

Sapcote Stepping Stones Pre-School Playgroup

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	226466
Inspection date	25 September 2007
Inspector	Mark Evans
Setting Address	The Methodist Church Hall, Leicester Road, Sapcote, Leicester, Leicestershire, LE9 4JE
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Registered person	Claire Patricia Shields
Type of inspection	Integrated
Type of care	Sessional 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?

Sapcote Stepping Stones Pre-school opened in 1993. It operates from the Methodist Church Hall in the village of Sapcote. Children have access to the main hall, adjacent room for small group activities and toilet facilities. The pre-school serves the local community and surrounding area. The group opens five days a week during school term times. Sessions are from 09:15 to 12:15 Monday to Friday.

There are currently 37 children on roll. This includes 25 funded three and four-year-olds. The setting supports three children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and has no children for whom English is an additional language.

Six practitioners work with children, of whom, three have Level 3 childcare qualifications and one has a Level 2 qualification. The setting receives support from a mentor teacher and the local authority early years advisory service.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Children are cared for in clean and hygienic premises, which helps to reduce risk of cross-contamination and keep children healthy. They develop good awareness of hygiene and health because the setting has activity themes and personal care routines that support this. For example, practitioners explain the reasons for washing hands before children go to the toilet area and they have discussion about the importance of healthy eating, the need for sleep and exercise. Parental consent is obtained for any medication that needs to be administered and accidents are recorded and monitored, and as a consequence children's good health is maintained. Practitioners are able to respond appropriately to children's accidents and illness because they have current first aid training and good policy arrangements for care of children who are unwell.

The setting provides a good, healthy range of snack foods, including savoury items and fresh fruit, for example, raisins and apples. Activity themes, such as foods from around the world, encourage children to experience various cultural foods. This encourages familiarity with a variety of foods and promotes good dietary health. Practitioners ensure knowledge of children's special dietary requirements and provide foods that are suitable and keep them healthy. This information is recorded and made available to practitioners to ensure secure and correct details to maintain children's health. Children have access to drinking water and routinely have water and milk at snack times. This keeps them well hydrated and comfortable and supports their active play and learning.

Children develop physical movement and skills by taking part in a variety of outdoor activities. They also benefit from the fresh air and exercise. Children use large equipment and other resources to climb, slide, go through, under and balance. They experience planned activities that provide them with challenge and encourage them to try different ways of moving, for example, by taking part in an obstacle course. When playing on tricycles and ride on toys, they negotiate each others space and when walking and running, children display good spatial awareness. Children gain good ability with balance and coordination and they become aware of changes to their body when active, such as becoming warmer.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

Children feel welcomed into a setting, which has very well maintained and presented premises. The layout of the room and displayed information for parents enhance the environment and help to make it warm and inviting. Children's safety and comfort is supported by a good range of child-sized furniture and play equipment that are kept in good order. Practitioners use good policy and procedures to keep children safe. For example, they supervise children at all times, including the toilet areas and during outdoor play; risk assessments are provided to reduce risk and the premises are secure and visitors are vetted prior to entry.

Children have developing awareness of keeping safe because practitioners educate about relative aspects, such as a visit from the 'Lollipop' school crossing person to learn about road safety; they are involved in fire evacuation practises and they take an active part in helping to tidy away activities at the end of the session to keep the room in an organised, safe order. The setting has written child protection procedures and contact details for relevant local agencies,

however, policy does not identify a designated member of staff with responsibility for child protection liaison, which potentially limits the effectiveness of safeguarding for children. Practitioners have good understanding of child protection issues and the procedures to follow if they have a concern and this helps to protect children's welfare.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

Children enjoy their time at the pre-school; they enthusiastically participate in the wide range of stimulating and challenging activities. Young children settle well because the setting has very good arrangements for them to make visits with their parents prior to their full placement. Practitioners provide supportive contact and develop caring relationships with children to support their emotional needs. As a consequence, children's sense of security and well-being are increased and they become confident to explore the environment and engage in activities that support their play, learning and development. Children benefit from shared information between parents and practitioners, which promotes continuity in their care arrangements. For example, to provide a 'comforter' where relevant to support children's needs.

The 'Birth to three matters' framework is used very effectively to observe and assess children under three years and to plan good learning and development opportunities. For example, key worker practitioners have sound knowledge of children's abilities, based on initial assessment using information from parents and observation, and a good balance of adult-led and child-initiated activities, which allow children to learn at their own pace. Young children begin to play happily with each other and with adults and they enjoy sensory play and the use of natural materials, such as sand; they select books, engage in role play and use outdoor equipment.

Children's behaviour is good overall, they learn to share toys and equipment and take turns because practitioners talk to children about this at circle time and provide some activities to promote cooperative play, such as taking turns with use of outdoor equipment and with table games.

Nursery Education

The quality of teaching and learning is good. Practitioners have sound knowledge of the Foundation Stage guidance, demonstrating awareness of the six areas of learning. They know their key children well and use this knowledge to promote children's learning within planned and child initiated play, such as number recognition with number labelled shop items in role play. Practitioners have responsibility for observation of key children and have involvement in planning of the curriculum to support children's learning using the Foundation Stage guidance. Observations and assessment are undertaken to inform of children's levels of achievement and medium term planning indicates the learning intentions for focussed activities. However, there are some anomalies for the use of assessment and some inconsistent links between children's next steps and the planned learning intentions. This is potentially detrimental to the full effectiveness of directive learning for children. Practitioners make good use of time and resources to support children's learning.

All practitioners work directly with the children and provide an environment that is organised to help children to be independent and make choices. There are a wide range of interesting and stimulating activities provided by the setting, and as a consequence, children make good progress overall. Children benefit from practitioner questioning, for example, during circle time

and in their informal play, which encourages them to talk about their interests and home-life events and to express their feelings. Children's behaviour is managed well and they respond appropriately to adult requests.

Children show confidence in being without their main carer and form good relationships with adults and their peers. They interact cooperatively in group activities and within their play, for example, when sitting together for a music and percussion instrument activity, they followed adult instruction very well and exchanged instruments in order to experience different actions and sounds. They show good levels of concentration and involvement in activities. When opportunities arise, children show sound levels of independence. Children start to understand that print has meaning and recognise their own name. They use very good opportunities to make marks and write for purpose. For example, a practitioner encouraged children to write shopping lists whilst in role play. Children enjoy books and show good interest in stories read by adults, being able to anticipate aspects of the narrative. More able children are developing sound ability with phonic knowledge, for example, when in role play, a child recognised the sound of the letter 'M' for the beginning of his name.

Children sing and 'act out' songs that include numbers and simple addition and subtraction, for example, by singing 'five current buns' and using props to take away by one at a time. Younger children are developing ability to count with some numbers in the right order and others are able to count objects by saying one number name for each item, for example, counting children at circle time. Children can match and judge space through use of resources such as puzzles. They can select or name a particular shape, for example, a child used a shape cutter with play dough and correctly named the cut out dough as a square.

Children learn about natural things and patterns of change, for example, by planting and growing vegetables. They enjoy investigation and examine items to see what they are used for and how they work, for example, by taking apart a clock. Children use spontaneous opportunities to experiment, for example, by using mirrored shapes to reflect sunlight onto a surface. They use available information technology, including programmable toys and role play items, such as a shop till and telephone, to support their play and learning. Children can construct and shape using various materials, for example, when using construction toys, collage pictures, selecting and joining household items and in using malleable materials. They have a sense of place within their local community through visits by local agencies and early developing awareness of the wider community through activities and resources that represent diversity.

Children use a variety of role play settings to develop their imagination and enact their life experiences, for example, to make a shopping list and sell items in a shop or to prepare food in the home area. They enjoy music and explore different sounds and ways to use instruments, for example, to use them loudly or softly. Use of various materials encourages children to be creative and to investigate. For example, they make models and collages and use water, sand and malleable materials. Children respond to their senses and are able to express this, for example, they described the feel of play dough as 'soft', 'sticky' and 'cold'.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

Practitioners are welcoming and friendly and they provide an inviting environment for children and parents. Relationships between practitioners, parents and children are very good with time made available to talk and exchange information. This helps to promote continuity of care for the children. Children benefit from their parent's being well informed through various types

of written documents, for example, a prospectus, written policies, newsletters and various displayed details. A written complaints procedure and available records for any complaints encourages transparency for children's care and welfare.

Children are respected and valued as individuals, and inclusion is effectively supported by practitioners, for example, by developing children's knowledge of languages used by other children at the setting, such as Dutch or French, and including children in developing awareness of Makaton sign language. Children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities integrate well. The setting works in partnership with parents and relevant agencies in order to meet their individual and developmental needs. Children learn about other cultures, various lifestyles and the wider community through their involvement in themed activities, for example, tasting various breads from around the world and Chinese foods. They also develop awareness and familiarity through access to a good range of play materials and pictorial images that promote diversity. Children are very well behaved and have sound awareness of adult expectation, which enhances their involvement in activities. This is supported by practitioners who take time to talk to children about suitable behaviour, for example, reminding them to share and take turns during circle time. Children become confident and willing to try new experiences because practitioners regularly praise them for their involvement in activities. Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered.

Partnership with parents and carers is good. Parents receive written information from the setting that includes some information on the Foundation Stage. Newsletters provide useful information on events and current matters and there is displayed information on the activity programme. The effective partnership with parents contributes to the children's educational needs; aspects of development are discussed and recorded with the parents when the child begins placement at the setting, enabling practitioners to have a base-line assessment for planning. The staff welcome informal contact with parents at the beginning and end of the session; they share information about the children's activities and achievements on a regular basis and parents are able to view their child's development file at any time. Parents have opportunity to be further involved in their child's assessments through designated meetings, of which the frequency is being further developed. Should parents decline these arrangements, a form is available for them to complete and share information about their child's progress. There are opportunities for parents to be involved in the child's learning, for example, by facilitating their child in taking an item to the setting for them to share and discuss and through participation, such as having a pre-school soft-toy pet at home and making a diary of this using drawings, words and photographs to share at the setting.

Organisation

The organisation is satisfactory.

Well organised deployment of practitioners provides children with stable levels of care. For example, there are more than the required number of practitioners on duty, which allows them to help each other during group activities such as circle time and to support children individually. This encourages children to feel valued and secure. There are suitable numbers of staff with childcare qualifications and relative training, such as first aid, to support the care and well-being of children. Adults working with children undergo vetting procedures. However, these are not fully rigorous and robust, which potentially compromises children's welfare. The setting has a set of policies, which are accessible to parents, and these detail procedures that are designed to keep children healthy and maintain their well-being, including procedures for lost or uncollected children and child protection. However, the records for children's hours of

attendance do not consistently include their times of departure and this impacts on the availability of details for maintaining children's welfare.

Leadership and management are satisfactory. The managers and deputy have an overview of the planning for the nursery education, which supports children's learning and development. There are sufficient systems to evaluate and monitor the use of the Foundation Stage guidance and service delivery. For example, advice from the local authority mentor teacher is acted on and written development plans detail further action, for example, to develop use of story bags and a book library for children's home use. The setting is to further monitor consistency for assessment and planning of next steps and linking of this information to planning. The pre-school has a committed, enthusiastic and well motivated team of practitioners. Regular meetings are held to discuss ongoing practice, daily issues, planning and children's development. Although a formal appraisal system is not in place, practitioners are encouraged to attend relevant training courses to continue their professional development. Overall, the provision meets the needs of the range of children for whom it provides.

Improvements since the last inspection

At the last Children Act inspection the setting was required to develop staff's knowledge and understanding of child protection issues; devise an equal opportunities policy and written statement on special needs; ensure that children experience resources that promote equality of opportunity; improve behaviour management and to improve the nutritional content of food provided to children at snack time.

The setting has provided some child protection training to develop practitioner knowledge to safeguard children and an equal opportunities policy is available and a range of resources and activities promote children's awareness of diversity. A written special needs statement is in place to support children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and practitioners are deployed effectively to support children's behaviour. The range of foods provided for children are balanced and nutritious, for example, by providing various fruits, and this helps to promote their good dietary health.

At the last nursery education inspection the pre-school was required to develop parent support for children's progress in the home environment; to use observation and assessment to inform planning; to develop information for children's next steps; to effectively deploy staff to ensure the composition of groups is effective for children's learning and ensure there are sufficient opportunities to support children's large muscle development and for creativity to be child-initiated.

The setting has a key worker system and arrangement with parents that they can request to see their child's assessments at any time, they have periodic meetings to discuss children's progress and links with planning and observation, assessment and children's next steps forms are completed to inform of children's progress and a balance of activities are provided for the six areas of learning. Practitioners are deployed effectively to support children's behaviour and learning. Children take part in regular child initiated outdoor play and planned activities to provide physical challenge and they enjoy opportunities to be creative using their own ideas, for example, making collage pictures.

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

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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 there is a designated member of staff for liaison with local child protection agencies and with Ofsted in any child protection situation
- ensure that the record of children looked after clearly indicates their hours of attendance
- make sure that the system for vetting new staff is rigorous and robust to ensure their suitability to work with 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):

- ensure that assessment and planning of next steps are consistently applied for all children
- develop the links between children's next steps and the learning intentions within planning.

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