stage and their roles and responsibilities. Staff use their knowledge to present children with many new experiences and information to suitably challenge them. They plan well to cover the contents of the early learning goals and giving children a very balanced educational experience. Staff are effectively delivering these sessions to observe children and build on children's understanding. They are recording what they observe children already know and can do. These observations are being used to plan for next term in order to meet the individual and group needs. Planning also includes what children are intended to learn and evaluates how well it helped them progress. However, they do not record what they could do to extend the activity/next steps. This would cater for more able or gifted children to fully challenge them and maximise their learning potential.

Children confidently initiate their own play and explore and discover things for themselves. This allows children to be in control of their own learning and helps them develop their assertiveness. Although there is a session routine, children do have opportunities to fully focus on an activity for as long as they wish. As a result children are able to gain the most from the resource or activity. One child dressed up as a fire fighter. When the routine interrupts his imaginative game, staff assured him he could carry on his game after circle time. They explained to him that they would place the Noah's ark and the tissue paper strips that formed his pretend 'fire' on the side. They went on to say that he could play with it later. They helped him place it on the side. They give him lots of praise for his creativity, saying to him 'that's brilliant'. Staff then took a photograph of his efforts. Staff at circle time talked to him and all the children about his clever thinking, bringing over the Noah's ark to show them all. They ask him to say the colours of the tissue and ask him if he had put out the fire. They make all children feel valued by showing their efforts are of great importance, building on their self esteem and confidence.

Children are encouraged to re-tell narratives and guess what is likely to happen next. They have story time in two groups to meet their developmental needs. Some children, who have English as an additional language, have a one to one story time activity. This supports their language development effectively. Staff also give one to one sessions for children who are beginning to read. Children also choose their own books and look through them with interest. As a consequence, children develop an enjoyment of books and develop reading and language skills. Children are actively encouraged to recognise their own names through imaginative

practical routines. At snack time they are given their own laminated piece of art work with their written name label printed on it. There are many word and picture labels, which encourages children to learn that words have meaning. Some of these are in more than one language.

Children have many opportunities to practice their mathematical skills and explore mathematical concepts through everyday play and routines. They expertly count up to twenty during an outdoor game of hide and seek, excitedly shouting 'we are coming ready or not'. Each toilet cubicle is numbered and children are advised which one is free to use, by staff saying the relevant number to them. On one occasion they were asked to count the boys in line and then the girls in the line. When asked how many children are there altogether, a child was able to add the two numbers together and correctly give the answer. However, several opportunities to further build on children's mathematical skills were missed during other lining up routines.

Children have adult-led, small group activities each day. This includes a variety of art and craft activities, which contributes to their creativity. Staff make imaginative use of practical resources. In a small group adult led teddy activity, children are exploring what material would best make a roof that keeps teddies dry. They placed the materials over the teddies 'house' and poured water from a watering can onto different types of material. Children were then encouraged to guess what had happened to the water. They then share their thoughts and ideas on whether the choice of material for the roof was a good choice or a bad choice.

Their physical development is encouraged during frequent opportunities for vigorous physical play both inside and outdoors. Indoors the children have an energetic dance/aerobics session in the school, which they share with children in the reception class. The outdoor area provides a very good range of both large apparatus and smaller resources that are of a good quality. This gives the children lots of choices and numerous chances to use their imaginations. At snack time children are encouraged to cut up sections of fruit by themselves and pour their own drinks. They also take turns to wash and dry the dishes. Both indoor and outdoor activities promote children's fine and gross motor skills.

### **Helping children make a positive contribution**

The provision is outstanding.

Children behave exceptionally well. They show a great deal of care and concern for each other, playing co-operatively throughout the session. Children are extremely good at sharing and taking turns. They are developing high self-esteem through the many opportunities to voice their opinions, take decisions and make choices. Children are given constant praise and encouragement and are eager to follow spoken instructions. This is often very well supported by staff using Makaton signing.

Partnership with parents is outstanding. The manager encourages parents to visit with their children and share all relevant personal information on their child prior to them attending. As a result, children settle very easily. Children's needs continue to be met exceedingly well, through on-going discussion and personal details held at the setting. This contributes enormously to children's continuity of care. Parents are encouraged to visit at any time as the nursery has an 'open door policy'. Staff readily make themselves available to parent's to share any concerns about their child's physical, emotional or intellectual development. Communication between

staff and parents appears relaxed, friendly and informative. Parents have equal access to the information contained in the policies and procedures. All records are kept safe and secure in a lockable filing cabinet and remain confidential.

Staff are very effective and enthusiastic role models. This encourages children to learn and remember to use good manners. Children are given consistent messages by staff and reminders about what is expected of them. Children follow staff when its time to tidy up. Children and adults have extremely warm relationships. Staff provide a very meaningful range of activities and resources so that children have both times to relax as well as be active. The atmosphere always remains calm and provides children with an ideal learning environment.

All children are valued and respected as individuals. Staff work exceptionally hard to enable all children to be fully integrated. They celebrate a range of festivals. Parents from different ethnic groups are often involved in the planning and delivery of these festival topics. This ensures their authenticity and ensures all families feel welcome and valued. This also ensures children's positive attitudes towards others are further established in these early years. All children are learning about equality and justice through their play. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered.

## **Organisation**

The organisation is good.

Comprehensive policies and procedures are provided. These impact positively on the quality of care children receive, because adults working with the children know what is expected of them. There is a clear complaints procedure. However, it does not include any time scale for investigating complaints. There is a register of staff and children and a visitor's book. The register does not make it clear to the exact time children arrive and depart. This may not sufficiently safeguard children should it be used as a fire register. The registration certificate is displayed in a way that makes it easy for parents to see. All required documentation is in place. It is regularly reviewed and updated to reflect current practice.

The registered person follows robust recruitment procedures to ensure people working with children are thoroughly vetted. They ensure that the required adult to child ratios are consistently met. They ensure that there are a minimum of two adults on duty at all times. The leader, deputy and all other staff are qualified and experienced. They strive to keep abreast of current childcare practice and, as a result, provide very good quality care for children. Staff have not accessed the 'Birth to three matters' training. However, they have acquired a good knowledge and understanding of providing care for younger children and implement the 'Birth to three matters' planning well. As a result, they support children's needs extremely effectively and safeguard their well-being. They happily delegate duties and have appointed co-ordinators for special needs, child protection and behaviour management. Suitable organisation of activities, space and resources result in all children receiving effective care. The setting meets the needs of the range of children for whom it provides. Consequently, children's health, enjoyment and achievement are being promoted.

Leadership and management are good. Staff effectively monitor how well the children are making progress towards the early learning goals and this information is shared with parents.

The setting is committed to improving the care and education for all its children and knows what most needs improving. They put action plans in place with timescales to ensure that all issues are promptly addressed. This includes increasing multi-cultural equipment and resources and further staff training. The setting does assess its own teaching skills strength and weaknesses. This is undertaken both formally and informally and includes evidence of reflective practice. They demonstrate how they plan and provide extremely well for the inclusion of children from diverse ethnic backgrounds or have other additional needs. They have a clear vision on how they want the setting to run.

### **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 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 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 complaints procedures to include all relevant information
- ensure children's exact time of arrival and departure is recorded

#### **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):

- extend planning to include 'next steps' to use for more able children to fully challenge them



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