

Stepping Stones Nursery School

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	EY346747
Inspection date	27 June 2007
Inspector	Lilyanne Taylor
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Registered person	Rose Lodge Nurseries Ltd
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 Nursery School registered in 2007. It is a privately owned nursery and is managed by a Limited Company. The nursery has sole use of premises which are organised on three levels and is situated in a residential area of Southsea in Portsmouth. There is access to a fully enclosed outdoor area. Stepping Stones Nursery School provides care for children aged from three months. Children attend from all areas of Portsmouth and surrounding districts. Children are able to attend for a variety of sessions. Currently there are 72 children on role; of these 23 are in receipt of government funding for nursery education. The nursery is open all year round, Monday to Friday from 07:45 to 18:00, with the exception of Bank Holidays. There are 17 members of staff employed most have relevant early years qualifications and experience.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Most toys and equipment children use is maintained in a clean condition; equipment, such as babies' high chairs, feeding utensils and dummies are sterilised after use and older children's toys are cleaned regularly. However, the good health of children under the age of one is not fully promoted. Although outdoor shoes are sprayed prior to entering the room that these children are cared for in there are no systems in place to ensure their hands are wiped prior to eating snacks or meals. In addition to this items such as hand held toys that children may place in their mouths are not sterilised after each child's use. As a result children are not fully protected from germs and/or infection.

All children are able to sleep and rest according to their needs, bedding is kept unique to each child and laundered as required.

Parents are informed of the setting's policy regarding the care of sick children and the exclusion period required for children suffering from any communicable diseases. If children become ill whilst in the setting staff ensure they are cared for sensitively while waiting to be collected by their parent.

Appropriate systems and procedures are in place for recording accidents children may have and these are shared with parents. All injuries to children are able to be dealt with; there is always staff on duty that are first aid trained and the permission they obtain from parents allows them to seek emergency treatment/advice if necessary.

Staff liaise closely with parents to ensure all children's dietary requirements are met and understood. Children are provided with a selection of snacks which are healthy and nutritious; snacks include pieces of fresh fruit, breadsticks and malt loaf. For main meals parents have the choice of what their children eat; they can supply their child with a healthy packed lunch, a meal from home that requires re-heating or cooking or purchase a hot meal that is cooked in the nursery kitchens. A menu detailing the meals available each day is displayed in the main foyer of the nursery; these include meat, pasta and vegetable dishes. A vegetarian menu is also available, which ensures all children's dietary needs are catered for. However, although staff store meals children bring in from home appropriately and use a temperature probe to ensure they are re-heated/cooked to the right temperature they are not aware of how the food has been stored prior to them receiving it. Consequently, the good health and wellbeing of children is not able to be fully protected. Staff ensure drinks are freely available to children throughout the time they are in the nursery which ensures they do not go thirsty.

Children develop a positive attitude towards physical exercise because they are able to spend time outdoors in the fresh air each day. During sessions they play in the outdoor play area and they are taken on regular walks around the local area visiting places of interest. For example, they visit the Canoe Lake, parks, sea front, butterfly museum, model village and aquarium. Children have regular opportunities to develop their large motor skills using large equipment, such as a slide and climbing frame and they show good co-ordination when using equipment, such as scooters and bikes. While outdoors children are protected from the rays of the sun; they wear sun hats and cream and a gazebo provides a shaded area for them to play.

Children thoroughly enjoy joining in with music and movement activities and are beginning to show good control with their bodies when they carry out actions in response to music that is

played to them. They show a good sense of space and move confidently around the nursery during activities.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

Children enjoy a safe, secure and welcoming environment.

All areas of the nursery are vibrant and stimulating with a substantial range of posters and photographs on show. Children's work is displayed and useful information to support children, parents and staff is all around the walls, making all visitors and families feel welcome. Access to the premises is monitored ensuring no unauthorised persons gain access to the children. All visitors are required to sign in at reception and to state the purpose of their visit. Visitors are escorted to the areas within the nursery they are attending.

All areas of the nursery and equipment children use is good quality and well maintained. Comprehensive written risk assessments are undertaken regularly and appropriate action is taken with any identified hazards. This ensures all areas of the nursery indoors and outdoors that children have access to and the equipment they use is safe. Resources are stored at a low-level and are easily accessible to the children.

Systems in place ensure sleeping children are kept safe; they are checked on every five minutes and a monitor is sited in the rooms staff are in so they can hear if a child wakes or disturbs.

Children are becoming aware of the importance of keeping themselves safe through nursery routines such as fire drills; these are practised regularly to ensure all children who use the nursery understand what to do in an emergency.

Although records of children's attendance reflect the number of children actually present in the nursery premises, they are not updated to show the area of the nursery they are in or the members of staff whose care they have been in. Consequently, children's safety is compromised.

There are clear procedures in place for the safe arrival and collection of children; children are only allowed to be collected by persons their parents have authorised and passwords are requested for extra protection. If a child is not collected from the nursery then systems in place ensure they are kept safe.

Appropriate systems are in place for walks and outings; parents' permission is sought prior to children being taken off the premises.

Children are extremely well protected because staff have a detailed understanding of child protection procedures and parents are made aware of the responsibility the nursery has as day care providers to share any concerns they may have. Pre-existing injuries children may come in with are recorded and shared with parents. Systems in place ensure if an allegation of abuse were to be made against a member of staff appropriate investigations and action would be taken.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

Children feel secure as they are cared for by a consistent staff team. Staff know the children well and ensure their individual care needs are met. Younger children's home routines are respected through the flexible organisation of the day.

Staff working with children under three plan activities using the Birth to three framework; they use suggested ideas and link these to children's observations, to ensure experiences are appropriate for them and help them make progress.

Children have the opportunity to explore and investigate; they play with cooked spaghetti, corn flour mixed with water, mashed potato, and jelly. All children benefit from the involvement they have in growing plants for the garden; younger children have the experience of exploring the texture of the soil, while older children observe and gain knowledge of how a seed once planted is cared for and develops into a plant.

Children make friendships with other children and play well alongside one another.

Nursery Education

The quality of teaching and learning is good.

Children are making good progress in their learning and achieve well given their capabilities and starting points. Staff have a good understanding of the Foundation Stage, enabling them to support children and help them to make progress in all areas.

Staff plan a wide range of worthwhile activities that are enjoyable and effective in helping children to develop at their own pace. They use open-ended questions to make children think and adapt teaching techniques according to the age and ability of the child. Staff differentiate activities effectively, providing challenge for the older more able children while sustaining the interest of younger children.

Staff work very well as a team, they monitor the children in a variety of ways to identify individual targets for them to work towards. Observation of children's progress is ongoing and staff collate this information to inform the curriculum, ensuring all children's needs are met. Activities are closely linked with the stepping stones of the Foundation Stage, to ensure children's progress can be monitored effectively. Each child has an individual progress record which highlights what the staff's plans are for their next steps in learning. This ensures all children are supported to achieve their full potential.

Children's social skills are developing well; they are making friendships with other children and they relate well to staff. Children's confidence and self-esteem is raised through the constant praise they receive in recognition of their achievements and the encouragement they receive from staff.

Although children are beginning to show some levels of independence in caring for themselves and their own personal hygiene they are not able to be fully independent. For example three year olds are not consistently encouraged to find their own outdoor clothing and children having packed lunches are not able to unpack their lunch boxes or unwrap their food because members of staff do this for them.

Children's behaviour is very good because they are fully occupied during the day taking part in activities that in the main are of their own choosing.

During cooking and gardening activities children's learning is developed in all areas. While making dough they take turns to measure the ingredients using cups, discuss the changes that occur when dry ingredients are mixed with water and egg and they see the effect baking powder has when they stir into the mixture. Children have their own vegetable, flower and herb garden; they plant their own seeds, learn how to take care of them and monitor their progress until they are fully grown.

Although children are becoming aware that print carries meaning the methods used to support children gain recognition of words they see in the environment are not consistent. For example, most resources and areas within the nursery are labelled with a picture and the written word alongside; however, children's names are not. Children practise their emergent writing skills in a variety of ways, for example through mark making activities such as painting and drawing, using various writing tools and paint brushes. They are encouraged to mark their own work and more able children write labels that are displayed to define the different learning areas of the nursery.

Children develop their hand and eye co-ordination skills through the use of small equipment; they skilfully use a hammer to tap nails into shapes on a board and use various cutters to make shapes in play dough.

Children enjoy listening to stories being read by staff, and ones that are played on the computer. Their vocabulary is extended because staff explain the meaning of words they are not familiar with so they have a full understanding. For example, children learn that a telescope when looked through brings things that are far away closer so it is easier to see them. Children are becoming confident communicators; they talk about the activities they are doing and recall activities they have done in the past.

During music sessions children listen to tunes being played on a key board, and make their own choice of the songs they wish to sing. They confidently move their bodies to music by following the instructions they hear played on a tape. Children confidently use a computer; they load their own programs and manoeuvre the mouse with increasing control.

Various wall displays and models show that the children have many opportunities to be creative and express themselves, using a wide range of materials and media. Children use their imagination well and enjoy creating their own play. For example, they pretend that a large box they have painted is their house and make a birthday cake with sand that they have mixed with water.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

The nursery is open to all children and parents from the community; they are all valued as individuals and respected. Children are fully supported to play an active part in the session; they help to tidy up their toys, clear away after snacks and take turns to care for the guinea pigs. Most of the time children are able to make their own choice of activities they wish to engage in and they respond well to the praise and encouragement they are given.

Children have opportunities to play with resources which show positive images of wider society and they learn about the cultures of others through various activities. Children are developing an awareness of the needs of others; they take part in various fundraising events to help children less fortunate than them.

There are effective arrangements in place for caring for children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The nursery has a member of staff who is the named Special Education Needs Co-ordinator. She has attended training and although no such children are attending the nursery at this time systems in place ensure parents, other professionals and outside agencies are liaised with so that individual children's specific needs are able to be met.

Children's behaviour is very good. They play well together and learn how to share and take turns. They begin to understand right and wrong through consistent boundaries and age appropriate methods, used by staff to manage behaviour, including explanation and distraction. Staff are aware that the behaviour some children may display at times is a result of an additional need they may have and take this into account with the methods and strategies they use. Staff act as good role models; they talk to children respectfully and politely and encourage children to have the same attitude towards them.

Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered.

The partnership with parents is good.

Children benefit from the good relationship staff build with their parents. Children are cared for in accordance with their parents' wishes; written and verbal agreements made with parents are respected.

Parents receive good information about the nursery in the form of a prospectus, newsletters and information boards sited in the entrance foyer and areas leading to the various base rooms.

Good settling in procedures are offered to all children; they are able to attend pre-visits with their parents prior to attending. This provides them with the opportunity to become familiar with the staff and the surroundings in which they will be cared for. Parents have the opportunity to discuss any specific care arrangements or individual needs their children may have. As a result, children are provided with appropriate care. The nursery welcomes parents into the nursery at any time; they are able to stay with their children if they so wish.

Children under the age of two have a daily diary that is given to parents; this includes details of care provided, food intake, nappy changes, sleeps and activities children have engaged in. A verbal exchange of information on a daily basis is in place for older children.

All children have written progress records, these are based on the Birth to three matters framework for children under three and the stepping stones of the Foundation Stage for children over three. They contain samples of children's work and written observations staff have made and clearly reflect the progress children are making and what the staff's plans are for their next steps in learning. Progress records move with the children as they progress through the nursery which ensures their progress is able to be continued in each area of the nursery they are in. Parents are able to view these records at any time and state any progress they feel their child has made at home. Formal meetings to discuss these records may be arranged if parents wish.

Parents are encouraged to be involved in their child's learning; they are invited in to share their professions, skills or cultural background with the children.

Parents are informed of the procedures they should follow if they have any concerns about the nursery. In addition to this a poster displayed provides information of how they can contact Ofsted, the regulatory body. Systems and procedures in place ensure should the nursery receive any complaints they will be appropriately investigated, recorded and shared with parents.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

Children are well cared for by suitably experienced and qualified staff.

Robust employment and recruitment procedures in place ensure all adults are suitably checked and have the necessary skills and qualifications to be working with children under the age of eight. New staff complete an in depth induction programme, ensuring children are kept safe. Systems in place ensure all staff's ongoing suitability is checked.

Staff work extremely well together to ensure all outcomes for children are positive. Staff are committed to updating their knowledge in childcare; some are working towards enhancing the existing qualification they hold in child care and all attend various in-service training days.

Management are committed to ensuring the quality of care and education children receive is of a good standard. Ratios of staff to children are maintained at all times and staff deployment is very effective, enabling staff to provide good quality support and supervision for all children. There are effective systems in place to cover staff absenteeism and emergency situations. In addition to this support staff are employed to deal with the preparation of snacks and meals which ensures there is always sufficient staff caring for the children.

The nursery has a strong commitment towards providing an environment in the community, where children are nurtured and supported to develop. The children's care and learning is enhanced by the implementation of an effective operational plan.

Daily routines are organised exceptionally well and run extremely smoothly. The nursery is organised to provide separate areas for children of differing ages. The good organisation of space within the rooms of the nursery ensures children are provided with a stimulating learning environment which supports their development in all areas.

Resources and equipment are readily available in each area so staff can effectively carry out activities they have planned for children.

Children are grouped appropriately for activities which ensures they are able to gain the most learning and enjoyment from them. Children are fully occupied and stimulated throughout the day, which has a very positive effect on behaviour. They are able to move freely from one activity to another.

Documentation that requires parents' consent is in place and most records are maintained as required. Policies and procedures the nursery work to are updated on a regular basis and most are effectively carried out in practice across all areas of the nursery. As a result most of the time the health, safety and well-being of children is promoted.

Management and staff consider it to be most important to respect confidentiality and to show sensitivity and respect toward parents and their children. They are conscious that the information they are made aware of through the nature of their employment and the records they maintain of children is confidential, and are careful to ensure it is kept safe.

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

Leadership and management is good.

Secure and effective systems are in place, to monitor the quality of teaching and to identify strengths and areas for development in individual staff performance.

Management work closely with staff to ensure all aspects of the curriculum are covered and all children have regular opportunities to participate in the full range of activities and experiences offered as a result most aspects of children's learning is promoted effectively to enable children to make progress.

Improvements since the last inspection

Not applicable

Complaints since the last inspection

Since registration 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 may 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):

- review the arrangements for accepting meals into the nursery from parents to ensure they remain healthy for children to eat if they require re-heating/cooking
- review the practices in place for cleaning items children place in their mouth and for hand washing/cleansing prior to eating snacks and meals to ensure children under the age of one are fully protected from the spread of germs and /or infection
- ensure registers of children in attendance are updated throughout a session so it is clear to see the areas of nursery they are in and the staff whose care they have been in at any one time

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 methods used to develop children's pre-reading skills are consistent so they are fully supported to gain recognition of their written name
- provide further opportunities for children to become independent by allowing them to be more involved in the serving of their packed lunches and getting ready for outdoor play

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