

Stepping Stones Under 5s

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	EY290184
Inspection date	22 June 2007
Inspector	Lynn Clements
Setting Address	Coupals CP School, Chalkstone Way, Haverhill, Suffolk, CB9 0LB
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Registered person	Elaine McManus
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 satisfactory.

WHAT SORT OF SETTING IS IT?

Stepping Stones Under 5s is a privately owned pre-school. It was registered in 2004. The pre-school operates from a classroom within Coupals County Primary School. The school is situated in a residential area, close to the centre of Haverhill. A maximum of 20 children may attend the pre-school at any one time. The nursery is open each weekday from 08.45 to 12.00 and 12.45 to 15.15 during term times only. An additional lunch time session from 12.00 to 12.45 is available on request. All children share access to a secure enclosed outside play area.

There are currently 45 children aged from two to under five years on roll. Of these, 32 children receive funding for nursery education. The pre-school serves the local and surrounding areas.

The nursery employs seven members of staff. Most members of staff including the manager hold relevant early years qualifications. One member of staff is working towards an National Vocational Level 3. The setting receives support from the local authority and Pre-school Learning Alliance.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Staff work well as a team, taking effective measures to promote the children's good health. They encourage and support children to learn about the importance of personal hygiene through regular daily routines. Children sing a song as they wash their hands which helps to ensure they spend enough time so the process is effective. Hand washing is encouraged at relevant times and clear child-height visual clues are provided which help to remind children how to wash their hands thoroughly. All health related documentation required by regulation is in place and updated as required. Parents are encouraged to share information to meet children's changing needs. Members of staff have completed first aid training enabling them to care for children appropriately in the event of an accident. All accidents occurring on the premises are recorded and shared with parents. Nappy changing procedures are in place and implemented in practice to reduce the risk of cross-contamination.

Children learn about keeping healthy as they talk about drinking all their milk so they will have strong teeth and bones. Staff work hard as a team to ensure healthy eating is promoted within the pre-school. Weekly snack menus are planned to provide a balanced nutritious diet for children. Staff encourage parents and carers to support this when providing packed lunches. Access to drinking water throughout the session is good and ensures no child remains thirsty. Information about children's individual dietary needs are recorded and parental wishes respected. Check lists about children's allergies are in place to provide a quick reference guide to staff as they prepare snack. Children are actively encouraged to help at snack time. They assist members of staff making toast and cutting it in half ready for children to enjoy at the rolling snack bar. Children increase their coordination and competence as they spread toppings on their toast or pour their own drinks. They have plenty of opportunities to taste different foods from other countries enabling them to explore their personal likes and dislikes. Staff have attended relevant training in food preparation and hygiene to protect children from cross-contamination.

Children enjoy a wide range of physical activities which help them develop their confidence and skill when using large and small apparatus. For example, they confidently balance and jump on crates and planks which they use to create an obstacle course. They use wheeled toys safely and move around the classroom and outside area showing good spatial awareness. Children have plenty of opportunities to develop skills such as hand to eye co-ordination as they use single handed tools and equipment with increasing control. All children are able to rest or be active according to their individual needs.

Staff have recently completed training with regard to the 'Birth to three matters' framework to support their practice with children under three years.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

The pre-school provides a welcoming environment for parents and visitors. Clear information is placed on notice boards and children's creations are displayed on the walls helping to give them a sense of belonging and achievement. Children and parents are greeted warmly by staff. They freely access the wide range of attractive, well-maintained play equipment and resources. Very good child-height storage promotes independence and helps children to develop their decision making skills. A range of child-height furniture enables children to extend their play

and learning in safety and comfort. Daily check lists are used by members of staff to ensure the play-space is safe for children and any issues are clearly identified and appropriate action is taken.

Staff support and encourage children to care for their environment, gently reminding them to look after their books and toys or tidy away between each activity; this also ensures the play-space is kept free from tripping hazards and helps children to learn about the importance of doing things for themselves. Children are supervised at all times. Staff take positive steps to help them understand how to keep themselves safe. For example, they practise and discuss road safety while out and about or learn how to use knives to cut their toast or spread the topping safely. Clear child collection procedures are implemented in practice to prevent children leaving the pre-school with strangers. Security systems are in place to prevent children leaving the building unescorted and visitors are checked prior to entry to protect children from harm.

The majority of staff have completed relevant safeguarding children training and this is updated regularly. They have a clear knowledge and understanding of child protection procedures and how to make referrals to social services if they believe a child is at risk. Staff act in the best interests of the child at all times to ensure their welfare remains paramount

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

Children arriving at the pre-school are eager to join in. They make their own decisions about the activities they want to explore. The organisation of the pre-school encourages their independence, building confidence and self-esteem. Staff support children in their chosen activity; enthusiastically helping to extend their existing knowledge and skills, for example, when children are engaged in construction, staff provide equipment such as crates and planks enabling them to build on a larger scale than is possible indoors.

Children of all ages mix freely, benefiting from observing and learning skills from their peer group. Staff interact well, encouraging children to play together and build caring relationships.

Plans are made using the 'Birth to three matters' framework to support children until they are old enough and able to move onto the Foundation Stage curriculum. Children's individual progress is monitored and activities planned to ensure they make progress.

Nursery Education

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. Children are offered a range of worthwhile experiences. They are making sound progress towards the early learning goals. Staff have an understanding of how children learn and interact appropriately to support their development. They are interested in what the children say and do, taking time to listen and respond positively to their suggestions and ideas. Children are confident in their relationships with each other and staff as they move freely around the classroom, making choices about their play and learning.

Children's achievements are linked to the stepping stones. Systems for recording their progress are in place. However, there is a weakness in the planning systems with regard to identifying learning intentions in all six areas of learning, and differentiation in planning enabling staff to adapt activities to challenge the more or less able child effectively is limited. Information about children's educational development within the pre-school is shared with parents and carers

through daily verbal feedback and written diaries. Assessment records are in place and shared during open evenings. While children's progress over time can be plotted through their records of assessment, identification of their next steps for learning is limited.

Children enjoy what they do and the majority are able to sustain interest in a range of activities. Overall, children concentrate well to complete tasks. Children's self-esteem and confidence increase as they share stories from home and proudly seek out others to show them their finished creations, such as their 3D play dough diamond rings or yellow bananas. They form good relationships with each other and members of staff, as they make room at activities, learning to share and care for each other.

Children become increasingly independent when dealing with their own physical needs. For example, they know where to put their belongings such as sun hats and bags and are confident at helping themselves to snack when they are hungry. Children take the initiative to be self-sufficient in their learning because they have access to equipment and resources stored at their level.

Children are beginning to use writing for a purpose in role play as they take messages and write lists. They select books independently, using the pictures as clues to the text as they share stories with their friends. Children use name cards, helping them to recognise their name in print. They are beginning to link sounds to letters and write their names, forming letters correctly. Posters and labels around the setting provide children with examples of the printed word.

Children begin to make sense of the world around them as they explore and investigate information technology; they negotiate programmes on the computer and use the mouse with good coordination. Children learn about the changing seasons of the year and what the weather is doing. They observe change as their seedlings grow.

Children explore volume and capacity as they fill and empty containers during sand and water play. They develop their understanding of simple calculation as they sing number rhymes and songs. Children explore repeating patterns, setting the table for snack or lunch, or when sequencing compare bears and sorting by colour and size.

Children enjoy a range of physical activities which help them to develop their confidence and skill as they move around safely. They demonstrate sound coordination and control while using large apparatus. For example, they confidently balance on wooden planks and soft play cubes. Children develop their fine motor skills as they use single handed tools and utensils with increasing competence. They are beginning to learn about the importance of physical exercise and how it can help them to stay fit and healthy.

Children express their individual creativity through a satisfactory range of craft activities. For example, they freely paint and create pictures, some of which are displayed around the setting. Children enjoy experimenting with different textures as they paint their hands to print pictures or squeeze and knead play dough. They develop their games based on real and imagined experiences as they encourage others to play babies in role play games.

Staff work closely as a team, praising and encouraging children to develop their personal independence and support learning. Staff are developing positive relationships with the feeder primary school to support smooth transitions for children as they take the next step into mainstream school.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is satisfactory.

Staff ensure that there is no bias in their practice in relation to gender, race or disability. Children learn about other cultures and beliefs during topics and discussions. They examine artefacts and some bright posters provide positive images for children. Staff plan the classroom and layout of activities to provide equal access for all children.

Staff have clear procedures in place to support children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. They work with other agencies in the best interests of the child. One-to-one funding is sought as required and other professionals are welcomed into the setting to provide further support for children. Staff support families and work closely with them. Individual education plans are in place and reviewed regularly with parents to ensure children make progress.

Staff work together to provide a consistent approach to behaviour management. Children learn to share, take turns and negotiate with each other. Younger children are supported by staff to share toys fairly. They show care and consideration for others as they greet each other warmly on arrival and encourage others to join in their imaginary games. Staff create an environment that fosters children's confidence and self-esteem. A behaviour management policy is in place but does not include information for staff or parents regarding bullying issues. Staff share verbal information with parents regarding behavioural issues. However, systems for recording incidents during the day-to-day running of the setting are limited.

The pre-school develops close relationships with parents. Staff take time to offer verbal feedback about their child's development and day at the pre-school and written two-way daily diaries are in place to aid clear communications. Notice boards provide relevant information about forthcoming events, funding, policies and procedures and general pre-school business. Parents are encouraged to share their skills in the setting and are received warmly when they volunteer to help during sessions. Parents and carers views are listened to and any concerns affecting the care of their children are fully investigated and dealt with.

Partnership with parents and carers of children in receipt of nursery funding is satisfactory. Information is shared about the curriculum offered and daily diaries provide opportunities for parents to share information from home. However, opportunities for parents and carers to make written comments and share observations about their children achievements at home in relation to the Foundation Stage curriculum are limited. Daily planning is displayed to provide information for parents and carers enabling them to share in their children's experiences at the pre-school. Members of staff develop links with the reception class to provide continuity of care for children.

Children are learning to share and help each other. They encourage others to join in their games and show care and consideration to each other. Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered.

Organisation

The organisation is satisfactory.

Managers maintain documentation appropriately and most policies and procedures are in place. Children attend the pre-school for a variety of sessions. However, the systems in place for registering children and members of staff do not contain their times of arrival or departure to ensure they can be safely accounted for at all times. Robust vetting systems are implemented

to protect children from harm. Staff induction procedures are implemented in practice and regular appraisals take place to support existing members of staff. All information gathered is used to ensure staff are appropriately deployed within the pre-school. An operational plan is in place and has been made available to parents and carers to support the smooth running of the setting.

All members of staff including the manager hold appropriate qualifications. They attend regular training courses to update their knowledge and skills and implement frameworks such as 'Birth to three matters' and the Foundation Stage curriculum. The organisation of the setting ensures that children are well cared for and are developing positive attitudes towards their learning. Overall the needs of the children are met.

Leadership and management is satisfactory. The provider supports staff and works closely with them to develop the staff team. Staff are responsive to the needs of children and parents. Training budgets are in place to develop existing practice and skills. Funding for resources and topic work is sought enabling staff to provide a varied curriculum. Regular planning meetings take place to support the delivery of the Foundation Stage curriculum. The provider monitors classroom practice to ensure staff work appropriately with children.

Improvements since the last inspection

Since the last inspection the provider has improved outcomes for children. Information from parents is now in place enabling staff to contact them directly in an emergency. Permission is also in place enabling members of staff to seek emergency medical advice or treatment to ensure children are cared for appropriately in the event of an accident or them becoming ill. All concerns are now recorded and made available to parents and carers on request. Staff have completed behaviour management training to ensure they support children effectively according to their age and stage of development.

This is the first nursery education inspection.

Complaints since the last inspection

Since the last inspection, there have been two complaints made to Ofsted that required the provider to take action in order to meet the National Standards.

On the 26/01/2005 Ofsted received a concern relating to National Standard 2: Organisation, 11: Behaviour, 8: Food and drink, 12: Working in partnership with parents and carers. An Ofsted inspector conducted an unannounced visit. As a result of this visit two recommendations were raised under National Standard 2: Organisation and National Standard 12: Partnership with Parents and Carers. A satisfactory response was received from the provider. The provider remains qualified for registration.

On the 29/03/2006 Ofsted received a concern relating to National Standard 1: Suitable person, 2: Organisation and 6: Safety. An Ofsted inspector conducted an unannounced visit. As a result of this visit one action was raised under National Standard 6: Safety. A satisfactory response was received from the provider. 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.

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 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):

- update the written statement on behaviour management, to include information regarding bullying; formalise the current system for reporting incidents to ensure that any incident occurring in the pre-school is recorded and shared with parents or carers on the day
- develop the current registration systems to include the hours of attendance for members of staff and children.

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):

- further develop the current planning systems to ensure learning intentions are clearly identified in all six areas of learning and include differentiation enabling staff to adapt activities appropriately to challenge the more or less able child effectively
- further develop the current records of assessment to ensure children's next steps for learning are clearly identified
- further develop opportunities for parents and carers to share in their children's records of assessment, providing observations from home and enabling them to take an active role in their child's formative years.

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