

# Tiny Steps Pre-School

Inspection report for early years provision

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	303486
<b>Inspection date</b>	17 April 2007
<b>Inspector</b>	Sheila Iwaskow

<b>Setting Address</b>	St. Martins Lane, Murdishaw, Runcorn, Cheshire, WA7 6HZ
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<b>Registered person</b>	Karen Reese
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<b>Type of inspection</b>	Integrated
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<b>Type of care</b>	Sessional care
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## 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 good.

### WHAT SORT OF SETTING IS IT?

Tiny Steps Pre-School was registered in 2001 and is run by a management committee. It operates in the grounds of St Martin's Catholic Primary School in the Murdishaw district of Runcorn and serves children living in the local area. Children attending access two large play rooms in a mobile unit, the school hall and computer suite. The school playground is available for outdoor activities.

There are currently 34 children on roll; of these 33 receive funding for nursery education. Children attend for a variety of sessions. The setting supports children with learning difficulties and disabilities.

The setting opens Monday to Friday 09.15 to 11.45 and Monday to Thursday 13.00 to 15.30 term time only.

The pre-school employs five staff; of these four hold an appropriate early years qualification. The setting receives support, advice and training from Sure Start in Halton and is a member of the Pre-School Learning Alliance.

## **THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION**

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

The provision is good.

Children's self-help skills are extremely well developed and staff put great importance upon nurturing children's independence before starting school. Wiping down tables, sweeping up sand and pouring out drinks are routinely carried by children through out the session. Children's health is well protected as a result of effective day-to-day practices that operate within the pre-school. Staff work in conjunction with the school cleaner to ensure high standards of cleanliness are maintained in all areas where children play. Children are learning to adopt good hygiene routines as they wash their hands before eating and after going to the toilet. The bathroom area has good reference to procedures for hand washing, displayed in picture and written format. Visits from the dentist and discussions about germs help children understand the underlying concepts of good hygiene routines. The setting has recently received an award from Halton and St Helens council in recognition of their commitment to keeping children's teeth healthy. All staff keep up to date with their first aid training and are therefore able to offer children good levels of care in the event of an accident or illness. A sick child policy is in place and meets the needs of all the children who attend. A list of communicable diseases is clearly displayed, which further helps to prevent the spread of infection.

Children's health and dietary needs are thoroughly discussed with parents and competently dealt with by staff. Snack times are relaxed social occasions where children sit in small groups and chat happily with each other and staff. At the inspection children were provided with a range of nutritious snacks, which included bananas, toast, apples and grapes. The use of brightly coloured plates and cups makes eating a more pleasurable experience for children. Exploring topics, such as 'healthy and unhealthy foods' helps children understand the importance of a balanced diet to their good health. Children confidently access the water fountain in the hallway to keep themselves refreshed throughout the day.

Children are learning the importance of physical activity in keeping themselves healthy. Outdoor play is an integral part of children's day. Children also enjoy two weekly sessions of physical activity in the school hall. They are developing a good awareness of space and give due consideration to others as they run around in the fresh air and ride on wheeled toys. Children have fun as they balance and negotiate the obstacle course and explore the climbing frame. Taped music provides children with enjoyable opportunities to explore positioning their bodies in different ways. A good range of small tools such as scissors, paint brushes and glue sticks are used by children with increasing control.

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

The provision is good.

Children are welcomed into a bright and stimulating environment. There are beautiful paintings of animals and fish in the hallway with key questions displayed, such as 'can you find the spiders?' to attract and maintain children's attention. The main room, in which the children play in is rich with labels, displays of children's work, number lines and alphabet friezes, creating a purposeful learning environment for all children who attend. Children move around their immediate area with ease and confidence and the space available is maximised to its full potential to provide children with a worthwhile range of learning opportunities, which covers all areas of their learning.

A wide range of developmentally appropriate resources are available to the children, which are safe, clean and in good condition. Resources are stored at child height and clearly labelled, allowing children to make informed decisions about their play. The well thought out organisation of resources enables children to sort and classify as they tidy toys away at the end of the session. The child-sized furniture is of good quality and meets the needs of all the children attending the pre-school.

Close attention is paid to safety throughout the setting. Entrance and exits to the setting are secure, the outdoor play area is fenced off and children are closely monitored at home time. This ensures that children are cared for in a safe and secure environment. Appropriate fire fighting equipment is in place, a clear evacuation policy is displayed and practised with the children. This informs children of procedures to follow in the event of a fire or emergency evacuation. Safety features, including a visitors book, radiator covers and plug sockets further protect children. Visitors, such as the policeman and fire fighter are invited in to the pre-school to talk to the children about keeping themselves safe. Regular risk assessments are carried out to minimise any potential hazards.

Children's welfare is protected as staff have a good awareness of the indicators of abuse and procedures to follow if they are concerned.

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

The provision is good.

Children are warmly welcomed into the pre-school at the beginning of the session. Parents and children are greeted by staff; children laugh happily and eagerly chat with their friends as they wait for the register to be taken. Good settling in procedures are in place, helping children to feel comfortable and secure within their new environment. Close relationships are established with St Martin's primary school to ensure the smooth transition for children from the pre-school to the reception class.

Warm and caring relationships are established with staff, who are enthusiastic and take an interest in what children say. For example, children have daily opportunities to tell everyone their news and things that have been happening in their lives. Staff are deployed effectively to support children in their play. Children thrive on the routines that operate within the setting. For example, they recognise that when the alarm clock goes off it is time to tidy up, select a book and read quietly for a few moments before snack time. Particularly noteworthy is the visual timetable, which keeps children fully informed of the routines that operate within the setting. Children are clearly secure in their environment and happily talk to visitors.

The setting is registered to care for younger children aged from two to three years; however, at the time of the inspection there were no children of this age on roll. Systems are in place to ensure that planning and assessments are securely linked to the 'Birth to matters' framework when younger children start at the pre-school in the new academic year. Information on this curriculum is displayed within the setting, however, there is no written details on the 'Birth to three matters' framework available for parents. This prevents them from being able to read about the curriculum being delivered to their children at their leisure.

Simple explanations, such as not swinging on chairs in case they hurt themselves and to take care when using knives teaches children right from wrong.

Nursery Education.

The quality of teaching and learning is good. Children clearly benefit from staff's secure knowledge and understanding of the Foundation Stage and how children learn. Detailed planning systems are in place, ensuring that children are provided with a range of exciting activities, which promote their development across all six areas of learning. Clear learning intentions are identified in short term planning and children's progress is regularly assessed and the information gained is used to predict the next stages of children's learning. As a result children are making good progress towards the early learning goals.

Areas of continuous provision are very well organised within the setting, allowing children to independently consolidate their learning. Teaching strategies are varied and have a positive effect on children's learning. Skilful questioning techniques are used spontaneously by staff to promote and extend children's thinking. For example, staff ask children what food comes from a cow; children reply 'milk'. Children are then asked what hens lay; children reply 'eggs'. Staff then extend this learning opportunity by asking them to think about what is in the egg.

Children express a keen interest in learning and are highly motivated. They confidently move from one activity to another and quickly become engrossed in what they are doing. Children's spoken language is developing well. They are confident speakers and spontaneously initiate conversations and recall events. For example, they happily tell staff what they did during their Easter holidays and re-tell the story of Goldilocks and the three bears. A love of books is fostered at the pre-school and children are encouraged to take books home from the setting on a daily basis to share with their parents. Children have interesting opportunities to write for a purpose as they make a shopping list and write letters about what 'Millie the clown' did when she went to their homes. They have many opportunities to link sounds to letters and recognise their name as part of the daily routine.

Children are developing a good understanding of mathematical concepts as they are fully incorporated into everyday activities. For example, they happily talk about how the colour of the Liverpool team shirt is red and randomly identify numbers as they play. They eagerly count how many children are present at snack time and then count out enough cups and plates for each child. Problem solving skills are nurtured as children cut up a banana so that each child at the table has a piece and identify the number that comes after nine and before eight. Children use a range of mathematical language to describe shape, position, size and quantity.

Children explore their senses as they smell spices, explore the contents of the feely bag, feel the differing textures of sand and cones and make models from junk. They squeal with delight as they examine each other using magnifying glasses and observe change as they plant seeds and watch them grow. Looking at maps, going on nature walks and observing seasonal changes enhances children's understanding of the world and the local area. Children enjoy looking at photographs of a recent outing. Such experiences helps them understand the passing of time. A range of resources, such as a computer and programmable toys are available to support children's development in Information, Communication and Technology.

Well resourced creative areas allow children to express themselves freely within the setting. They explore colour as they paint pictures and use a variety of resources to join and stick a range of materials together. They use their imaginations as they re enact stories, engage in role play and design Easter and Mother's Day cards.

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

The provision is good.

Children enjoy each others' company and play harmoniously in the friendly atmosphere of the pre-school. They share and take turns as they prepare a meal in the home corner and use sponges to paint numbers. Outings to a local farm and caring for the goldfish and stick insects that live in the pre-school help children to develop a caring attitude towards creatures that live in their environment.

Cultural diversity is well promoted within the setting through a range of well thought out and meaningful experiences. For example, with the help of parents, children enjoy cooking and tasting authentic Chinese cuisine. They also enjoy looking at artefacts from the Chinese culture and taking part in a dragon dance during Chinese New Year. A good range of multicultural resources further supports children's appreciation of the world that they live in.

Staff respect the uniqueness of each child and their individual needs. A comprehensive policy is in place which effectively underpins the care of children with learning difficulties and disabilities. Staff work closely with parents and outside agencies to ensure that children's additional needs are met. Activities are adapted and appropriate teaching strategies are used to promote inclusion for all children. Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered.

Children are delightful and well behaved. There is a strong ethos of mutual respect between staff and children and all are treated with individual care and respect. Minor disagreements are dealt with in a calm and sensitive manner. Frequent praise and encouragement from staff help children feel good about themselves and develop their self-confidence. Children's personal achievements are recognised by stickers, certificates and a system devised by staff called 'the good stamper chart'.

The partnership with parents and carers is good. The setting involves parents in fund raising activities and adopts an 'open door' policy, which contributes towards establishing trusting relationships. Parents receive a comprehensive booklet containing detailed information about the setting, policies and procedures. A notice board and regular newsletters ensure that parents are involved and informed about the setting. Parents also receive written reports about their children's educational progress and are invited to consultation evenings. Plans of topics being covered are displayed, however, although parents receive written details about the Foundation Stage at the start of the year there is no information about this curriculum readily available for parents within the setting. Parents are invited to contribute to some of their children's assessments, however, they have no input to assessments conducted on their children when they initially start at the pre-school. This prevents parents from being fully involved in their children's learning. Parents have the highest regard for the service provided and the excellent progress that their children are making.

## **Organisation**

The organisation is satisfactory.

Good procedures are in place for the recruitment and selection of the new staff. The registered person is aware of her responsibility to monitor the on-going suitability of existing staff, however, these procedures are not yet fully developed. A clear induction system is in place and forms a firm basis for staff employment. High staffing levels result in children receiving excellent levels of attention, support and encouragement. A good key worker system operates within

the pre-school, providing parents with a point of contact within the setting. A named deputy is in place, which ensures consistency of care in the absence of the manager.

Documentation and policies relating to the care of the children are in place and organised to reflect confidentiality. The registration certificate is displayed, keeping parents fully informed of the setting's conditions of registration.

The leadership and management of the nursery education is good. The aim of the pre-school is to provide an environment where children 'feel secure and become confident learners through play'. To fulfil this the management have developed a committed staff team who are highly motivated and clearly enjoy what they do. There is a clear vision for the pre-school and the management are able to identify their strengths and areas for improvement. The manager is actively involved in the day-to-day running of the pre-school and effectively supports the staff team during each session. Training of staff is given high priority to ensure that the quality of nursery education provided is of the highest standard.

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

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

Following the last care inspection the provider was requested to devise and make improvements to some policies. These issues have now been fully addressed. An equal opportunities policy is now in place, understood by staff and shared by parents. Procedures to be followed if an allegation is made against a member of staff is now included in the child protection policy. This ensures that policies are now compliant with the National Standards.

At the last nursery education inspection the provider agreed to review the regularity with which staff meet to identify their strengths, weaknesses and possible training needs. The frequency of these meetings have now increased ensuring that any issues arising concerning quality of the nursery education offered to the children can be dealt with promptly and in a timely manner.

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

Since the last inspection there have been no complaints made to Ofsted that required Ofsted or 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):

- provide parents with written information on the 'Birth to three matters' framework
- further develop procedures for monitoring the on-going suitability of staff.

### **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):

- involve parents with their children's initial assessments when they start at the pre-school
- display information for parents on the Foundation Stage.

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](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)