

# Stepping Stones Day Nursery and Nursery School

Inspection report for early years provision

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	EY258333
<b>Inspection date</b>	14 May 2007
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<b>Registered person</b>	Jane Mary Kelly
<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 satisfactory.

### WHAT SORT OF SETTING IS IT?

Stepping Stones Day Nursery and Nursery School has been run by the current owner since 2003. It operates from four main rooms in a purpose-built premises situated in a residential area of Witney.

A maximum of 73 children may attend the nursery at any one time. The nursery is open Monday to Friday from 07:15 until 18:00 for 52 weeks of the year. The nursery also provides out of school care. All children share access to an enclosed outdoor play area.

There are currently 82 children aged from three months to under nine years on roll. Of these, 23 children receive funding for nursery education. Children come from Witney and surrounding villages. The nursery currently supports children with special educational needs and also supports a number of children who speak English as an additional language.

The nursery employs 15 staff. Six of the staff, including the manager, hold appropriate early years qualifications. Four staff are working towards a qualification.

## THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

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

The provision is good.

Children's individual dietary and feeding needs are addressed well through discussion with parents. Staff show sound understanding of special diets and the issues involved in catering for individual needs and preferences. Children benefit from the balanced main meal menu. Children are encouraged to eat a range of fresh fruit and vegetables at most snack and meal times. Children have access to drinks of water at all times. Children's health is well promoted through clear routines for administration of medication and first aid. A clear policy for the exclusion of children with illness protects the health of all. Records contain clear detail and all required signatures.

Children take part in a varied range of activities which enable them to learn about good health and encourage them to take responsibility for their own personal hygiene such as brushing their teeth after lunch and changing into warm clothes after playing in the rain. Tissues are easily available for the children to use independently with even the youngest toddlers blowing their own noses and disposing of the tissue appropriately in the bin. The staff support all children well in their quest for independent personal care. For example, staff form good role models as they wash their hands with the babies and young children following nappy changing. Older children are able to describe why they should wash their hands 'to get rid of dirt before we eat'. Topics on healthy eating that the children have made their own are displayed.

Children of all ages develop their physical skills daily in both the indoor play rooms and the outdoor play area. The children have daily opportunities to develop their running, jumping, pedalling and pushing skills. Younger and less confident children are supported effectively to join in activities at their own level and explore methods of moving such as in the ball pool. For example, less confident children are supported as they learn to slide down or manoeuvre around the climbing frame.

The out of school club caters for ten active school age children who enjoy lots of physical play with their peers and often their siblings as well as table top games and musical instruments such as the electric piano. They have a large say in the type of activities offered to them and their requests for visits and trips out are included in the holiday club time table.

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

The provision is satisfactory.

Children are welcomed into a warm, friendly, and happy environment where they play safely. The children use a varied range of safe and developmentally appropriate resources, including everyday household items that are of sound quality. The resources and play equipment support, and stimulate the children's individual development needs appropriately. However, some areas, such as, the home corner in the two to threes and the book corner in the three to fives are uninviting for the children. Equipment and resources are kept clean and in a sound state of repair and are checked regularly for safety. However, the nursery does not plan and use their equipment to its best for children's independent use. This does not encourage freedom of movement and individual expression based on their individual needs.

The nursery premises are secure and there are good arrangements for the safe arrival and departure of children. Children, staff and visitors arrivals and departures are promptly recorded

so that in an emergency, such as a fire, there is a record of who is in the building. Children are well supervised by staff at all times, who take sound measures in reducing potential risks around the building both inside and outside. Written risk assessments are carried out, and these are supported by detailed policies and procedures to ensure that the staff are consistent in keeping children safe. Older children and especially the out of school children learn to keep themselves safe by giving each other gentle reminders of the safety rules of the group. The older children know what to do if the fire alarm sounds because staff practise evacuation procedures regularly with them.

Staff understand their responsibilities for protecting children's welfare. All staff undertake training regularly to update their knowledge. They have clear procedures in place and have a good understanding and knowledge about what to do in the event of having a concern about a child in their care.

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

The provision is good.

Babies are provided with lots of sensory experiences that are good for their early development, including messy activities. They enjoy sounds, intonation and musical instruments, and they explore instruments by putting them to their mouths and chewing them. Children are happy and contented as they move around and investigate play things. They enjoy the company of the adult carers and good relationships are evident. Younger children actively seek out familiar adults when they are unsure such as at sleep or lunch time. This bond the children are making supports children's overall development and fosters their emotional security.

Young children enjoy investigating natural materials, through the use of planned activities, such as feeling the paints and brushes, playing with flavoured ice, rattling the tinsels streamers and rolling the sparkly pop bottles. This means that they are learning to explore the world around them. The toddlers and two to threes enjoy water, sand, and creative play as they express their ideas eagerly. They observe, smell, touch and taste different materials and enjoy investigating how things work, what they are made of and what they taste like. Staff are starting to use Birth to three matters framework in their planning and assessment of the younger children's development and parents can clearly see the elements of the framework as it is clearly displayed on posters as they enter the rooms.

### **Nursery Education**

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. Some staff have a good awareness while other have a satisfactory knowledge of the Curriculum guidance for the Foundation Stage and plan a range of suitable activities. The staff provide a learning environment for the children to learn and develop as individuals through the use of varied teaching methods to engage the children's interests and develop their progress such as whole group, small group work and individual activities. The staff team work well together and are developing the planning systems. However, as staff frequently move rooms this has an impact of learning and development needs of individual children. Systems of observation and assessment are not sufficiently developed to ensure that all staff are clear about the learning objectives for activities. Therefore, planned activities are not always used productively to extend children.

Staff interact with children well as small groups come together spontaneously to share an activity. The staff are friendly and caring to the children and are supportive to their emotional development this allows children to be able to express themselves and talk about home and

birthday parties and their friends. Staff use some assessment methods to monitor the children's development. They know the children well, but at present are not recording their individual progress very frequently and only targeting some of the children's information to plan the next steps in learning. As a result, staff do not manage to fully challenge children to further their learning.

Children are developing satisfactory levels of independence and are encouraged to dress themselves for outdoor play, toilet themselves and help to tidy away. Children respond well to instructions and show good consideration towards others. They learn to share and take turns, and play well alongside each other. Children respond well to the routine changes in the session, they follow clear guidelines and are aware of the expectations such as, helping tidy activities away. They are forming close relationships with staff and often initiate interaction.

Children receive praise in their work and play helping build their self-esteem and confidence. They explore different beliefs, traditions and cultures and talk about special events in their lives at carpet time. The nursery has adopted a baby elephant and all the children share in the pictures and stories from the elephant's homeland. Topic work provides a varied and enjoyable introduction to different countries and the opportunity to learn about others in the wider context.

Children's creative development is progressing as they use resources like dressing-up clothes and role play. They act out being explorers and use the small world figure families to re-enact their home life and family. Children enjoy singing and competently sing songs from memory and they have a 'Musical Specialist', who visit each week and the children fully participate in the musical activities. They begin to recognise their written name and work hard on their one to one writing work with staff. There are some opportunities for children to practise mark making as they access the writing table.

Children experience varied opportunities to develop their physical skills through spontaneous activities both indoors and out. They respond with enjoyment to songs, rhymes and are able to repeat complex sequences of movements with their musical instruments at singing time. Children's imaginary play is varied and interesting as they draw on their experiences from everyday life when playing.

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

The provision is good.

Staff work hard to ensure the needs of all children are being met. Babies and young children develop a good sense of belonging and self-assurance. Low level mirrors enable babies to explore what they look like and who they are, and children become confident through the good support given by staff. Children are well behaved and their good behaviour is reinforced, in a positive environment, through constant praise and encouragement. Children learn to share and take turns and have respect for each other, consistently using 'please' and 'thank you'. Staff follow a comprehensive behaviour management policy, and all staff ensure appropriate strategies are used to manage the children's behaviour such as using their 'indoor voices'. Children with learning difficulties or disabilities and those with English as an additional language are receiving appropriate support.

Children develop a positive attitude to others through a variety of images displayed around the setting. They receive good opportunities to visit the local community especially the out of school children, as well as welcoming visitors from the community into the setting. The nursery

has adopted a baby elephant and the children discuss where the elephant lives its environment and needs. This means that the children have an opportunity to further develop a secure knowledge of the wider world. The positive approach of the nursery, along with their care and concern for each child, reflects on the children and fosters children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

Staff share relevant background information, play activities and discuss children's specific needs. Parents are welcomed into the nursery at any time and information is shared through informal daily discussion. Parents have access to an information pack that includes statements on policies and procedures, and many activities linked to information on the Birth to three matters and the Foundation Stage. Regular newsletters keep parents informed of future events and up-dated staff information. Staff complete, and share with parents, daily diaries and 'What I Have Done Today' on babies and young children. Children benefit from the open door policy and two way sharing of information, with opportunities for parents to speak to staff to enhance their development and learning.

The partnership with parents and carers of the children receiving nursery education funding is good. There are some systems in place to share information with parents about their children's progress. Parents are able to access their children development records and to arrange to meet with staff to discuss their child's progress. Information is freely available on the daily activities so that parents are able to fully contribute to the nursery and their child's learning.

## **Organisation**

The organisation is satisfactory.

Children's well-being and education is supported by staff who either have appropriate early years qualifications or valuable experience in caring for young children. There is a high staff to child ratios are in place. However, staff are not always effectively deployed to fully promote children's safety or their learning and development.

The leadership and management are satisfactory. The nursery benefits from the commitment and enthusiasm of the nursery manager combined with the close working relationship of her staff. They liaise regularly, have shared aims for the nursery and are working together as a team to further develop the quality of the day care nursery, such as by supporting staff's early years degree training and raising awareness of the setting within the wider community. The partnership between the nursery and the local schools is fostered through activities such as and involvement in the out of school club's play. These links enhance the children's experiences within the group and supports their transition into the reception class. The nursery has been proactive in tackling weaknesses they have identified within the educational provision, such as in planning and progress is slowly starting to develop with their systems on monitoring and observing individual children's play. However, clear concise organised records of daily planning and documents, which are required for the efficient management of the nursery education, are not in place to ensure that staff are able to effectively promote the welfare, learning and development of all children.

Suitable procedures are in place to record the daily attendance of children, staff and visitors, which has a positive impact on promoting children's welfare. Documentation is carefully maintained and easily accessible to staff should children's personal information be required in an emergency. Detailed policies and procedures are in place, which are easily accessible to parents and discussed with them as part of the registration process.

The setting meets the needs of the range of children for whom it provides.

### **Improvements since the last inspection**

Good progress has been made in addressing the many recommendations raised under health and safety at the last inspections. The nursery now has a clear procedure for hand washing and removal of outdoor shoes. Medicine records have been reviewed and there is a clear policy and records to ensure that parents have countersigned and these documents are kept up to date. With regard to safety issues, the garden and fire door now have procedures in place to regularly check through a risk assessment that the children are kept safe from harm and any dangerous areas of the garden have been removed or are inaccessible to the children. Following the nursery education inspection children now have regular opportunities to develop their understanding of number and these opportunities are monitored. The nursery is working towards obtaining Foundation Stage early learning goals training for all staff.

### **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 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):

- provide a suitable range of equipment for children, which is inviting for their stage of development, and allows freedom of movement based on their individual needs
- ensure staff are effectively deployed at all times

#### **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):

- continue to develop the assessment system to include regular observations of children at play, and use the written evidence to inform future planning and move children onto the next stage in their learning
- ensure all staff are fully familiar with early learning goals and the individual needs of children

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