



## Stockton Stepping Stones

Inspection report for early years provision

<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	200782
<b>Inspection date</b>	08 February 2007
<b>Inspector</b>	Sheila Dawn Flounders
<b>Setting Address</b>	Stockton Primary School, School Street, Stockton, Warwickshire, CV47 8JE
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<b>Registered person</b>	Stockton Stepping Stones
<b>Type of inspection</b>	Integrated
<b>Type of care</b>	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](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?

Stockton Stepping Stones Pre-school opened in the 1970s and is a sessional group. It operates from a portacabin classroom on Stockton Primary School site. A maximum of 24 children may attend the setting at any one time. The pre-school is open each weekday from 09.05 to 12.00, during term time only, with the option of lunch club until 13.00 on Wednesday, Thursday and Friday. All children share access to a secure enclosed outdoor play area.

There are currently 19 children aged from three to under five years on roll. Of these, 18 children receive funding for early education. The setting serves the local area and children attend for a variety of sessions. The pre-school currently supports children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities.

The pre-school employs three members of staff. Of these, one holds appropriate early years qualifications and another is working towards a qualification. The setting receives support from the local authority.

## **THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION**

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

The provision is good.

All of the children understand simple good health and hygiene practices, they readily go to wash their hands after independent toileting and before snack time, although staff do not monitor to ensure that soap is used, which could impact on their health. Children stay healthy because there are robust cleaning routines in place and a sickness policy which helps to limit the spread of any infection. Due to the short session times children do not often rest, but a soft, quiet area is available for younger children if they need it.

Children are well nourished due to the healthy snacks provided. These are usually prepared by the staff, although at times the children are involved, who are mindful of food handling procedures. A rolling snack time is used to provide children with less disruption to their activities and more independence, whilst retaining the social skills of eating together. Children have their health and dietary needs met because the setting works with parents to establish what these are. Children have very good opportunities for physical play when activities take place outside each session, with alternatives planned for inside if necessary as a replacement in bad weather, or to supplement shorter time spent outdoors when it is very cold. This regular access to fresh air and exercise ensures that children learn about healthy living, with planned topics in support.

Those in receipt of early education are confident in their movements, exercise control as they pedal, scoot or climb and have good awareness of the space around them. They discuss various health issues in many areas of the curriculum, including considering the changes that happen during exercise. All of the children have good access to a range of large and small equipment, tools and materials which they use with increasing control. For example, they join cartons, tubes and straws together in junk modelling using scissors and glue spreaders, or they play with dough using rolling pins, cutters, knives or their fingers to make a variety of representational objects.

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

The provision is satisfactory.

Children are cared for in a welcoming and secure environment because staff have an adequate awareness of how to keep them safe. They are particularly vigilant about arrival and collection times to ensure that children are not allowed to leave the building unsupervised. The premises is very welcoming to the children and parents with a bright, child centred environment indoors, with many displays of children's work, and a secure all weather outdoor area. Children use suitable and safe equipment, which is selected according to their age and abilities, and the minor nature of accidents shows they know how to use it. Adequate provision is made for first aid treatment if needed, which is recorded and shared with parents. Basic safety equipment is

maintained and checks made daily, although the risk assessments which are in place have not been reviewed which could endanger children's safety.

Children are kept safe on outings, with suitable transport used and parents usually accompanying their child. If local walks take place, higher ratios are maintained. Regular practice of the emergency evacuation drill ensures that the children learn to protect themselves and they also do topic work about how to keep themselves safe. Children are further protected because the supervisor understands her role in safeguarding children and has ensured that new staff know what procedures to put in place if necessary. However, they are unsure of the procedure to follow if an allegation is made against adults in the setting which could compromise children's safety and delay appropriate action being taken.

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

The provision is good.

Children develop confidence and self-esteem because they are given good opportunities to become independent and to use their initiative to develop activities as they wish. They are interested in what they do and join in all the activities they choose with enthusiasm, often not wanting to stop when it is time to do so. Children interact very well together and with the staff, constantly holding discussions or asking questions to extend their play and increase their knowledge and experience. They are easily able to access a wide range of activities and experiences which cover all areas of their development.

### **Nursery Education**

The quality of teaching and learning is good. The supervisor has sound knowledge of the Foundation Stage curriculum and has ensured that new members of staff feel confident about what they are doing with the children. She takes responsibility for planning, with input from the others, which provides a good range of opportunities for children across all areas of learning. The planning is effective in supporting children as they become independent learners with a strong emphasis on role play, creative activities and physical play, with everyday routines used well to encourage numeracy, communication skills and investigation. Challenge is provided through the skill of the staff and also through planned differentiation of activities to meet the varying abilities of the children. However, activities are not fully evaluated to reflect what actually happened or to consider if learning objectives are achieved. Staff use a variety of methods, with some whole group activities, for example registration and stories, some small group activities, but mainly with free choice by the children from activities planned or ones they decide upon for themselves. The management of children's behaviour is achieved through a strong emphasis on positive reinforcement and consistency when handling any incidents. Thus all staff give children the same reminders of the basic boundaries, often not to run or to shout inside. Most children respond well to these reminders, although a few do get over excited at times and try to dominate certain activities when staff use distraction or simply wait for them all to be listening before the activity continues. Good use is made of the time and resources available, particularly the outdoor area, with areas inside set out well for differing activities, for example the messy activities near to the handwashing facilities. A basic daily routine is in place, although it has flexibility within in to adapt to children's interests. Regular observation

and assessment is used to monitor children's progress, although limited information is collected about children's ability as they enter the foundation stage.

The children have a positive attitude towards learning, they are well motivated by the range of activities on offer and their interaction with staff. Most are able to concentrate well, for example, at registration or story time and display high levels of self-confidence as they move between activities, following their own interests. All of the children are provided with opportunities for self-selection and quickly learn to be responsible for their own personal belongings. They are aware of their own needs and are able to express these, for example, by serving their own snack. They are mindful that other children may want something different and are willing to take turns and share resources. The older children are sensitive to the younger ones, who are new in the setting, and are encouraged to explain things they are not familiar with or help them during activities.

Children are confident in their communication, both orally and in their emergent writing skills. They have very good opportunities throughout the sessions for conversations, discussion and questioning. Staff are skilled at introducing, and checking understanding of, new vocabulary often during role play or stories. Books are given particular importance, children are always able to access a good range of fact and fiction, at times they all look at books together and the daily story is used well to bring all the children together before home time. Certain books are also used during role play, either to use the story as a basis for the play or to access information by the children or the staff. The children's own words are frequently displayed next to their creative work. This immersing in print is then reflected by the children's desire to do their own writing. They have many good opportunities to write for a variety of purposes, for example, to write appointments in the hospital or to make get well cards. They demonstrate good pencil control and the more able children write their own names easily and are beginning to write other words.

Children have good experience of number within the setting and older children are easily able to recognise numerals to nine. They count objects regularly, both as a group and spontaneously on their own, using correct number names. They problem solve during everyday activities, for example, comparing the number of plates and cups at snack or working out how many tablets to give to their 'patient' in role play. Mathematical language is part of everyday activities, as children frequently discuss the size or position of objects. They are introduced to addition and subtraction through practical experience and rhymes, such as the current focus on '10 fat sausages'. Children enjoy challenge in connection with measurement as they time to see how long it takes for ice to melt or use shaped bricks to make as tall a tower as they can before it topples.

Children use their senses whilst exploring and investigating in the environment around them. The outdoor area is well used, for example, to closely examine the frosty spiders webs, using magnifying glasses and also to look at seasonal changes. Inside they mix ingredients whilst cooking, use their hands to explore sand, water and dough or experience nature first hand when various creatures are brought in for visits. Children are competent users of technology, modelling its use well in role play and are able to show less familiar staff how to use the computer. They are able to talk about the weather and its effects, the date, their homes and families on a regular basis and also have opportunities to learn of other cultures through food

tasting, creative activities and stories. All of the children have very good opportunities to use a wide range of media, tools and materials as they produce a variety of two and three dimensional creative projects, for example group collages on Elmer or 'People who help us' and individual paintings after the Zoolab visit. Children enjoy music, often singing to themselves as they play and instruments are usually freely available. Regular dance opportunities allow the children to express their feelings and emotions in response to the music and they enjoy acting out stories from books they have read. Role play is a particular strength of the setting, giving children the opportunity to learn as they model adult situations and is well resourced and appropriately supported by the staff to provide experiences that cross all areas of development.

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

The provision is good.

Children have their individual needs met well, including those with additional needs. The setting has considerable experience of meeting a wide variety of special needs and of working in liaison with parents, carers and other external agencies to ensure that the needs of the child are paramount and that suitable levels of support are given. All of the children quickly develop a sense of belonging, they have responsibility for their own care needs and looking after their belongings. They are mostly familiar with the boundaries and the few established routines, such as tidy up time and have adapted well to the idea of a rolling snack to allow more choice about when to take a break. They are all confident about making choices about what activities to take part in enjoy using their freedom to move around the premises and select resources for themselves, which boosts their self-esteem.

The children get on well with each other because they understand the need for reasonable behaviour, although at times reminders are needed about the noise levels when over excitement takes over. Children begin to distinguish between right and wrong due to the staff's emphasis on positive behaviour and they enjoy receiving praise for a good effort or seeing their work displayed on the wall. Children are aware of their own needs and become more aware of those of others in wider society as they are provided with positive images of gender, culture and disability.

The partnership with parents and carers of children in receipt of early education is satisfactory. They are provided with adequate information about the setting and its policies, although some aspects are incomplete or out of date. For example, the behaviour statement does not detail how bullying would be managed and the detail of the educational provision is brief. Parents are aware of the open door policy, so that they can access their children's records at any time, although the main channel of communication is the daily exchange when bringing or collecting children. Staff ensure that someone is available to talk to parents at these times and that records are shared fully with parents before a child goes to school. Parents provide basic factual information about their child before they attend, although generally this is not in connection with their ability, which is added to during introductory visits to the setting together and ongoing discussions with the keyworkers. Parents have some opportunities to be involved in their child's learning as the setting informs them in advance of what the topics will be, they are able to come in to help or accompany the group on outings. The recent story telling week

was a successful way of parents sharing their skills, although only a few are able to be involved in such a way. Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered.

## **Organisation**

The organisation is satisfactory.

The staff and committee of the setting have due regard for the well-being of the children in their care, with all necessary consents obtained from parents. The space within the premises is well organised to provide a child centre learning environment, where staff work together as a team to provide a positive experience for the children. All necessary policies and procedures are in place, although many do not reflect recent changes within the setting and externally which impacts on all the outcomes for children. Policies are all made available to parents and carers, and staff are easily able to find documentation or information that they need during the course of a session, such as accident forms. Robust procedures are in place for the recruitment, vetting and induction of new staff and committee members, including information about their roles and responsibilities. The committee are active in supporting new staff to obtain the additional qualifications and training that they need to update their knowledge and skills. The provision meets the needs of the range of children for whom it provides.

The leadership and management of early education is satisfactory. The committee have regular meetings, which involve the staff and conduct appraisals to help identify the settings strengths and weaknesses. Some weaknesses have been identified in the operational plan, but neither the committee or the staff have been pro-active in ensuring these have been dealt with. All of the committee are parents within the setting and as such see the progress their own children make. Some have also spent time in the setting observing the provision in an ad hoc way and raise issues for discussion at the meetings if necessary, thus they are beginning to monitor and evaluate the provision of early education. The setting has a strong commitment to continuous improvement, in their physical surroundings, through training and through liaison with other agencies, such as the school and local authority workers.

## **Improvements since the last inspection**

At their last inspection the setting were recommended to review their snack time, ensure that staff involved were aware of food hygiene requirements and to record the names of staff each session. Since that time they have added staff to the daily register and reorganised snack time so that children can access it freely without disrupting activities. All previous staff did train in food hygiene requirements, although currently only the supervisor has done so, new staff have a suitable awareness of food handling requirements and will attend further training in the future. These measures have improved outcomes for children.

For funded sessions the pre-school were recommended to develop planning to include challenge and to use unplanned and routine activities as part of the learning process. Since that time they have included differentiation for more and less able children within all their planning. Staff have also undertaken additional training and workshops so that now they are confident about including spontaneous opportunities that arise in children's learning and make good use of everyday routines. They were also to extend children's records to show evidence of children's

progress and have since changed the method of recoding progress to include more detailed evidence, although it is not always consistently maintained.

### **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.

## **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):

- ensure that the written statement on behaviour, includes how bullying would be managed
- review the child protection statement and ensure it includes the procedure to be followed in the event of allegations being made against a member of staff or volunteer
- review risk assessments to ensure the children are kept safe and also after significant change.

#### **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):

- use the information about children's starting points and ongoing assessments to clearly demonstrate children's progress
- ensure that activities are regularly evaluated to reflect what actually happened, if learning objectives are achieved and to feed into future planning.



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](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)