



Stepping Stones Pre-School York

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	321529
Inspection date	23 February 2007
Inspector	Rosemary Beyer
Setting Address	Hurst Hall, 1 Border Road, Strensall, York, North Yorkshire, YO32 5SR
Telephone number	01904 442 826
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Registered person	Stepping Stones Pre-School
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 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 Pre-School opened in August 2000. It operates from the main hall in the community centre on the Strensall Army Camp. It has access to its own outside play area. Strensall is situated to the east of the city of York. The group serves both the army camp and the local area.

There are currently 69 children aged from two years to five years old on the register. This includes 44 children with funded education places. Children attend for a variety of sessions. The group supports children with learning difficulties and disabilities.

The group opens Monday to Friday from 09.15 to 12.00 and 12.30 to 15.00, term time only.

There are six staff employed, including the manager. Half the staff members have level 3 childcare qualifications, while two are level 2 and working towards level 3, and one is working towards level 2.

The group is committee run, receives support from the Early Years Development and Childcare Partnership, and is a member of the Pre-School Learning Alliance. It also belongs to the local Strensall Partnership cooperating with the school, a local private day nursery, other playgroups in the village and childminders.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Children are cared for on premises which are clean and well maintained. Good hygiene practice is well established in the group, and effectively prevents the spread of infection. The children know they must wash their hands after the toilet, which they do without reminding, putting the paper towels in the dustbin after use. They also wash their hands before they eat.

The group promotes healthy eating and the children know they need to have a well-balanced diet to stay fit and well. Parents are informed about the snack on a daily basis to ensure there are no unsuspected dietary problems. The children help themselves to food when they are ready during the session, and sit with their friends to eat their snack. If they do not have anything to eat or drink, staff remind them. Water is available for the children to help themselves to at any time. They enjoy the independence of choosing when they can eat, and the social aspect while sitting chatting with their friends.

Children have fresh air each day, weather permitting. They use the outside area with a wide range of toys and equipment to help them develop their coordination and physical strength. The funded children are all developing very good control of their bodies and move around safely. They balance and climb confidently and competently. The children know they get hot when they exercise and help themselves to drinks if they need them.

The sick child policy is made available to parents, along with information about exclusion times for infectious diseases. A medication policy and a system of recording administration are also maintained. All the staff have current first aid certificates and they ensure the first aid box is well stocked. Parents sign the accident book when they collect their children if they need to do so. If children are unwell, staff comfort them until they are collected, usually in the quiet area of the playroom. Some of the younger children get tired before the end of the session and they can also sit quietly until their parents arrive.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

The building and the outside area are secure. Parents and visitors are only admitted by staff. The visitors' book is readily available and completed on arrival and departure. No unauthorised persons are allowed access to the children. The premises are clean and well maintained, with

risk assessments completed by staff, and the fire and electrical equipment checked by the army. The fire evacuation procedure is posted on the wall and fire drills are completed each half term. All staff work each session so they all have experience of these.

Children use resources carefully and safely, picking up pieces of equipment if they are dropped and helping to tidy away at the end of the sessions. They clear up if they spill things, helping themselves to the brush for the sand and the cloth for water or milk on the table. They know they must not run inside as this can cause accidents.

The children know about road safety and how to behave when they are out near the road. They discuss the pedestrian crossings and the use of seatbelts. In their role play activities they ensure the children going to the seaside on the bus do up their belts in case there is a crash.

Children are also protected by the good knowledge staff have of the local child protection procedures, although the procedure to follow in case of allegations against staff is incorrect. The comprehensive policy has been updated to include recent changes, such as the Local Safeguarding Children Boards.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

Staff have a good understanding of both the 'Birth to three matters' framework and the Foundation Stage. However, they give parents little information about the framework used for the younger children. They use the guidance to provide a well-balanced setting where the children make good progress. Topics for activities are chosen in line with other provision in the area after joint meetings. Staff ensure the activities provided meet the development needs of both younger and older children by adapting them to suit, providing sufficient challenge for the more able. All the children are settled and comfortable in the setting. They enter happily, keen to see what is on offer each day and happy to see their friends. All children are encouraged to participate in the range of activities provided. A file is kept by the children's key workers to monitor development from when children start to attend.

Nursery Education

The quality of teaching and learning is good. Staff have a very good understanding of the Foundation Stage and the needs of the children, and provide a wide range of learning opportunities. They monitor the children's development effectively to ensure they make good progress but also ensure that any concerns are addressed. Planning takes account of all the children who attend each session, with activities adapted to meet their needs.

Children have individual development files which are kept up to date by their key worker. All staff record information about achievements, which is then passed on for recording. Parents can access the file at any time and make comments in it if they wish to do so. The funded children have photographs, samples of work and development sheets to show how they have developed during their time in the setting.

Displays of children's artwork show their creative development is good, including paintings of elephants, raindrops and winter scenes. They use a wide range of materials and implements to produce very imaginative and colourful pictures and models. Role play in the home corner and the hospital and spontaneously using general resources, such as chairs to make a bus to go to the seaside, is also very imaginative, providing children with opportunities to work together and also develop their vocabulary.

The children are developing mathematical language and understanding when playing and during everyday activities, such as counting the number of children present, the wheels on the train or the cars being used. The older children count very well. They can identify simple shapes and play matching and sorting games successfully. Children's concentration is developing well and they persevere to complete tasks.

All the children like listening to stories and can anticipate what will happen in familiar tales or make suggestions during new ones. They sit quietly when staff read, but also use books independently in the comfortable book corner. The children know print carries meaning and that books can be used to obtain information as well as for stories. All the children recognise their own names and most can write them recognisably, using their name labels if they are unsure or asking staff for help. When work is completed they put it in a drawer labelled with their name. The children talk confidently to staff and visitors, and chat to their friends while playing.

The children are developing a good knowledge and understanding of the world. They use a computer and programmable toys with confidence. They are also developing a good knowledge of the local community with walks in the village and also the nearby woods. During the summer they grow sunflowers and tomatoes and put bedding plants in pots. However, the outside area is not used fully to support children's awareness of the natural world.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

The children behave very well. A code of behaviour is posted on the wall for both children and staff. Good manners are encouraged and staff provide good role models. The children share, take turns and cooperate well. Older children show younger ones what to do and help them with paper towels or snack times. The children apologise if they knock each other. When playing the children use resources with care and clear up independently if they have spilt things, such as the sand or paint. They all help to tidy toys away at the end of the sessions.

The positive equal opportunities policy which governs the group's practice ensures the inclusion of all children and parents. The children's awareness of diversity is raised by the celebration of different festivals, customs and cultures throughout the year. They have celebrated Chinese New Year with craft activities and by trying different foods. They made dragon masks and a large lion head to walk around with. Some equipment is labelled in the first languages children use. The children know they are all different and treat each other with concern. Resources are available to reinforce their growing awareness with books, dolls, cooking implements, musical instruments and dressing up clothes in regular use.

Partnership with parents and carers is outstanding. The group makes them feel welcome and values their input as the primary carers of the children. They receive information about the Foundation Stage in the group brochure when they express an interest in the setting. Once children start to attend they are able to access their children's development files whenever they wish; a sheet is available in the file for them to pass on comments to the staff. The key workers build excellent relationships with parents to ensure information about children's achievements and also any concerns is exchanged. The annual parents' evenings give parents an opportunity to visit the setting and try the activities their children enjoy, and also to discuss progress and achievements with staff. Displays of work are produced for them to view.

Parents receive information about the future activities and topics in the sessions. They are also given ideas for things to do at home. Every child is able to take a book home each week, which parents are asked to read with them. They make comments in a notebook about the children's achievements, such as cutting out, counting, recognising words or new interests their children have developed.

The parents spoken to expressed great satisfaction with the support and care the children receive. They value the contact they have with the key workers about their children's development and feel able to raise any concerns with them. They like the information they receive about the future activities and the ideas for things to do at home. Parents of children with English as an additional language or with different cultures feel valued and comfortable in the group. The staff make them welcome and included and ensure they understand the policies and procedures.

Children with learning difficulties or disabilities are welcome in the group and staff have experience of caring for children in line with the Code of Practice. Parents and outside agencies are consulted to ensure the needs of the children are met and they are able to progress. Resources and individual learning plans are available, and the premises are on one level so less-mobile children can be cared for. The children are all very supportive of children with different needs and include them in their activities.

Children's social, moral, spiritual and cultural development is fostered. They learn about other cultures and customs, learn right from wrong and learn that they are individuals. Staff provide good role models and they and the children treat everyone with respect and equal concern.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

The setting is run by a committee of parents with a very well-established staff group. The policies and procedures used to guide the group are regularly reviewed and are currently under discussion by the committee. This ensures the safe and efficient management of the setting. The certificate is displayed in the entrance hall and the conditions of registration respected so children are well supervised. Information is also available about the complaints procedure, with the Ofsted contact details. The group has a recording system in place for parents to see if they wish to do so.

Leadership and management is good. Robust systems are in place for the employment of new staff and an induction system is in place for them and for students on placement in the group, none of whom are allowed to work in the group without police clearances. The staff work very well as a team, communicate well and keep each other informed. Planning meetings are held each half term, when staff discuss the programme and the progress the children have made and what they need to do in the future to enhance their learning. The day is well planned, although the programme is flexible to take account of unexpected learning opportunities, such as a snowfall. The key workers are responsible for helping parents and children to settle, obtaining information from parents and recording children's development.

The staff are well qualified and experienced. There is an expectation in the group that they will undertake further training to support their own personal development and to further improve their practice. Staff appraisals provide an opportunity to assess their effectiveness and consider future training needs. 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 less than half the staff were appropriately qualified. However, since then staff have undertaken a variety of training and sufficient suitably qualified staff are now in post. They are expected and encouraged to continue to their personal development.

At the last inspection it was noted that staff did not ask parents to acknowledge, in writing, the administration of medication in line with their instructions. Since then parents have signed the medication record when they collect their children, which ensures children have only the correct dosages. Staff were also asked to ensure children have access to water as they need it. A jug of water and beakers are now made available each session so the children can help themselves to water whenever they are thirsty.

Complaints since the last inspection

Since 1 April 2004 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 staff are aware of the procedure for reporting allegations against staff in accordance with Local Safeguarding Children Board procedures
- provide information for parents about the 'Birth to three matters' framework.

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):

- develop the outside area further to support children's knowledge of the natural world.

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