

Step by Step Day Nursery

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	129055
Inspection date	20 June 2007
Inspector	Beverly Hallett
Setting Address	Monument Gardens, Benden House, Lewisham, London, SE13 6PY
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Registered person	Joyce Hendle
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 satisfactory. 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?

Step by Step Day Nursery opened in 1994 and operates from the ground floor of the residential block Bendon House in the London Borough of Lewisham. A maximum of 36 children may attend the nursery at any one time. The nursery is open each weekday from 08.00 to 18.00 for 50 weeks of the year. All children share access to the communal secure enclosed outdoor play area.

There are currently 46 children aged from four months to under five years on roll. Of these, 15 children receive funding for early education. Children come from the local community and most of their parents work in the area. The nursery currently supports a number of children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities.

The nursery employs 13 members of staff. Of these, 11 hold appropriate early years qualifications and two are working towards a qualification.

The nursery receives support from Lewisham Early Years Development and Child Care Partnership (EYDCP) and Lewisham Early Years Advice and Resource Network (LEARN).

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is satisfactory.

Some suitable hygiene routines are in place to protect children's health, for example children have their own toothbrushes at the setting to clean their teeth after lunch and there are hand washing routines before eating and after participating in messy activities. Clear records and procedures also support children's health in case of accident and illness. However children are not encouraged to wash their hands after using their fingers to eat a snack of fruit. Also at sleep time, children are not given sheets to sleep on, only to use as a cover, therefore their face rests directly on the plastic mat. Although beds are cleaned after each use, sleeping directly on plastic is not good for children's health.

Children enjoy suitable foods based on healthy eating guidelines. Main meals are well cooked and tasty, consisting of things such as pasta, sausages and baked beans, and home made chicken broth with potatoes and sweetcorn. However lunch time organisation does not promote children's self help skills, independence and choice. All children are given a bowl and plastic spoon to eat with regardless of age and developmental stage. Although children are encouraged to go to the serving trolley to collect their food, they have no opportunities to serve themselves and staff do not sit with them at lunch times creating a relaxed and social occasion for children to develop positive attitudes to meal times.

Children are developing positive attitudes towards food, and learning about healthy eating, through planned topics and by bringing in their own fruit for snack and lunch times. This is a strategy implemented by the staff to encourage children to enjoy and eat fruit regularly.

Children have very good opportunities to experience a wide variety of physical exercise. Daily activities are planned which ensure a good balance of types of movement, for example balancing, throwing, climbing running and using wheeled toys. If the weather is poor, these activities are offered indoors, ensuring children always enjoy good opportunities to develop a wide range of physical skills.

Staff are familiar with the Birth to three matters framework and use it to support children's emotional well being. For example staff plan activities for under three's such as drawing pictures of themselves, which help children to develop a positive self image.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is satisfactory.

Children play contentedly in a warm and stimulating environment. Walls are decorated with lots of photographs and displays of children's art work based themed topics. The premises are suitably secure and staff supervise children well to ensure they do not leave the premises unaccompanied.

A good range of toys and equipment are available to promote learning for children in all areas, in particular for the preschool room. However the general appearance and maintenance of some of the toys and pieces of large equipment such as tables, detract from the attractiveness of the setting. They are well used and showing signs of wear and tear.

Good systems are in place to ensure children's safety whilst at the setting. Regular fire drills are practised, safety checks are carried out on electrical equipment and the setting has been

awarded a BAFE certificate to confirm that fire extinguishers are checked appropriately and conform to standards.

Children are appropriately protected by staff in case of child protection concern, as staff have a clear understanding of child protection policies and procedures and give top priority to children's welfare.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

Children and babies enjoy their time at the nursery and are mostly stimulated by the activities they are offered. They are interested in their play and staff capture their interest by asking them questions and encouraging them to participate in activities which appeal to them. Some are adult initiated, such as the planned craft, and some offer free choice such as the puzzles and imaginative play. This balance helps children to make progress in all areas of learning. Occasionally, older children are disinterested in the activities offered because there are limited areas available to play in. For example, creative, book and exploration areas are not freely available and children can only access these as part of adult focus activities.

All of the children are enthusiastic when taken outside to play and explore. A balanced range of equipment and toys provides them with challenges. For example, children play with bikes, balls, hoops and balancing equipment. This develops good physical skills and confidence in their abilities. Children learn about the natural world from trips into the local community and farther afield such as London Zoo. This range of activities allow them to explore and investigate, and comment on the seasons and the weather.

Staff are already developing their use of the Early Years Foundation Stage, even though it does not come into force until 2008. Babies and young children benefit from the staff's encouragement and conversations with them during meal times and play times.

Nursery Education.

The quality of teaching and learning is good. Staff use the Foundation Stage curriculum to plan topics for learning activities and support the children so that they are helped to achieve the learning outcomes. Regular observations are made which staff use to assess the children's development. This ensures that children's individual needs are taken into consideration when planning daily and weekly activities.

However, because most activities are adult initiated, the lack of a rich stimulating environment for older children limits free access to a wide range of facilities and therefore restricts their opportunities for autonomous learning. In addition, some staff do not extend children's learning through interaction during the large free play section of the daily routine. For example whilst playing alongside children at the water tray, staff do not attempt to support children's understanding of mathematical concepts and spatial awareness.

Children communicate with each other and adults with confidence, they respond to questions, listen to stories and enjoy practising their writing skills which are developing well. When books are available, children enjoy pretend reading stories to each other, drawing on the language patterns of stories and showing an understanding of the elements of stories.

Children are developing their understanding of numbers through the opportunities that staff provide through adult focus activities. However opportunities for children to experience many different mathematical activities in the environment and through daily routines is limited.

Children are offered a good range of resources to develop their physical skills and dexterity. As part of planned adult supervised activities they decorate adult drawn cut outs and complete paper collage activities, use tools with playdough, and develop their co-ordination using scissors, paintbrushes, pencils, and pegs and boards.

Children participate in role play well. They use their imaginations to participate in pretend activities such as a travel agency and a home corner. Opportunities for children to experience a good range of creative activities are limited as these are only set out as part of adult focus times.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is satisfactory.

Children generally behave well at the setting and the majority of children are focussed and occupied in their play. However, children at the lower and upper range of the developmental range, do become noisy and boisterous at times as the limitations of the adult's directive teaching style and limited number of activities available does not enable them to follow their own learning needs and interests.

Children's spiritual, moral, cultural and social development is fostered. Children's positive self image is developed as although the setting only have a few toys and resources which provide images of people different backgrounds for example religion and ability, there are many displays and activities planned around the children themselves and their individual families and backgrounds. In particular, children learn about and make positive contributions to their local community through sponsored toddles, and raising money for charities.

Partnership with parents is good. Detailed information about the nursery education is shared with parents both informally and at bi-annual parents evenings. Parents also contribute to their child's learning through a homework system.

Children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are appropriately supported as staff work closely with parents and local early years professionals to ensure individual needs are met.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

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

The leadership and management of the educational system is good. Staff are effective in supporting children in working towards the early learning goals. Children's records are regularly updated to monitor children's progress, and although staff are at different levels in their understanding of the early learning goals, planning for children's learning is well developed and ensures all children make good progress.

Children learn through a varied and well planned range of adult focus activities. However limitations of the environment does mean that children's opportunities to make choices, following their own interests and develop autonomous learning is restricted.

Rigorous and effective recruitment and training procedures ensure staff are suitably qualified to care for children. Staff's training needs are identified by management and staff attend a variety of workshops run mainly by the local early years team in order to meet those needs and ensure continued development within the setting.

The complaints procedure is made available to parents and a complaints log is kept to record any issues and how they were resolved. However, not all policies and procedures are reviewed in a consistent and timely manner to ensure they meet current guidelines and therefore support best practice in caring for children.

Improvements since the last inspection

At the last inspection the setting was asked to extend children's opportunities to select resources and work independently, in particular resources to promote drawing, writing and creative skills and to improve hygiene for children. Although a writing area has been created that children can access independently, these areas still need improvement and further recommendations have been made at this inspection.

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.

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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):

- ensure good hygiene routines are encouraged for children at all times, in particular when sleeping and after eating meals
- ensure toys and equipment such as rattles and drinking cups with spouts used by the youngest children are kept clean at all times and do not offer potential risk of cross infection
- ensure toys and resources are well maintained and replenished as necessary to offer children a stimulating and well resourced environment

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 the organisation of daily routines and the learning environment offers children opportunities to select resources and work independently to follow and extend their own learning
- ensure documentation to support children's learning and the efficient management of the setting are regularly reviewed and updated

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