

Stepping Stones Day Nursery (Stanground)

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	256828
Inspection date	25 April 2007
Inspector	Anna Davies
Setting Address	The Bungalow, Oakdale Avenue, Stanground, PETERBOROUGH, Cambridgeshire, PE2 8TD
Telephone number	01733 563 116
E-mail	
Registered person	Janet Baker
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 good.

WHAT SORT OF SETTING IS IT?

Stepping Stones Day Nursery Oakdale is one of two operating in the city of Peterborough. It opened in 1988 and operates from a bungalow in the grounds of Oakdale Primary School, Stanground. A maximum of 17 children may attend the nursery at any one time. The nursery is open each weekday from 08.00 to 17.30 for 51 weeks of the year. All children share access to a secure enclosed outdoor play area.

There are currently 21 children aged from three months to under five years on the roll. Of these, 11 children receive funding for early education. Children come from a wide catchment area. The nursery does not currently support children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The nursery does currently support a number of children who speak English as an additional language.

The nursery employs four full-time staff who work directly with the children. Of these, all hold appropriate early years qualifications. The setting receives support from the local Early Years and Childcare Development Team.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Children's health is actively promoted by the staff who follow effective procedures to maintain a healthy environment and to encourage them to develop good personal hygiene routines. For example, staff wipe tables with antibacterial spray before the children sit down to eat and open windows in the main play areas to ensure that the air remains fresh. Children wash their hands after using the toilet and before eating food and are learning about the benefits of maintaining good personal hygiene through discussion with staff and reminder posters displayed in the bathroom. Younger children benefit from the staff's effective nappy changing procedures. They wear aprons and clean the changing mat thoroughly between each child. Children receive appropriate treatment when they have accidents because all staff hold current first aid certificates and a suitably stocked first aid box is easily accessible by both rooms. Children benefit from effective record keeping in relation to nappy changes and records of any accidents. However, the system for obtaining prior written permission for medication each time it is administered, is inconsistent. This has the potential to compromise children's health and well-being.

Children's dietary needs are respected, and all dietary requirements are recorded on children's records so that their needs can be met. Children's dietary health is promoted effectively as snacks are healthy and balanced. For example, children choose from their selection of fresh fruit that they bring from home to share each morning. Children sit together with staff at mealtimes and benefit from healthy and nutritious meals such as quiche, salad and cous-cous or roast chicken, carrots, broccoli and mashed potato. Younger children's individual mealtime routines are followed according to parent's wishes. Children learn about healthy eating through discussion and cooking activities as they talk about the ingredients and whether they are good for them. All children help themselves to fresh drinking water at any time, from their individual water bottles. These are taken outside when the children play in the garden so that children are able to respond to their body's needs after physical activity. This ensures that they remain well hydrated throughout the day.

All children have good opportunities for physical play and fresh air. They have regular opportunities to use the garden which hosts a range of equipment suitable for all age of children. For example, older children enjoy using the climbing frames and crawling through tunnels, whilst younger children enjoy rocking toys and are appropriately supported as they begin to 'toddle' around the outside environment. Extra resources are taken outside into the garden, for example, paper, pens and books, to further enhance children's enjoyment of the outside area. Inside, children regularly take part in 'tumble tots' action and music sessions where they have opportunities to move their bodies in many ways, for example, to wiggle, jump, stamp and march. Children have opportunities to practise fine skills as they use rolling pins to make biscuit crumbs and fill sand moulds to create patterns and shapes in the wet sand.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

Children are cared for in a welcoming and secure environment. Children's safety is promoted by the staff who supervise the children well. For example, all parents and visitors are greeted when they arrive and visitors use a book to record their arrival and departure times. The bell on the front door alerts staff to visitors, and for the rest of the time, the door is kept locked.

Children begin to learn about fire safety because they regularly practise emergency evacuation procedures. However, the methods for raising the alarm in the event of a fire, are not completely effective and potentially compromise children's safety in the event of an emergency. Children enjoy using a good range of safe and suitable play materials and equipment. They are able to self-select activities from low-level furniture and move freely between their chosen tasks. All of the toys and most of the equipment used by children are in good condition and their on-going suitability is regularly assessed. Children's understanding of keeping themselves safe is reinforced by staff as they are asked to sit appropriately on chairs. Younger children's safety is considered by staff as they plan activities. For example, sand play is sited on the carpet area instead of the wooden flooring, to prevent young children from slipping on spilt sand.

Children welfare is safeguarded because some staff have completed relevant training on how to safeguard children. All staff have a secure knowledge and understanding of signs and symptoms of possible abuse and the procedures for recording and reporting concerns about a child in their care.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

Children enjoy attending the setting and settle well to play with their chosen activities. They have plenty of opportunities to select their own play materials from suitable low-level storage units that they can easily access themselves. Children are grouped in two rooms according to their age. Generally, children under three years are cared for in the 'dolphins' room. They enjoy many rich learning opportunities as the activities are planned according to their individual interests and possible lines of development. For example, staff are aware that one child's current interest lies in imaginative play, so they have provided an extended range of accessible resources such as play food and equipment in the play kitchen area to support and extend this interest. Children make their own musical 'shakers' and all sit together to sing songs as requested by the children, for example, 'twinkle, twinkle, chocolate bar'. The children confidently join in the repeated refrains of the song as they shake their instruments and listen to the different sounds that they make. Younger babies confidently explore their environment as they see objects in the distance and crawl over to them. For example, a baby explores the texture of a pastry brush, pulling a face as he puts it in his mouth. Babies are curious as they skilfully clash two cymbals together and listen intently to the resulting sound, before repeating the action again and again. Children benefit from the good quality interaction during activities and the knowledge of the individual children that the staff have. Staff effectively support the children as they experiment with felt pens, mark-making on paper. For example, children are praised when they create patterns on the paper and show delight as they continue the activity.

Children under three years have their achievements and development recorded through effective use of the 'Birth to three matters' framework. Staff monitor children's progress by making regular observations of the children which are used to inform the short-term planning of activities. This ensures that activities can be specifically prepared for the children in order to promote their skills and interests further.

Nursery Education

The quality of teaching and learning is good. Staff in the 'green frogs' room have a secure understanding of the Foundation Stage curriculum. Plans cover all areas of learning and are meaningful and relevant to children. All activities are well planned and take account of children's interests, for example, activities are re-visited in future planning if they prove popular. However,

the learning intentions of activities and extension or support required for more and less able children, are not clearly identified which means that staff and students are not always aware of the specific goals in mind when supporting activities. This does not completely ensure that the planned activities build on what children already know and can do. Staff complete observations on children and link these to the areas of learning. However, they are not linked to individual stepping stones which means that staff are not able to monitor the progress that individual children are making towards the early learning goals. Children have individual records of achievement and staff generally know areas for development for their key children. However, records do not show children's next steps for development. Staff use effective teaching methods to support children's learning. They give children time and space to explore activities independently, or demonstrate skills. Children are praised and encouraged consistently.

Children are developing their independence well as they pour their own drinks at snack time and obtain their own aprons prior to painting. They take care of their own needs and are confident to explain their needs to others. For example, one child returns from the bathroom with a puzzled look on her face. When asked why, she explains to a member of staff that the bathroom door is closed and she can't get in to use the toilet. Children's self-esteem is promoted as they share their 'weekend news' during circle time on Monday mornings. They enjoy the responsibility of giving the props out at song time, as part of their role as the 'special helper' for the day. Older children helpfully support the younger children as they take part in activities such as painting, for example, by demonstrating how to wash your paintbrush after each colour change to prevent colours mixing when you don't want them to. Children persist at activities and maintain concentration for great lengths as they engage in role play activities such as 'mums, dads, brothers and sisters'.

Children's communication and language skills are developing well because staff engage with them and interact with them throughout the session. They ask questions that promote discussion, for example, 'what happens next' as they read the familiar story of 'The three little pigs' and the children are asked to consider how the pigs feel as they are building their houses. Children begin to learn about letters because they have opportunities to recognise their name and have a wide variety of labels showing letters and text throughout the setting in the displays. Spontaneous activities are used by staff to enhance children's understanding of the use and sound of letters. For example, a child wonders why she can no longer see the display of numbers on her calculator. A member of staff helps her to find the 'on/off' button by spelling out the letters to her. Children enjoy stories such as 'The Gruffalo' and staff provide props such as role play figures and a stimulating display, to further the children's interest.

Children's growing knowledge and understanding of early mathematics and numbers is good. Hanging number mobiles around the room help to enhance children's recognition of numerals and number values. Children are interested in numbers and counting, and do so spontaneously in everyday play and activities. For example, a child shares out a large quantity of toy trains between four of her friends, counting the numbers aloud to ensure that they all have an equal number. Early calculation skills are reinforced by staff as the children sing familiar songs such as 'five little rocket ships' where most children confidently take one away each time as the member of staff asks 'how many have we got left now?'. Children's understanding of shape is developing. For example, as they colour pictures of faces, children notice symmetrical features such as eyes and colour them in the same colour, to reflect this understanding.

Children learn about life cycles as they watch the tadpoles hatch and grow before releasing them back into the pond. They grow seeds and display them on a low-level unit so that they can continue to monitor their growth and development. Children are taking an active interest

in their environment as they notice features about living things, for example, that snakes don't have legs, they slither along. They learn about the natural world as a member of staff brings in a chair from outside and asks the children why it is wet. The children all eagerly respond 'because it's raining'. Children are interested in how things work, for example, as they gently kick a wooden cylindrical shape across the floor and watch it roll. Children have good opportunities to freely design and construct models from recycled materials and construction resources such as sticky tape, staples, glue and paper fasteners. Children learn about information and communication technology as they use appropriate programmes on the computer and explore the use of torches and calculators in their everyday play. Children speak freely to adults about their home and families, and staff encourage the children to share their weekend experiences in a 'diary' book which staff and children write and draw in together.

Children's creative development is promoted through an imaginative selection of activities. They enjoy using musical instruments such as drums, bells, keyboards and rain shakers as they listen to the different sounds of each one or create music altogether. Children listen to 'whistle while you work' music as they tidy up which encourages them to help and background classical music is often played during quieter times of the day. Children also listen to music from different cultures. This encourages children to appreciate a broad range of music. Children take part in many creative activities such as free painting where they are encouraged to express themselves and develop their own ideas. Children explore the feel of porridge oats and puffed wheat cereal as they describe the way that they stick to one another. Children confidently use role play to develop their imagination. For example, as the children go from one room to another for tea time, they pretend to be different animals and staff guess which animal they are by observing the noises and movements that the children make.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

Children are welcomed into the setting and are included in all activities. They are treated as individuals and with respect. For example, when a new member of staff started working at the setting, children and staff were asked to fill small boxes with items that represented their likes and dislikes. This was effective in helping staff and children to get to know each other. Careful planning, discussion with parents and organisation ensures that each child's requirements regarding culture and religion are managed effectively. Children's contributions are valued. They are all given the opportunity to show their favourite toys from the 'Friday look box' and are encouraged to share their 'weekend news' with everyone. Children bring fruit in on a daily basis to share with their friends at snack time, promoting their consideration of others. Children's work is displayed on the walls. This develops their sense of achievement and self-esteem. Children demonstrate a sense of belonging as they make decisions about their own activities. Younger children's individual routines are valued by staff. For example, children bring in their own 'comforters' and staff spend time reassuring them as their parents leave. This enables children to feel a strong sense of belonging and security. Children begin to learn about the wider world as they celebrate a variety of festivals such as Chinese New Year. During this celebration, children decorated the nursery bathroom with angpows, calendars, lanterns and Chinese writing. Children use a range of multicultural resources such as books, puzzles and dolls that display positive images of a diverse society. Children are encouraged to bring in further resources from home such as cultural music, in order to further extend this area of learning. There are good systems in place to monitor and support children with disabilities or learning difficulties. This ensures that all children's individual needs are met effectively and sensitively.

Children benefit from the good relationships between staff and parents. Parents are kept well informed of their child's day through daily discussions. They are invited into the setting to spend time with their child and to discuss their child's needs with staff. Parents of younger children receive communications in a daily 'diary' book which outlines their child's day. Regular feedback is invited from parents, to identify the strengths and areas for development of the setting. This positive partnership with parents and carers has a beneficial impact on children's development and feelings of well-being.

Children behave well because they are provided with interesting activities which are fun and stimulating. They benefit from the staffs active approach when behaviour issues arise. They use age-appropriate methods such as explanation and distraction. Children receive a consistent approach from staff. They use positive language, recognise and acknowledge their efforts and achievements and clearly explain what is expected of the children who understand the boundaries that are in place for their safety. Younger children begin to learn to manage their behaviour because staff display a calm and consistent approach when managing issues that relate to children's stage of development. Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered.

The partnership with parents and carers of nursery education is good. They have access to a wealth of information about the Foundation Stage, on notice boards and in leaflets. Clearly displayed planning and regular communication notices keep parents well informed of the current and future activities and themes. This enables them to participate in their child's learning at home. Parents discuss the progress that their child is making, on an informal basis with staff. They are verbally able to offer their own information about their child's skills. However, there is no system in place to record this information. This is not completely effective in helping staff to plan children's next steps and provide activities based on what the children already know and can do.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

Children benefit from being cared for by suitably checked and qualified staff. Members of staff display a genuine commitment to on-going training and personal development which benefits the children they care for. For example, all staff complete 'Birth to three matters' framework or Foundation Stage training and attend a wide variety of training sessions and workshops. The space inside and out is well organised to meet the needs of children effectively and allow sufficient space to play. Effective positioning of furniture enables children to utilise every available play space within the two rooms. The setting has a comprehensive range of policies and procedures that supports the good practice seen within the setting. However, some procedures such as the administration of medication and fire safety, need reviewing to ensure that they are effective and consistent in order that they fully support children's health and well-being. All documentation is kept securely to maintain the confidentiality of children and their families.

Leadership and management is good. There are good systems in place for staff induction. Six monthly appraisals highlight specific abilities and knowledge as well as any training needs. There are informal systems in place such as regular discussion and parental feedback, to monitor and evaluate the nursery education and the setting is currently working closely with the local Early Years and Childcare Team to improve the planning and assessment within the nursery education. However, there is no system in place to specifically monitor the progress that individual children are making towards the early learning goals which does not ensure that all

children are achieving their full potential. All staff work well together and are committed to improving the care and education of all the children in the setting. Overall the provision meets the needs of the range of children for whom it provides.

Improvements since the last inspection

At the last care inspection the provider agreed to ensure policies and procedures are organised for parents to view clearly. Policies and procedures are available for parents and are permanently displayed in the hallway. This ensures that parents are fully aware of the service that the setting provides. The provider was asked to include procedures to be followed in the event of children being lost, in the settings policies. This is in place and is clear and detailed. This ensures that staff are fully aware of the procedures to follow.

Regarding nursery education, the provider agreed to develop planning to include vocabulary to be used in focused activities and to plan opportunities for children to develop their skills in simple calculation. Although not specifically recorded on the planning, staffs methods for developing children's vocabulary, are effective throughout many of the children's planned and free-choice activities. Staff interaction and support of the children as they play, encourages children to extend their vocabulary and learn the meanings of new words. The provider was asked to develop a formal appraisal system for staff. Staff appraisals are undertaken every six months and are detailed, informative and an effective part of monitoring staff performance. The provider was also asked to improve the provision for creative development to include regular opportunities for children to express their own ideas through art and to have less adult input. A creative resources trolley is available at all times for children to freely select their own art and craft materials, from which they are able to express their own creativity and ideas.

Complaints since the last inspection

Since the last inspection 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.

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):

- ensure that parents consistently provide prior written permission on every occasion that medicines are to be administered

- ensure that the methods for raising the alarm in the event of a fire are effective.

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 children's assessment records so that they are informative and identify the next stage in the children's learning. Use these details and information from parents about their child's existing skills to plan activities that build on what children already know and can do
- implement systems to monitor and evaluate the provision for nursery education to ensure that children continue to make progress towards the early learning goals.

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