

Stepping Stones Day Nursery

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	148626
Inspection date	12 July 2007
Inspector	Carol Patricia Willett
Setting Address	152 Nine Mile Ride, Finchampstead, Wokingham, Berkshire, RG40 4JA
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Registered person	Kingsclere Nurseries Ltd
Type of inspection	Integrated
Type of care	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.

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 Day Nursery opened in 1989 and are part of the Kingsclere group of nurseries. They operate from a converted residential building in Finchampstead and serve the local and wider area.

The nursery is registered to care for 33 children under five years. There are currently 34 children from three months to under five years on roll. This includes 11 funded three and four-year olds. The setting is able to support children with learning difficulties and or disabilities and children who speak English as an additional language.

The nursery is open from 08:00 to 18:00, Monday to Friday for 51 weeks a year. Nine members of staff work with the children. Six members of staff have early years qualifications to level 2 or 3 and one member of staff is currently working towards a recognised early years qualification. The nursery employs a cleaner and a cook. The setting receives support from the local Early Years Advisory team.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Children stay healthy and are protected from illness and infection because staff follow generally good health and hygiene policies and procedures. This ensures the areas where children play and sleep are in a clean, hygienic condition. Staff follow good nappy changing procedures and babies are checked frequently to ensure they are comfortable and clean. The nursery use tablecloths as children eat and staff clean these and the tables with anti-bacterial spray before and after children sit to eat. However, some procedures are not fully effective as children place fruit at snack times directly onto the table in the three to five room as they are not provided with plates. In the baby room spilt food falls onto a carpeted area and this increases the risk of cross infection as it is difficult to clean properly. Children understand when they need to wash their hands. For example, they go without prompting to wash their hands after messy play and staff ensure all children have clean hands before eating.

The majority of staff are first aid trained and children receive appropriate care if they have accidents. Staff follow very good procedures for giving medication with two members of staff present to check and confirm all the details. Detailed, confidential accident records are maintained alongside medication records and parents sign to acknowledge when medication has been administered. Children rest and sleep according to their needs. Staff meet children's needs well as they share information on children's diet and routines with parents. Children eat well and can have as much as they like to satisfy their appetites. They independently feed themselves, as appropriate to their age and stage of development using appropriate cutlery and crockery. Children enjoy their healthy snacks and know that fruit is good for them. Fresh water is available at all times and older children confidently help themselves to their drink bottles.

Children develop healthy bodies as they have daily opportunities for physical activity. Children thoroughly enjoy play outside in the fresh air where they skilfully manoeuvre wheeled toys around. They eagerly take turns to use the climbing frame and younger children develop in confidence as staff sensitively support them to climb up and get down. They enjoy digging and growing vegetables, taking care of them in the garden. All children move freely and confidently around their nursery rooms and use a range of age appropriate resources to develop their fine motor skills.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

Children play and learn in a small homely environment which is organised effectively where premises are organised into three age related base rooms. These are well equipped for the children's stages of development to ensure their comfort and safety and meet their needs. They are greeted warmly on arrival and immediately settle to play with a range of activities. They have their own named coat pegs which gives them a sense of ownership of their environment. Their artwork and family tree photographs are displayed throughout the nursery providing a stimulating environment for them. Staff set out a range of resources and activities for children ready for their arrival. Children show interest in what is set out and actively engage themselves in exploring resources. Resources are located on low shelving in all rooms so children can independently access the baskets and boxes of toys to initiate their own play throughout the nursery. Babies enjoy rummaging through the baskets of toys. Other toys in the toddler

and three to five room are rotated throughout the day to provide children with a wide variety of activities to promote learning in all skill areas.

Children keep safe within the nursery and their welfare is safeguarded as staff understand their role and responsibilities with regard to child protection. However, the policy does not contain a statement of procedures that will be followed if an accusation of abuse is made about a member of staff and this could put children at risk if procedures are not followed quickly. Staff do not record all injuries children arrive with. The premises are kept secure and all visitors are welcomed by staff who ensure written records are kept of those in the nursery. Staff undertake daily visual safety checks to ensure all areas are safe for children and internal hazards have been minimized, for example, socket covers are in place and safety gates used, as appropriate. Fire safety equipment is in place and staff are familiar with the procedures for emergency evacuation of the building. Children are comfortable and safe as they sleep and rest. Staff are vigilant regarding sleeping children and regular recorded checks are carried out. The attractive outdoor play space is safe for children to enjoy fresh air and play with good quality equipment that is suitable for their ages and needs. Outside, staff position themselves carefully to ensure children remain safely within the play area and also so that they play safely on the climbing frame. Children's awareness of their own safety is developed through daily activities and staff remind children to use resources safely and to care for other children.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

Children play happily in the small, friendly environment at the nursery where they are supported by kind, caring staff who know them well. Children confidently approach staff that listen and respond attentively to them enabling meaningful relationships to develop. Staff get down to play with babies and younger children at their level sitting on the floor with them and provide cuddles and lots of smiles which reinforces children's sense of well-being. Children develop in independence as they freely choose activities and age appropriate toys to initiate their own play. Babies, for example, enjoy crawling to the low shelving and rummaging through the baskets of toys. They like the noises of musical activity toys and name the sounds of animals. Toddlers beam with delight as they enjoy making patterns in the shaving foam activity enjoying the feel as they manipulate the material and develop awareness of their senses. They like to look at photographs of their family members including grandparents, parents and siblings in their family tree pictures which are displayed on the walls in the rooms. All children enjoy listening to stories and looking at books as they sit comfortably on soft cushions. Older children play cooperatively with toys such as the train set and develop their fine motor skills as they draw, paint and manipulate the mouse on the computer. Staff are sensitive to children's individual needs and allow children time for independent exploration. They listen to children and take a continual interest in what they are saying and doing. Children have daily opportunities to develop in all skill areas and dated observation records are kept showing individual children's achievements. Staff working with those under three have an understanding of how learning links to the Birth to three matters framework and use the framework to plan for young children's learning.

Nursery education

The quality of teaching and learning is good. Children develop good relationships with adults and other children at the nursery. They learn to co-operate and work well together. For example, they understand the need to share and take turns when playing together. Many children independently take themselves to the toilet and put on outdoor shoes and jackets and sunhats.

Staff are enthusiastic and caring and have a very positive manner developing good interaction and positive behaviour in the children. They use questions effectively throughout sessions to make children think. They maintain a calm, relaxed atmosphere in which children absorb themselves in play and learning. Children have daily opportunities to access activities which promote learning in all skill areas. Daily plans show how activities link to the early learning goals of the Foundation Stage curriculum. Staff have a good knowledge of individual children and plan to further develop their knowledge and skills. However, staff do not effectively use children's achievement records as they are confused about how to complete them due to the changing and conflicting information. This sometimes means more able children are not sufficiently challenged in their learning.

Children are generally making good progress towards the early learning goals. They immediately involve themselves in activities as soon as they arrive at the nursery demonstrating a strong motivation to learn. They concentrate well, for example, as they listen to stories and participate in group registration times and develop their problem solving skills as they negotiate with each other over resources, such as the clay to be shared fairly. They behave well as they are actively occupied and well supported and show consideration for others as they pass tools for cutting the clay. Children have a good understanding of letter and sound links as staff use opportunities well to reinforce and further develop children's knowledge with the letter of the week and children confidently name bubbles, balls and balloons for the letter B. Children recognise written letters which are in their name and are proud of their achievements as they type their name on the inspector's laptop. They are curious and eager to learn, listen attentively to stories and are able to answer questions about the pictures in story books. Children enjoy books and handle them carefully, making good use of the comfortable cushioned areas. They spend time looking at and sharing books and enjoy the adults enthusiastic story telling. Children cannot freely access information books as these are kept on a high shelf.

Children's mathematical development is good as staff plan and provide a good range of activities to develop their skills. Children are confident with numbers and counting and staff support children to reinforce and consolidate their number skills by encouraging them in the use of the computer software to support number skills. Many children count confidently and recognise numbers in the date and find numbers on the trees in the garden. They enjoy board games where they throw dice and move their counters. They participate in counting activities and enjoy number songs and rhymes. Children have opportunities to develop their understanding of space and shape and make patterns using pegs, matching and identifying colours and quantities.

Children have good opportunities to learn about the natural world. Staff make good use of the outdoor area to support children in planting and growing flowers and vegetables. Children help water and weed the garden area though this is fenced so limits children's ability to use independently. Children have great fun outside developing their physical skills as they skilfully manoeuvre wheeled toys around the garden. They use the climbing frame with confidence and indoors they reinforce their fine motor skills using a variety of small scale equipment and tools. They enjoy creative activities and use their imagination well as they pretend to they are on holiday in the caravan and make dinner in the garden playhouse during self-initiated role play. They absorb themselves in free painting, easily recognise different colours and join in readily with songs and action rhymes. They enjoy singing and enthusiastically participate in the Jo Jingles sessions using musical instruments and matching words and actions in the songs. Children independently use the painting easel and enjoy making their own pictures.

Staff are caring and enthusiastic. They show interest in the children's activities and respond to them appropriately, listening and extending the play and learning opportunities. Consequently children are happy and secure and confidently approach staff. They make good eye contact with the children and sit at their level promoting good communication. Staff identify the next steps in children's learning and ensure that appropriate activities are included in the plans to enable children to progress. Staff get to know the children well and use their knowledge to encourage the children's interests. Staff do not effectively reflect on their practice and this means they do not maximise opportunities to further develop children's learning and enable them to make links between areas. For example, the playdough is used in the playroom and is not available to further develop role play in the home or role play area. The range of recycled materials is sited in the conservatory and the tools and joining materials such as scissors, sticky tape and glue are in the play room which limits children ability to develop props to support their role play due to the limitation of the premises.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

The partnership with parents and carers is good. Parents are positive in their praise of the nursery and staff who they find to be genuinely caring. They work closely with parents to ensure they meet the needs of all children including those with any learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Parents of children in receipt of nursery education funding view children's records and are able to discuss the children's progress as often as they need or wish. All parents have daily verbal opportunities to exchange information about their child with staff. Parents of younger children also receive daily information with details of their child's day. Regular newsletters and information displayed on notice boards keep parents informed about nursery practice, the Foundation Stage curriculum and Birth to three matters framework. Information displayed includes details of planned activities throughout the nursery and how they link to the different learning areas. Parents share skills and send in items from home to support children's learning and for show and tell sessions at registration.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered. Children enjoy a range of activities which enable them to develop an awareness of the wider community, such as nature walks and visits to a local elderly persons residence. A children's farm visits the nursery and gives children insight to living creatures. They learn about familiar celebrations, such as Christmas and Easter, and some different cultural events, such as Diwali, through planned activities.

Children mostly behave very well in the nursery where they receive good support from staff who act as positive role models. They demonstrate good manners and are polite saying 'scuse me' when they want to talk or move by. Staff provide plenty for children to do and are very attentive and positive in all aspects of children's care and education. They talk calmly to the children using please and thank-you. Consequently, children develop a sense of belonging and good self-esteem. Staff know the children well. All children are treated with equal concern and all have access to all age appropriate activities. Staff give children lots of praise and encouragement; as a result they are sociable, chatty and confident.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

Children play and learn in a friendly, homely atmosphere and staff are mostly well organised throughout the nursery. Children are happy and their needs are met as staff work together well

as a team and are very supportive of each other. Children are supported effectively in their play as staffing ratios are maintained, sometimes through support from other nurseries in the chain. Staff have a good awareness of their roles and responsibilities. Most documentation is in place to support all areas of practice, although some policies have missing detail or need updating. Currently staff and parents' policies differ as staff policies are not yet updated. The leadership and management of nursery education is good. Practice is regularly reviewed and monitored and areas for improvement identified. For example, staff and managers are aware that planning and assessment records are not used effectively. Staff are confused by the changing practices for recording children's achievements due to the nursery changing their systems to meet the requirements of different local authorities within the nursery chain. This means children's achievement records are not always used effectively to plan for children's next steps in learning. The area manager from the nursery chain is working with all the managers and early years development workers to develop consistent practice across all the nurseries. Staff are encouraged to undertake training workshops both in-house and externally through local authority training programs to ensure their skills and knowledge are furthered and continually updated. Overall, the nursery meets the needs of the range of children for whom it provides.

Improvements since the last inspection

At the last inspection the nursery were required to ensure records are up to date and there are sufficient resources to meet the needs of all the children. The nursery has made good progress and maintain generally good records which are reviewed to ensure they are up to date; daily registers are accurately maintained so children children's welfare is safeguarded. There are sufficient resources available at all times so children can play freely and independently.

The education inspection required the nursery to improve: opportunities for children to practise emergent writing and calculation in everyday activities; planning details to identify the learning objectives and how activities can be adapted for children learning at different rates; staff knowledge of the stepping stones. The nursery has made some progress as there are many opportunities for children to practise calculation during everyday activities, for example, children lay the table and count during board games. There are opportunities for children to make marks at free painting activities and with writing tools and paper in the role play area and freely available in low shelving and drawers; this ensures children can develop their skills in these areas. Staff working with the children have appropriate childcare qualifications and have generally good knowledge of the Foundation Stage curriculum. Planning is not fully effective and does not identify how activities are adapted for children learning at different rates so some children are not always sufficiently challenged. This is carried forward for further improvement.

Complaints since the last inspection

Since April 2005 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.

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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 hygiene procedures during snack and meal times with regard to putting food on tables at snack time in the three to five room and the spillage of food on the carpet in the baby room
- improve child protection procedures to ensure the policy includes a written statement if allegations are made about staff and ensure injuries children arrive with are 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):

- ensure staff have a clear understanding about completing children's achievement records so they are used fully to plan for children's next steps in learning
- develop reflective practice in order to maximise all learning opportunities and ensure all planned activities provide sufficient challenge for more able children.

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