



# Stepping Stones Day Nursery and Nursery School

Inspection report for early years provision

<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	EY258333
<b>Inspection date</b>	27 September 2005
<b>Inspector</b>	Gillian Little
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<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 satisfactory. 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 68 children may attend the nursery at any one time. The nursery is open Monday to Friday from 07:30 until 18:00 for 52 weeks of the year. The nursery

also offers out of school provision. All children share access to an enclosed outdoor play area.

There are currently 82 children aged from 7 months to under 9 years on roll. Of these, 25 children receive funding for nursery education. Children come from Witney and surrounding villages. The nursery currently supports a number of children with special educational needs and also supports a number of children who speak English as an additional language.

The nursery employs 11 staff, 7 of the staff, including the manager, hold appropriate early years qualifications and 4 staff members are working towards a qualification.

## **THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION**

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

The provision is satisfactory.

Children's health benefits from satisfactory procedures including first aid training for most staff, a no smoking policy and appropriate procedures for dealing with illness. Documentation is in place to record medications given to children but staff do not consistently gain signatures from parents to complete the records.

Children are able to play in a generally clean and hygienic environment but baby room staff wear outdoor shoes inside, which increases the risk of infection to children crawling on the floor. Younger children benefit from the hygienic nappy changing procedures, which include staff wearing disposable gloves and aprons. Staff label children's individual bottles and food, storing these appropriately in a fridge to prevent cross infection.

Older children learn about hygiene through established daily routines, such as washing hands after using the toilet and putting paper towels in the bin. Younger children also wash their hands throughout the day, but staff do not ensure that children do this after playing outside and before eating, which increases the risk of infection at mealtimes.

Children receive a regular and balanced diet of healthy meals, snacks and drinks. They enjoy meals such as spaghetti bolognese, sausages and mash or cheese and potato pie, all served with fresh vegetables. Children in the after school club enjoy sandwiches and fresh fruit. Children develop independence by pouring their own drinks and helping to serve food, although some staff forget to encourage them to do so.

All children enjoy regular opportunities to develop their physical skills both indoors and outdoors. Older children receiving funding for nursery education enjoy practising yoga to calming music, moving to action songs and playing parachute games to develop their co-ordination. Outdoors, they ride around on bikes and in cars, negotiating space well by following each other around a course of hoops and cones. A variety of outdoor equipment helps them to develop a range of physical skills at an appropriate level.

Younger children are able to rest and sleep according to their own needs and staff cuddle them while bottle feeding to help them feel secure.

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

The provision is satisfactory.

Children are able to play comfortably in a suitable environment. Babies have rooms on the first floor with space to play, eat and sleep, and have their milk kitchen and nappy changing areas located nearby. Older children have their play areas on the ground floor with easy access to toilets and the outdoor play space. Children attending after school facilities use a comfortable port cabin, which has appropriate furniture and its own toilet.

Children play with and use a variety of toys and resources, which staff clean regularly and check for damage by following appropriate rotas. Suitable toys are available for each age group and the nursery purchases these from reputable sources.

Children's risk of injury is generally minimal as the premises are appropriately maintained, secure and child friendly. There are satisfactory fire evacuation procedures in place and some staff have fire marshal training. Children learn about safe evacuation through regular drills but fire doors are routinely propped open, which increases the risk to children in the event of a fire. Children benefit from the manager's pro-active approach to accidents occurring on the premises. She routinely monitors accident forms to identify problem areas and puts procedures or resources into place to reduce these risks to children.

Children enjoy outdoor play throughout the year, as the enclosed outdoor area is partly lawn and partly paved, allowing for a range of activities. The adventure playground, however, has been vandalised by local youths and is dangerous to children. Children are under close supervision of staff and learn to stay away from this area, but steps to make it physically inaccessible to children are insufficient.

Children stay safe when away from the premises as staff are sufficient in number, carry out a risk assessment for each outing and take mobile phones and first aid kits.

Children's risk of harm from others is minimised as staff are aware of possible signs of child abuse, understand their role in child protection, and are able to put appropriate procedures into practice when necessary. Most staff have appropriate background checks and those awaiting checks do not have sole responsibility for children.

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

The provision is satisfactory.

Children show interest in what they do and develop a range of skills during their time at nursery. Babies and children under three benefit from staff following the Birth to Three framework. Staff use this to plan a variety of activities to help children develop in all areas of learning. Babies enjoy exploring musical instruments, homemade

shakers, plastic toys and a ball pit. They attempt to communicate with staff who respond appropriately to encourage early language skills. Babies benefit from the staff's knowledge of their individual routines, such as nap times and comforters. Older toddlers find out how household objects work, such as a hand held whisk, and begin to interact with each other through imaginative play in the home corner. Staff observe and record their progress in different learning areas to build up an individual profile. Children receive appropriate care from staff who put them down to sleep gently, helping children to remove excess clothes and covering them with a blanket. Children enjoy cuddles with staff when they wake up from their naps, rested and settled.

Children attending after school facilities enjoy a range of art and craft activities, games and outdoor play. They enjoy each other's company and chat to staff about their day at school and their home lives. They do not always have sufficient opportunities to make their own choices after a long day at school, as there is an expectation by staff to participate in some structured activities.

All children develop confidence and self-esteem as they engage in suitable and achievable tasks and are able to play and learn in a generally settled and calm environment.

#### Nursery Education

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. Senior staff have sufficient knowledge of the early learning goals to help children make sound progress towards them. Plans cover the six areas of learning on a long term, medium term and weekly basis to ensure that a variety of learning opportunities are available. However, plans do not detail daily objectives for learning. Other staff, who are not involved in the planning process and have not had sufficient training in the Foundation Stage, have to rely on verbal instructions to help children progress. The lack of daily planning results in staff missing opportunities to develop children's learning. Although there is a satisfactory balance of the six learning areas overall, plans do not ensure that all children have the same experiences. Part time children attending in a morning session, for example, do not have the same experience as those attending in the afternoon session.

Staff assess children's learning carefully. They use the stepping stones within the Foundation Stage to identify children's achievements. They complete a detailed report of each child each term outlining their progress in each of the six areas of learning. Staff use these assessments to plan for the next stage of learning with individual objectives for each child each term. Staff appropriately support children with special educational needs and ensure that they make sound progress. They also appropriately support children who speak English as an additional language and work closely with parents to help children make progress.

Children show a good level of behaviour and respond well to staff instructions, for example, lining up at the door quickly and quietly. They show care for others and recognise each other as friends. They enjoy the community spirit within the nursery, playing with younger children and singing Happy Birthday to the manager. They often become engrossed in their activities and cooperate well with each other.

Children learn about sounds and letters. They enjoy bringing toys from home beginning with the letter of the week and learn about rhyming words through well-planned group times. They express themselves confidently and are able to relate their own experiences to their play within the nursery. They have opportunities to develop writing skills and they enjoy stories on a regular basis. Children develop their understanding of number through games, computer programmes and simple calculation activities. However, staff miss everyday opportunities to reinforce the children's understanding of number and calculation.

Children learn about the world around them through a variety of activities. They enjoy exploring seasons through artefacts brought into the classroom such as a bird's nest or a conker shell. They explore water, concentrating well as they pour it from different containers. They are able to use a computer with confidence, moving the mouse to the appropriate place on the screen.

Children use their imaginations well, exploring different ways to draw and paint images. They attentively follow a music lesson using instruments to make different sounds. They develop social skills through imaginative play in the home corner, dressing up and setting the table for tea.

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

The provision is satisfactory.

Children become aware of wider society and have access to a reasonable range of resources reflecting diversity. They learn about different cultures through artwork and role-play. Staff generally treat children with equal concern and gain appropriate information from home in order to meet children's individual needs. Children with special needs are able to join in easily with other children. They receive appropriate support from staff who work in partnership with parents and outside agencies to help children progress.

Children develop comfortable relationships with staff, enjoying physical contact and cuddles when appropriate. They respond well to the staff's positive and consistent approach to behaviour management. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered appropriately.

Partnership with parents is good. Parents of children receiving funding for nursery education receive good information about the educational programme. Older and more able children take books home regularly to share with their parents and this helps to develop children's reading skills. Parents of children of all age groups receive good information about their children's progress and how the nursery is managed. As a result, parents are happy with the care their children receive.

### **Organisation**

The organisation is satisfactory.

Leadership and management is satisfactory. The manager ensures that children

benefit from a suitable education programme. She is aware of some areas within the setting which require improvement, such as the outdoor space and internal decoration, but has not identified other areas, such as training needs for staff working within the Foundation Stage and planning for the early learning goals. She helps to motivate staff through open communication and appropriate support. Staff work well together and are aware of each other's roles and responsibilities. The manager monitors staff performance but has not done this in recent months.

Appropriate recruitment and induction procedures are in place to ensure staff have the necessary checks and initial training in place. The adult to child ratios are generally well observed and adequately support children's care, learning and play. Documentation, policies and procedures generally work well in practise. The record of times of children's arrival and departure, however, is currently the responsibility of parents and staff do not check this rigorously to ensure that it is correct.

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

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

The nursery was asked to improve hygiene practices. The premises are now acceptably clean and hygienic. The nursery received a satisfactory Environmental Health report in July 2005. Hygiene has improved although some procedures still need further attention to reduce the risk of infection to children.

The nursery was asked to increase the indoor play space for two to three year olds. Staff have removed a table in this room which increases the play space available.

The nursery was asked to maintain a comfortable temperature throughout the premises and to ensure that heating appliances do not pose a hazard to children. The manager confirms that windows are kept open in hot weather and that the heating is on in cold weather to ensure children are comfortable throughout the year. Heating appliances are now fitted with guards to keep children safe.

The nursery was asked to provide staff with a comfortable area to take breaks away from the children. The staff now use the after school building during lunch breaks.

The nursery was asked to ensure that children can easily access toys and equipment. New storage units ensure that some resources are now easily accessible.

The nursery was asked to conduct a risk assessment on the premises identifying actions to be taken. This has been carried out which has reduced risks to children but now needs to be updated.

The nursery was asked to improve opportunities for imaginative play and to present role play areas carefully. Staff have purchased additional resources to encourage children to engage in imaginative play.

The nursery was asked to provide children receiving funding for nursery education with opportunities for independence. A new storage system is in place to encourage children to make their own choices; free play time is now part of each session; staff

encourage children to pour their own drinks at snack time and to tidy up at the end of a session. This improves the children's opportunities to develop independence.

The nursery was asked to develop staff interactions with children receiving funding for nursery education. Staff now spend more time in small groups with children to develop language and learning opportunities. They interact with children throughout the day but miss some opportunities to develop learning, particularly in mathematical development.

The nursery was asked to provide children receiving funding for nursery education with additional opportunities to explore and investigate using a wide range of tools and equipment. Children now have access to a workbench and "practical life drawers" to develop a wider range of skills.

The nursery was asked to improve staff's knowledge of how children learn and the stepping stones within the Foundation Stage (for children receiving funding for nursery education). Senior staff have training in this area and work together with other nurseries to improve their knowledge. Other staff, however, have not had sufficient training and are not involved in planning the curriculum. This limits the effectiveness of the nursery education programme for children.

The nursery was asked to ensure staff work together to support children with special needs. The manager has undertaken training and cascades this to other staff. Staff are aware of which children have special needs and understand how to support them appropriately. Children with special needs are making sound progress as a result.

The nursery was asked to improve staff's knowledge and understanding of positive behaviour management techniques. Staff have undertaken training and now use appropriate methods. Their positive and consistent approach encourages good behaviour from the children throughout the nursery.

The nursery was asked to maintain records of children's attendance and ensure these are available for inspection. The staff now keep appropriate records but rely on parents to sign children in and out of the nursery and this is not rigorously checked.

The nursery was asked to ensure that significant changes and events are notified to Ofsted. The nursery now has such notifications written into the policies and staff are all aware of these.

### **Complaints since the last inspection**

A concern was raised in September 2004 regarding the care provided by the setting. The concern related to National Standards 2 (Organisation), 7 (Health) and 11 (Behaviour). Ofsted investigated this concern by carrying out an unannounced inspection and raised four actions regarding Standards 7 (hygiene procedures), 11 (behaviour management) and 14 (records of attendance for staff and children and notifications to Ofsted). The provider remained qualified for registration.

A further concern was raised in February 2005 relating to National Standard 6



(Safety). Ofsted asked the provider to conduct an internal investigation and report back to Ofsted within ten working days. The provider remains qualified for registration.

## **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 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):

- ensure that children learn to wash their hands before eating meals and snacks
- obtain signatures from parents on children's medicine records
- consider an indoor shoe policy for the baby room
- ensure that dangerous areas within the garden are inaccessible to children
- ensure that fire doors are kept shut

#### **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 that staff make use of everyday opportunities to develop children's understanding of number
- ensure that all staff working within the Foundation Stage are involved in planning the curriculum and receive appropriate training

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the leaflet *Building better childcare: Compliments and concerns about inspectors' judgements* which is available from Ofsted's website: [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)