

# Stepping Stones Nursery & Preschool

Inspection report for early years provision

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	EY274200
<b>Inspection date</b>	11 February 2008
<b>Inspector</b>	Elaine Murray
<b>Setting Address</b>	6 Arundel Avenue, Liverpool, Merseyside, L17 3DA
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<b>Registered person</b>	Stepping Stones Nursery & Preschool
<b>Type of inspection</b>	Integrated
<b>Type of care</b>	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](http://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 inadequate – notice of action to improve. The registered person does not meet 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 Nursery is a privately owned day nursery. The nursery opened in 1993 and came under new ownership in September 2003. It is situated in the Aigburth district of Liverpool. A maximum of 33 children may attend the nursery at any one time. The nursery is open each week day from 08.15 to 17.30 for 51 weeks of the year. Children are organised into three rooms according to their age. They have access to a fully enclosed outdoor play area.

There are currently 36 children from birth to five years on roll, of whom 12 are in receipt of funding for nursery education. Children come from a wide catchment area. The nursery currently supports a number of children who speak English as an additional language.

The nursery employs staff nine staff. All staff, including the managers, hold appropriate early years qualifications.

## THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

### Helping children to be healthy

The provision is inadequate.

The nursery has clear written procedures for the administration of medication. However, these procedures are not consistently followed, as on many occasions staff do not obtain parent's written permission to administer medication. This is a breach of regulations and presents a risk to children's health. Children's health is also compromised as medicines are sometimes left in children's bags which are accessible to children. A record is maintained of accidents to children, but these are not always signed by parents.

All staff have an up to date first aid qualification, helping to meet children's needs in the event of an accident. The nursery's clear sickness policy, which includes a list of infectious illnesses, is shared with parents and helps to protect children from the spread of infection. Children show an awareness of simple hygiene procedures as they routinely wash their hands before snack and after using the toilet.

Staff plan a variety of opportunities to develop older children's physical skills, and staff have a sound understanding of babies and young children's physical development. Babies are encouraged to progress to their next physical milestone as they are encouraged to sit or to move for toys. However, the outdoor area is not always used by younger children and babies in winter months, even on fine days. This means that children lack sufficient opportunity to enjoy fresh air and robust play.

Children learn about a healthy diet as they are provided with healthy and nutritious food which is prepared and cooked on the premises. Meals are prepared using fresh ingredients and include plenty of vegetables. Children also benefit from healthy snacks, including fresh fruit. All staff have received training in food hygiene, which helps to ensure that food is appropriately prepared and served and children's health is protected. Drinking water is readily available for older children at all times. Younger children and babies are offered water regularly, promoting their good health.

### Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is satisfactory.

Children are cared for in an appropriately welcoming environment. There are plentiful displays of children's work and photographs of the children in the nursery rooms. A range of toys and equipment is visible and accessible. This helps to foster children's sense of security and belonging. Space is appropriately used as areas are provided for different purposes, for example, for children to sleep, look at books or be involved in activities. However, the toilet facilities for children in the pre-school room do not ensure that children's privacy and dignity is respected. In the baby room, there are no suitable, comfortable chairs for staff who spend time holding and feeding babies. The range of toys and equipment are suitable for different ages and abilities, helping to meet children's needs appropriately.

The premises are secure as access is via an intercom system, which allows staff to monitor all visitors to the nursery. This helps to ensure children's safety. Other safety measures are in place to protect children from hazards and dangers, such as a daily check of the outdoor area. On outings to the local library children each have wrist straps and wear brightly coloured tabards. This helps to ensure that children are visible and kept safe. Babies are checked regularly whilst

sleeping and this is recorded, helping to ensure their safety. Children learn to protect themselves in the event of a fire or emergency through regularly practising the fire evacuation procedure. Babies are protected as staff are clear about the evacuation procedure and have appropriate equipment available to transport babies quickly. Staff have an awareness of safety issues, but have not conducted a risk assessment of the premises and produced an action plan with timescales identifying action to be taken to minimise risks to children. Children are protected as staff have a sound knowledge of the signs and symptoms of child abuse and hold relevant contact numbers.

### **Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do**

The provision is satisfactory.

Children are content and secure and have positive relationships with staff. Staff make appropriate use of the 'Birth to three matters' framework to promote learning. Children's attention is drawn to photographs of themselves on display, helping to affirm their identity and sense of belonging. Staff follow children's interests in choosing and carrying out tasks, helping to develop children's confidence and self-esteem. Children enjoy learning to explore and investigate using their senses as they play with water, sand and paint. Babies and young children learn to feed themselves independently, as staff pay attention to encouraging this learning. There is a difference in the quality of provision for children aged under two years, and the provision for children aged from two to three years. Staff pay good attention to meeting individual babies' needs, responding to their needs for comfort and rest, and interacting positively with them. Babies enjoy exploring treasure baskets of different materials and staff support older babies to dress up. Staff have a good awareness of children's capabilities. They make regular observations of children's progress and use this information to encourage children's next steps in learning. For children aged between two and three years, assessments are made less frequently. Toys are rotated for interest and children are involved in regular craft activities. However, there is no clear planning of activities for children and assessments are not effectively used to inform children's next steps in learning. This means that activities sometimes lack focus and children are content rather than interested and involved in the experiences provided.

### **Nursery education**

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. Staff have a generally good knowledge and understanding of the early learning goals and this is reflected in their teaching. Staff plan some interesting and worthwhile activities that relate to the stepping stones. Staff involve themselves in children's self-chosen play, for example, joining in role play to develop learning. However, they do not always adapt activities or question children sufficiently to provide challenge for older and more able children. Daily routines, such as circle time are used appropriately to promote children's self-esteem and communication skills. Children are developing confidence in talking to the group to share news. Staff promote children's name writing and name recognition skills through regular chances to reinforce this learning. Staff make regular assessments of children's learning and use this information appropriately to inform planning.

Children are confident to select their own activities and resources. They take turns in a game. Children learn to put on coats independently, but do not learn to develop independence at mealtimes. For example, children do not take part in setting the table or serving their own food or drinks. Children enjoy looking at books and listen attentively to stories. They make use of chalk boards and other writing materials to make marks and write. Children have planned chances to learn to count to 10 and to recognise numbers. However, staff do not take advantage of opportunities for children to count in every day situations, such as at register time, snack

time or when lining up to go outside. Children confidently identify two dimensional shapes. Children learn to explore and investigate making shadows. They observe change as they grow beans and bulbs. Children build using construction sets and make models using dough, paper and card. Children are developing confidence using a computer to support their learning and are learning to operate a simple floor robot. They develop a sense of place through regular walks out to the local library, and visitors to the nursery, such as a fire-fighter. Children show growing skills of pencil control and threading. They express their own ideas in creative work.

### **Helping children make a positive contribution**

The provision is satisfactory.

All children are included in the activities provided and have equal access to resources to make their own choices. Children develop an awareness of diversity and the wider community through a generally good selection of resources and activities that promote positive images. Staff work with parents to positively acknowledge differences in culture, helping to foster children's awareness. Children for whom English is an additional language are appropriately supported. Older children develop an awareness of different cultures and beliefs through topic work relating to festivals, such as Chinese New Year, when children eat Chinese food and take part in craft activities.

Children behave well due to staff's clear expectation and positive approach. They are learning to share and take turns. Children are familiar with the routines of nursery and respond well to praise and encouragement from staff.

The partnership with parents and carers is satisfactory. Parents of funded children receive some information about current topics through newsletters and plans on display. However, they receive little other information about the Foundation Stage of learning. Parents are welcome to see their child's assessment file at any time and information is shared verbally. However, this system does not ensure that all parents of funded children are fully informed about their children's progress and achievements. There are few chances for parents to be involved in their children's learning.

Staff have established positive relationships with parents. They request information about children before the placement begins, which is used to help meet children's needs appropriately. However, staff do not obtain written parental permission to take photographs of children. Parents of babies and young children are well informed about their children's day to day experiences through use of a daily diary. Information about children's progress is shared informally through talks at the end of the session.

### **Organisation**

The organisation is inadequate.

There is a system in place to record children's times of arrival and departure. However, the time of children's departure is not always completed. This is a breach of regulations and presents a risk to children's welfare and safety. Staff do not always follow the required procedures with regard to the administration of medication, which poses a risk to children's health.

Staffing levels are organised so that they are within the required ratios and that children have an appropriate level of attention and support. All staff hold relevant qualifications in childcare. This has a positive effect on the quality of care and children's learning. Appropriate recruitment and vetting procedures are in place, helping to ensure that staff are suitably qualified and

checks are carried out. However, there is no system in place to ensure that the continuing training needs of staff are met, which has a negative effect on the care provided.

The leadership and management of the nursery education is satisfactory. The managers provide positive direction and staff work appropriately together to promote children's learning. Planning and children's progress in learning is generally well monitored. The managers seek and act upon advice from the early years partnership regarding improvements regarding, for example, planning. This approach has a positive effect on the quality of children's learning.

Overall, the provision does not meet the needs of the range of the children for whom it provides.

### **Improvements since the last inspection**

At the last inspection the setting was required to: carry out and record regular fire drills; ensure that the stairs are made safe for children; and make improvements to the behaviour management policy and the system for recording daily temperature checks on the refrigerators. These recommendations have been met with positive effect on children's safety, welfare and learning

### **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 inadequate - notice of action to improve. The registered person does not meet 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, the registered person **must** take the following actions:

- obtain written permission from parents before administering medication to children
- ensure that the registration system includes children's times of arrival and departure.

These actions are set out in a *notice of action to improve* and must be completed by the date specified in the notice.

#### **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 activities provide challenge for older and more able children and that children are questioned to extend their learning
- ensure that children have sufficient opportunities to develop independence and to learn to count in every day situations
- ensure that parents are provided with information about the Foundation Stage and their children's progress, and that they are encouraged to be involved in their children's learning.

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