

Stepping Stones Pre-School

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	254293
Inspection date	01 May 2007
Inspector	Pauline Margaret Todd
Setting Address	Aldborough CP School, Alby Hill, Alby, Norwich, Norfolk, NR11 7PH
Telephone number	01263 768 766
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Registered person	Stepping Stones Pre-School
Type of inspection	Integrated
Type of care	Full day 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 its present premises in 1996. It operates from a mobile classroom in the grounds of Aldborough Primary School in the village of Alby, Norfolk. A maximum of 24 children may attend the pre-school at any one time. The group is open each weekday from 09.15 until 15.30 during term time. All children share access to a secure enclosed outdoor play area.

There are currently 39 children aged from two to five years on roll. Of these 24 children receive funding for nursery education. Children come from the village and surrounding area.

The pre-school employs four childcare staff. The supervisor holds an appropriate early years qualification. Two staff are working towards a qualification.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is satisfactory.

Children's health is satisfactorily promoted. The group takes steps to prevent the spread of infection. Children have easy access to the bathroom and willingly take responsibility for meeting their own personal care needs. They confidently use the toilet. They wash their hands afterwards and before eating snacks and meals. A colourful handprint display above the sinks reminds them to do so. However, some toys, play equipment and furniture are worn and faded. The overall indoor environment therefore does not look fresh and clean. Children's health details and medical requirements are clearly recorded to maintain their good health, for example, asthma. Staff follow effective systems which enable children who are unwell to be cared for appropriately. Sufficient staff have current first aid knowledge to ensure children's well-being in the event of an accident.

Children are appropriately nourished. They eat snacks of carrot sticks, fruit, seeds, cheese and crackers which help them to learn about healthy eating. Some children bring their own packed lunches to eat at midday and others eat a hot meal cooked at the school. Children with special dietary requirements such as possible nut allergies have their needs met appropriately because the parents have provided the setting with detailed information. Children help themselves to water from jugs and staff ensure they drink sufficient amounts to keep them healthy, particularly when playing actively outside. Children learn about healthy living through a range of interesting activities that develop their understanding of what foods are good for them. For example, they make honey sandwiches and grow their own vegetables to eat.

Children are encouraged to adopt a healthy lifestyle. They have a positive attitude to exercise and enjoy going outside to play in the garden. They practice running and riding bikes avoiding obstacles and controlling their speed. They climb rope ladders and ramps confidently to access the slide and push and pull dolls' prams and wheelbarrows at the 'Garden Centre'. They use malleable materials such as play dough and clay with and without tools and are developing competent manipulative skills by using scissors to cut paper spirals. Children are able to fulfil their own needs with regard to rest and relaxation and use comfortable cushions and settee as they wish throughout the day.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

Children benefit from being cared for in premises that are safe, secure and suitable to meet their needs. They are helped to feel comfortable and at ease by seeing colourful displays of their work on the walls. Staff make creative use of the space available with furniture separating areas for different activities. For example, washable flooring for messy play, comfortable mats by the book corner, carpet area for children to take part in small scale play on the floor.

Children have access to a wide range of developmentally appropriate resources. These are stored in low units and trays which encourage some self selection, for example, construction, puzzles and vehicles. Children use suitably sized tables and chairs which enable them to sit comfortably to undertake activities and eat together. Steps are present in the bathroom for children to be able to access the facilities independently.

Children are kept safe because staff are vigilant. They remind children to be careful when using ride-on toys and children remember that they do not look at the sun through the magnifying glasses. The group use detailed risk assessments and daily checklists for indoors and outside to reduce potential hazards and minimise risks. Procedures for fire safety are simple and clear and staff have a good understanding of their responsibilities and roles in the event of a fire. Fire drills are practised regularly, sometimes with the school, to keep children safe.

Children are well protected because the staff have a sound working knowledge of their child protection policy. They would be able to put appropriate procedures into practice if they suspect that a child is being abused or neglected.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

Children's welfare is promoted successfully because they undertake a wide range of activities and play opportunities that develop their emotional, social and intellectual capabilities. They are happy and well settled. They hum to themselves as they play, sing 'Bob the builder' when looking at books and carry on their interest in dogs by reading the 'New puppy' story. Children undertake a variety of activities which are placed on the table tops by staff, for example, play dough, drawing spider webs, making spirals. The staff use the 'Birth to three matters' framework to effectively promote the development of younger children attending. They use it to help them identify the next steps in their learning and examples of their work are kept in a book to share their progress with parents. Children have good opportunities to play freely and extend their own ideas, for example, they move the dolls cot to the home corner and vehicles to the clay. Children respond positively to adults who are interested in what they do and say. The staff talk and listen to them and maintain good eye contact. They position themselves at the child's level to support them with their activities, for example, at the table with the play dough, on the floor with the construction bricks.

Nursery Education

The quality of teaching and learning is good. The supervisor is extremely enthusiastic about learning and makes the activities interesting for the children. For example, by hiding bugs in the sand and placing a table cloth on the floor for their picnic. She has a secure knowledge of the Foundation Stage and gives good guidance to other members of staff. She delivers a broad, balanced curriculum that fully covers all areas of learning. The staff help children to feel secure and support them to learn new skills. For example, how to make shell prints in the clay. They give sufficient time and opportunities for speaking, listening, reading and writing. Planning is used to make sure all the early learning goals are fully covered. However, there is no detailed planning for the activities to show clearly their purpose or how they can be extended to provide challenge for more able children. Ongoing observations are made of the children and the information transferred to their learning stories monthly. Children's next steps are clearly identified. These are used to guide planning so they build on what the children already know. Children enjoy looking at the photographs in their folders which they access from their trays as they wish. The teaching help children to focus and persist for some time, for example, when drawing on the wipe board with felt pens. Staff make good use of resources and accommodation with spontaneous access to the garden area.

Children show a willingness to solve their own problems, for example, how to hammer the nails into the shapes, how to use the rubber to clean the wipe board and by using the handle of the spoon to cut the play dough. They are developing a positive sense of themselves and talk about

their families, for example, when discussing going to the swimming pool. Children interact readily with others. When staff ask them what do they put on first when they get dressed in the mornings they say 'their shades'. They use their language during imaginative play and say, 'we can walk its not far' when they go to 'visit' the other children. They are becoming aware of sounds in words and recognise familiar words such as the days of the week and their names. They look at books independently and staff read them stories. They enjoy the movement of the brushes as they paint the slabs and fences outside with water and use the felt tips on the wipe board. Children write letter shapes during their drawings and give meanings to their marks, for example, my cat, a bumble bee, the swimming pool. Children undertake a wide variety of enjoyable, practical activities to promote their mathematical development. They use puzzles, pegboards, dominoes, weigh ingredients to make salt dough using scales and sing number rhymes counting up and back, for example, five little speckled frogs. Children count independently, for example, how many children are sitting at the table. They see numbers in their environment on posters and watch the supervisor write 15 children present today. Children recognise the numbers five and six on the squares on the floor. They use their fingers to count up to ten. They know when they have the same number, for example, two plates and two cups for their picnic. Children are learning how to make sense of their world and acquiring skills, knowledge and understanding that will help with their later work in history, geography, science and technology. Outdoor activities, such as the 'Garden Centre' and bug hunts, enable children to explore the natural world. They observe change over time by growing and planting, for example, potatoes. They experience different ways of cutting, joining and building using hammer and nails, glue, sellotape and paper mache. They learn about everyday technology by using computers. They see photographs which remind them of past events such as the Easter egg hunt. Children create their own 'small world' environments as they use wooden blocks to make sheds for the train. Children learn through using their senses and say the play dough mixture is 'goeey' and 'sticky'. These are heightened when playing in the garden and they respond excitedly to noises they hear, for example, they run to see the tractor. They explore colour and know the difference between light and dark blue. They are interested to see their mixture change colour when powder paint is added when they make play dough. Children freely select instruments and move rhythmically as they play them. They enjoy singing familiar songs. They use their imagination very well. When playing outside they make dens under the climbing apparatus and pretend to be dogs. They hang buckets from the handles of their bikes and fill their wheelbarrows full of peat.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

Children have high self-esteem and confidence because the staff give them lots of praise, for example, for their beautiful cutting and lovely singing. The group liaises well with parents to ensure that children's records contain sufficient information to enable appropriate care to be given, for example, their medical needs and food arrangements. Children with additional needs would be warmly welcomed into the setting and given support to promote their welfare and development. Children are helped to develop a positive attitude to others by using play equipment which reflects positive images of race and culture and celebrating festivals. The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of children is fostered. They play together cooperatively, share the play equipment and are well-mannered, for example, they say 'yes please', 'thank you' and 'excuse me'. They have some planned opportunities to learn about themselves and the local community, for example, they have visitors from the village talk to them about their work.

Children's well-being is promoted because of the positive relationships which have developed between staff and their parents. There is a useful exchange of information at the beginning and end of each session. Parents are welcome to say until they feel their child is settled. There is an informative notice board in the entrance lobby, details of the provision, copies of the planning and menus. Parents receive a helpful information pack which includes details of their aims, rules, the role of the committee and some policies and procedures. Parents have sufficient information about the procedures for making complaints and the process for resolving them. They receive regular newsletters informing them of forthcoming events.

The partnership with parents and carers of funded children is satisfactory. Parents gain some knowledge of the early learning goals through displays of children's work. However, they do not receive sufficient written information about the Foundation Stage and the different areas of learning. Some are well informed about their child's progress but many have not contributed to their child's assessment record and have not had the opportunity to discuss fully their children's achievements with staff.

Organisation

The organisation is satisfactory.

The organisation of the setting ensures that children are well cared for by staff who are suitable to meet their needs. There are satisfactory arrangements to make sure children are not left alone with anyone who has not been vetted. The staff and volunteers are able to work together well to promote children's welfare and learning. Appraisals are regularly undertaken for all staff to make sure they are given sufficient opportunities to improve their skills and identify their training and development needs. Although all staff are able to carry out their responsibilities effectively and have the necessary skills and experience for their roles, the group currently do not meet the qualification levels. The group has a satisfactory action plan in place which sets out how they intend to meet requirements.

The group's policies and procedures protect children and implemented effectively to promote all outcomes. Their operational plan shows how staff, space and resources are used to meet children's needs. However, there is no effective key worker system in place to help children to settle in and ensure continuity of care. The group employ an administrator who ensures all appropriate documentation is in place for the safe running of the provision. An efficient registration system is used with parents signing their children in and out. Staff check to make sure it remains accurate and up to date to keep children safe.

The leadership and management is good. The supervisor and committee chair are very committed to the improvement of care and education for all children. The staff team are aware of their roles and responsibilities. They meet together regularly to plan. The setting has an effective system for monitoring and evaluating their provision. Overall children's needs are met.

Improvements since the last inspection

At the last inspection, the group agreed to develop their risk assessment and record times of children's arrival and departure in the register. They have taken the necessary action to ensure all risks are now identified and minimised to keep children safe. The staff check that parents have completed the register accurately to ensure a clear record is maintained. There were no weaknesses identified at the last nursery education inspection. The group needs to continue to consider developing their record of assessments to ensure parents are fully aware of their children's progress.

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):

- improve the condition of toys, play equipment and furniture to make the environment cleaner and more inviting to children and parents
- continue to implement the action plan to make sure half of the staff hold recognised qualifications and develop the key worker system to maintain continuity of care.

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 planning so that it gives sufficient detail of what the children are intended to learn and how activities can be extended to provide challenge for more able children
- provide further information for parents about the early learning goals and ensure they feel fully informed of their child's progress.

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