

Stepping Stones Private Day Nursery

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	323016
Inspection date	25 May 2007
Inspector	Judith Anne Kerr
Setting Address	351 Leigh Road, Leigh, Lancashire, WN7 1TN
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Registered person	Patricia Malone Cavanagh
Type of inspection	Integrated
Type of care	Full day care, Out of School 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 Private Day Nursery opened in 1991. It is privately owned and operates from the ground floor of a large detached house. Children are cared for in four main rooms. Stepping Stones is situated in a residential area on the outskirts of Leigh, Wigan and serves the local area. A maximum of 36 children may attend the nursery at any one time. The nursery is open each weekday, 50 weeks of the year from 08.00 to 18.00. All children share access to secure enclosed outdoor play areas.

There are currently 48 children from birth to five years on roll. Of these, 24 children receive funding for nursery education. Children attend for a variety of sessions. The nursery currently supports a number of children with disabilities.

The nursery employs nine staff who work with the children. Eight of the staff, including the manager, hold appropriate early years qualifications. The nursery receives support from a community advisory teacher from the local authority.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Children are cared for in a clean, well maintained environment and stay healthy because staff give a strong emphasis to hygiene practices. Cleaning rotas are in place and surfaces are regularly wiped down with anti-bacterial spray before and after children have eaten or after messy play. Young children are becoming aware of basic hygiene routines, as they are encouraged to wash their hands at appropriate times of the day, such as before eating and after toileting. A detailed sick child policy is implemented to protect children from the risk of cross infection and promote their health. Staff are trained in first aid and appropriate records of accidents and medication are maintained. However, parents are not consistently requested to countersign accident records to acknowledge the entry and this may put children's health at risk.

Children take part in and enjoy a balanced range of activities that contribute to keeping them healthy. They benefit from fresh air and exercise and have lots of opportunities to enjoy themselves and develop their physical skills in the outdoor areas. These activities enable children to develop their coordination skills as they climb, crawl through and under obstacles, manoeuvre round their friends, ride bikes and practise their ball skills. Children are able to rest according to their needs. For example, children sit in the quiet area of the rooms and rest their bodies when they are hot or tired.

Children's dietary needs are met because staff gather information from parents about their children and take this into account when planning snacks and meals. The children learn about healthy eating and foods which are good for them through activities, such as visiting the supermarket to see the range of foods available. Meal times are relaxed, social occasions, where staff and children sit together and enjoy one another's company. At snack times children make their own choices from the selection of foods provided. This helps to promote children's independence. The children have independent access to fresh drinking water throughout the day to quench their thirst.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

Staff are committed to ensuring that the premises are for the most part kept safe and secure. Children self select equipment and activities from a comprehensive range of easily accessible resources around the room. As a result, they can move confidently around the premises, developing their independence and learning to keep themselves safe. For example, children are reminded not to run indoors or push as they may hurt someone. However, a drain and some ivy in the outdoor play area may pose a risk to children. Staff talk to the children about keeping safe as part of regular discussions and use topics to develop their understanding. Visits to the nearby pelican crossing encourage children to understand the correct procedures to follow when crossing the road and helps them begin to take responsibility for their own safety.

The staff demonstrate a high level of understanding of child protection procedures and how to keep children safe. They have a clear understanding about their role in protecting children and use this knowledge to promote the children's well-being. The child protection policy is in line with current guidance and as a result children are protected from harm and abuse.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

Children are relaxed, happy and secure in their welcoming surroundings. Good settling-in procedures ensure a smooth transition between home and nursery. A well established key worker system means children benefit from consistent staff members and develop healthy relationships with consistent people. This enables the children to become absorbed in the range of activities provided. They are confident, interested and enjoy their time at nursery. The children make good progress in all areas of development. Staff have a comprehensive understanding of the 'Birth to three matters' framework and use this to plan purposeful activities. They record their observations and assessment of children under three years and plan for the 'next steps' of learning. As a result, planning is based on what children already know and can do, which helps their progress.

The organisation of the sessions provides for individual children's needs, ensuring all children are interested and motivated. The home routines of very young children are respected to maintain consistency of care. Children make choices about their play, selecting activities and resources from the range available. This helps develop their independence and self-esteem. They enthusiastically act out roles, such as making tea or taking the baby for a walk. The children make musical instruments using pasta in bottles, koala shaped shortbread biscuits, hunt for pyramids and make sand pictures and hand prints. They are supported to extend and try out new skills and experiences as they spoon the rice krispies from one bowl to another, taste different fruits and weigh the ingredients for baking.

Nursery Education

The quality of teaching and learning is good. Staff's knowledge of the Foundation Stage provides opportunities to enable children to progress in all areas of development. Planning takes a thematic approach and is linked to topics, such as Spring and 'people who help us'. The planning of focused activities is detailed and gives equal coverage to all areas of learning. Learning intentions are clear, the needs of more and less able children are identified and the next stages of learning are usually predicted. Areas of continuous provision are securely in place to allow children to independently consolidate skills they have already learned.

Children use their imagination during role play activities, such as making a lunch pack or taking turns being the doctor and then the patient. They are developing good concentration skills and have access to tools and materials to make models. For example, they make a rocket from tubes and shiny paper. Children are beginning to understand the meaning of print and enjoy looking at books, listening to stories and reading to each other. Writing materials are accessible throughout the day. However, children have limited opportunities to attempt writing for their own purposes as writing materials are not readily available in all areas of the provision. Children are confident and engage well with each other and visitors, sharing their achievements. Their behaviour is good and reflects the staff's high expectations. Children take turns, share and negotiate roles as they play with the dough and wait their turn for a particular cutter. They are successfully supported to learn how to manage their own behaviour and respect others. They enjoy learning about the lives of others through topics and planned activities. For example, they talk about going to a party at the weekend, inspecting the bird's nest and enjoy the visit from the bug man with his snails and snakes. Children are introduced to number and problem solving through daily activities, counting and sorting as part of daily routines, when using the computer and singing action rhymes, such as 'five speckled frogs'.

Staff use information from parents completed in 'me myself' forms to help them establish what children know and can do on entry. Their own observations are used to monitor children's progress. Children are realistically challenged as staff skilfully use open-ended questions to extend children's language and develop their thinking. They value what the children say using positive responses, displaying their work attractively and promoting their self-esteem.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

Staff are fully committed to working in partnership with parents to make sure children's individual needs are met. They find out about children before they start at the nursery. Regular discussions at the beginning and end of the day ensure children receive continuity and consistency of care. There are a variety of resources which promote equality of opportunity including jigsaws, multicultural and disabled play figures and dolls. Meaningful experiences, such as making flags of different countries and talking about kangaroos from Australia help children to learn about the wider world. All children are welcomed into an inclusive environment. Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered well by staff who give them individual attention and encourage them to be independent.

Children are well behaved. Staff manage their behaviour using strategies that are consistent and appropriate to children's age and stage of development. The pre-school children are learning about being kind to each other. Wrapping up the dolls well as 'it is cold today', helps children develop an understanding about caring for one another. Staff treat all children with individual care and respect; they speak to them in a calm and gentle manner. Children's contributions are valued and their achievements celebrated. This promotes their confidence and self-esteem.

Children benefit from the strong emphasis that staff place on developing good relationships with parents in respect of their care. A realistic settling-in procedure and key worker system helps children settle quickly. All the required details on individual children are recorded by staff. Policies and procedures are displayed for parents to see. Notice boards and regular newsletters keep parents up to date about the provision. Effective communication systems are in place, which include a comments box, open evening and a daily verbal exchange of information. Parents speak highly about the provision. They value the friendly, supportive staff and the homely atmosphere. The complaints procedure is shared with all parents in line with recent changes in legislation to allow them to be fully informed.

The partnership with parents and carers of children who receive funding for nursery education is good. They are warmly welcomed into the pre-school room at the beginning and end of the day, receive daily feedback about their children and bring in items from home to support activities. However, no information is displayed and parents receive no written information about the Foundation Stage to allow them time to read the literature and become fully aware of all aspects of the curriculum delivered to their children.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

Space is purposefully organised to provide children with a broad range of activities. Children benefit from good staff ratios, which ensures they receive individual care and attention. Most of the required documentation is maintained to meet the National Standards which ensure the safety and welfare of children.

Children are protected because staff are appointed through sound recruitment and selection procedures. However, procedures are not yet fully developed to monitor their on-going suitability to work with children. An initial induction procedure ensures staff are clear about the policies and how to implement them. Children benefit from a well qualified staff team who work well together. Regular support and meetings help to identify staff training needs. The management place a strong emphasis on working towards a highly skilled staff team. Staff are encouraged to attend regular training for their professional development, which contributes towards positive outcomes for children.

Leadership and management of the nursery is good. This contributes to the children's progress towards the early learning goals. Children benefit from teaching which is rooted in a secure knowledge of the foundation stage. The owner, manager and staff work very well together to ensure that children are provided with good quality care and education. This means that children are cared for in a positive and supportive environment which effectively promotes their social and moral development. The commitment to improvement is reflected in the programme for staff training, appraisal and team building. This works towards improving the quality of care and learning for all children.

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

Improvements since the last inspection

Following the last inspection the provider agreed to make improvements to the system for maintaining records relating to children with who have disabilities.

The provider has addressed the improvement requested at the last inspection to ensure that children are cared for in an environment which meets their particular needs.

Complaints since the last inspection

Since 1 April 2004 there has been one complaint made to Ofsted that required the provider and Ofsted to take action in order to meet the National Standards. The complaint was made in November 2006 and relates to National Standard 2. Ofsted visited the provision and raised three actions relating to numbers of children and staffing levels in the toddler room. The provider employed an additional member of staff, has supply staff available and monitors the flow of children between the baby and toddler room more closely to ensure ratios are maintained.

The complaint made to Ofsted is recorded in the provider's complaints record (this relates to complaints made after 3 October 2005). The nursery submitted an action plan to Ofsted detailing the steps taken to meet the actions. The provider remains qualified for registration

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):

- undertake a risk assessment on the ivy in the garden and ensure the drain does not pose a hazard to children
- ensure parents consistently countersign the accident records and further develop procedures to monitor the ongoing suitability of existing 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):

- provide children with further opportunities to develop emergent writing for a purpose
- provide parents with good quality written information about the Foundation Stage and early learning goals so that they are well informed about their child's learning.

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