



Stepping Stone Day Nursery

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number EY301590

Inspection date 05 July 2005

Inspector Pamela Edna Friling

Setting Address Manor Farm, Upper Slaughter, Cheltenham, Gloucestershire,
GL54 2JJ

Telephone number 01451 820345

E-mail

Registered person Claire Louise Wilson

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 satisfactory. 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 Day Nursery is located in converted barn buildings near the rural North Cotswold village of Lower Slaughter. The nursery has been established since 1984 and moved to the present site in 1995. The present owner has been registered since 2005. A maximum of 59 children may attend the nursery at any one time.

The nursery is open each weekday from 08.00 to 18.00 for 50 weeks of the year. They provide after-school care during term time and a holiday play scheme during

the holidays for 16 children between 5 and 8 years old. There are currently 102 children on roll. Of these 36 children receive funding for nursery education. The nursery supports children who speak English as an additional language.

The nursery has five play rooms within the building and two enclosed outdoor areas. There is a separate area for the out-of-school provision. The nursery employs 22 staff. Ten of the staff including the manager hold appropriate early years qualifications. Four staff are working towards a qualification. The nursery receives educational support from the Local Authority.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is satisfactory.

Children are cared for in a healthy, active environment. They are independent in their personal care. They show understanding of the necessity for personal hygiene and the reasons for hand washing before eating and following use of the toilet. However, hand washing routines following potty use are not consistently implemented for younger children.

Children's individual dietary and feeding needs are well addressed through discussion with parents and provision of healthy food options. Imaginative use is made of individual placemats during meals and snacks which show the children's photograph and alert staff to any special dietary needs. Staff contribute well to children's discussions regarding their food to extend understanding of healthy eating. Babies are able to sleep according to their individual routine and are offered appropriate cuddles during bottle feeding.

Children stay healthy because the premises are adequately clean and hygienic. Clear routines are in place for maintaining the cleanliness of toys for the younger children, however, some toys for the older children are not sufficiently clean.

Children take regular daily exercise in the outdoor areas with both free play and organised country walks. Children develop good peddling, pushing, climbing and balancing skills. A good range of outdoor play equipment enables children to actively develop their physical skills. Children develop skill in small physical movements through daily opportunities for cutting, sticking, writing and construction. Older children recognise the way activity affects their bodies, with active discussion on heartbeats, sweating and breathing before sports day practice.

The children's health is well protected because staff have good first aid knowledge. Routines and records for administration and recording of medication and accidents are in place with clear detail recorded. Most records are shared appropriately with and signed by parents to ensure children's health is not compromised.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is satisfactory.

Children are cared for at premises which are safe and secure. Children are supervised closely and staff are vigilant in securing room gates to ensure children do not wander to other nursery areas. Older children show understanding of the established boundaries for where they can play. They negotiate the stairs to the upper floor with confidence and care. Children play safely in the well equipped, secure, outdoor play areas.

Children have sufficient space within the nursery and outdoor areas to move safely. Children's safety is further promoted through daily risk assessments by staff of the premises and equipment. Play resources are of adequate quality. They are safe and suitable for the children's age and stage of development but storage facilities restrict children's independent access and pose a possible danger if children try to reach items without adult support. Children cared for in some nursery areas have limited natural light to illuminate their play.

Children are kept safe as staff have a sound knowledge of child protection procedures. Policies, procedures and documentation are in place to ensure children's welfare is promoted, however the nursery visitor record is not used consistently to record visiting adults.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is satisfactory.

Children enjoy their time at the nursery and are supported well by staff as they play and learn. Children arrive with enthusiasm and are eager to share their news with the staff. Staff have attended training in the use of 'Birth to three matters' but have yet to implement the strategy in the care of the younger children. The nursery does not systematically monitor the development of the children. This limits the effectiveness of planning for younger children's individual developmental needs, the consistency of information passed between staff on transition to the next room and the information available to parents regarding their child's progress.

Children benefit from a range of interesting, planned activities on a common nursery theme with additional age appropriate activities provided and planned for children attending the out of school club. Nursery children spend their time purposefully with sufficient challenge through staff involvement and questioning. They are relaxed in the company of the attentive staff who offer consistent encouragement and praise. Children are encouraged to express themselves through genuine staff interest in individual conversation.

Children choose their activities from play items selected by the staff. This restricts their freedom to control their own play and develop independent skills as they choose and tidy away toys. Babies can play freely with all toys and enjoy exploring their environment.

Nursery Education

The quality of teaching and children's learning is good. Children's individual needs, abilities, likes and dislikes are used as a starting point for planning a range of activities to encourage individual progress. Children benefit from staff's clear understanding of how children learn. They are offered a balance of self-initiated and adult-led activities which are altered appropriately to suite different ability levels. Staff interaction and questioning encourages children to think and solve problems as they play. However, planning, observation, assessment and evaluation does not show clear links to the stepping stones of the Foundation Stage of learning.

Children's progress in all areas of learning is sound. Children are confident to try new experiences and use their imagination well during role-play, art-and-craft, music and singing. They play co-operatively, sharing resources and play ideas such as the instigation of a snowflake cutting session where children fold and cut paper with minimal adult intervention. They join in enthusiastically with group stories offering familiar chorus responses and predicting the next part of the plot. However, children's individual use of books is limited by the high book storage.

Older children write confidently both during group activities and free play. More able children can write their name with correctly formed letters and copy simple words and phrases accurately. They are able to link sounds to letters when discussing their names on individual place mats during meal times. Children count confidently with more able children challenged appropriately through practical activities to extend their understanding of calculation. They use mathematical language competently. Their understanding of the world around them is developing well with many planned and impromptu experiences to extend their curiosity.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is satisfactory.

Partnership with parents is satisfactory. Parents of the youngest children provide written information on their child's individual daily routine. This effective exchange of information establishes a process of shared care of the youngest children. Children's educational and developmental progress is shared through daily verbal exchange of information although there is no effective developmental monitoring system to inform these discussions. A descriptive parents handbook enables parents to understand nursery life and contribute to their child's care. Less information is offered regarding the use of stepping stones towards the early learning goals or the timeframe for the Foundation Stage. This limits parental involvement in the education of the older children.

Most children behave well and are co-operative with both staff and each other. They are able to discuss the boundaries for acceptable behaviour and offer explanation as to why some behaviour is inappropriate. Children are developing confidence and self-esteem through regular praise and recognition of effort. They are enthusiastic and engrossed with their own play with older children showing great excitement for their sports day.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered. Children have use of a good range of books and resources reflecting culture, race and disability. Different

cultural backgrounds are valued and differences celebrated. Children extend their individual awareness through activities and topics relating to world festivals. They also learn about themselves and the wider community.

Organisation

The organisation is satisfactory.

Leadership and management of the nursery is satisfactory. The new owner has a clear vision for the future development of the nursery based on her experience with other nurseries. Systems are in place to ensure staff are appropriately qualified and cleared for work with the children. Regular staff meetings ensure all staff are able to contribute to nursery planning and development.

The educational programme provides a wide range of experiences to enable children to make sound progress towards the early learning goals but does not follow the Foundation Stage guidance on monitoring children's progress against the system of stepping stones. Space is adequately arranged to allow sufficient space for each age group, however, it is recognised that the storage of resources restricts children's independent use.

The children settle well to familiar surroundings and show good understanding of well-established daily routines. Their welfare is promoted through the well-organised recording systems and written operating procedures which meet the requirements of registration. Nursery policies and procedures do not yet reflect the vision of the new owner.

The setting meets the needs of the range of children for whom it provides. Staff are very attentive to the children and respond quickly to their requests for support or direction. Staff induction is effective with ongoing training needs, career and personal progression routes highlighted in the staff appraisal system. Training opportunities are offered to all staff to extend their understanding of the needs of the range of children attending the nursery.

Input is welcomed from the Local Authority to improve and refine methods employed in the care and education of the children.

Improvements since the last inspection

Not applicable.

Complaints since the last inspection

There are no complaints to report.

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 satisfactory. 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):

- improve children's access to play resources to promote choice and independent learning
- monitor children's developmental progress to ensure appropriate activities and resources are provided to help individual children build on their skills and knowledge.

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):

- develop planning, observation, evaluation and assessment systems linked to the stepping stones of the Foundation Stage of learning
- provide parents with information about the Foundation Stage of learning to promote their involvement in their child's education.

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the leaflet *Building better childcare: Compliments and concerns about inspectors' judgements* which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk