

# Stepping Stones Playgroup

Inspection report for early years provision

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	255211
<b>Inspection date</b>	16 August 2007
<b>Inspector</b>	Jackie Nation
<b>Setting Address</b>	West Smethwick Methodist Church, St. Pauls Road, Smethwick, West Midlands, B66 1EX
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<b>Registered person</b>	West Smethwick Methodist Church Enterprise
<b>Type of inspection</b>	Childcare
<b>Type of care</b>	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](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk).

## THE QUALITY AND STANDARDS OF THE CARE

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.

### WHAT SORT OF SETTING IS IT?

Stepping Stones Playgroup opened in 1999. It operates from a play room in West Smethwick Methodist Church in Smethwick. The provision serves children in the local community.

A maximum of 20 children from two to five years may attend the playgroup at any one time. There are currently 17 children on roll. The playgroup is open each weekday from 09:00 to 11:30 for 50 weeks of the year. The playgroup support children with identified special educational needs and children who speak English as an additional language

The playgroup employs three staff, of whom two hold child care and early years qualifications, and one member of staff who is working towards an appropriate qualification.

### THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

#### Helping children to be healthy

The provision is satisfactory.

Children stay healthy because the setting take positive steps to prevent the spread of infection and keep the premises clean and well-maintained. Children understand simple good health and

hygiene practices with the consistent support of staff. Children know why they wash their hands after using the bathroom and before snack time, children said they need to have 'clean hands'. Children's health care needs are mostly supported with policies and procedures which work in practice, for example, if they require medication or become unwell. However, children's well-being is potentially compromised because the setting do not have written parental consent to seek emergency medical treatment or advice.

Children are well nourished because they are provided with snacks and drinks to meet their needs during the session. Drinking water and cups are available for children to help themselves and this ensures they are kept hydrated. The group promote and support healthy eating for children; they are provided with fruit or yogurt and low sugar juice. Staff follow good hygiene procedures when they prepare snacks and drinks for the children. Children's individual dietary needs are well met as these are discussed with parents and information about any allergies or specific dietary needs are recorded.

Daily routines ensure a good balance of energetic play and opportunities for children to enjoy quiet activities such as looking at books and colouring. Children enjoy physical exercise and develop a positive approach to this through regular opportunities to be active. Staff plan a good range of activities to promote children's physical skills and confidence. Children eagerly join in games and action songs such as musical statues. They are enthusiastic and laugh and giggle during the activity as they try hard to balance and remain still. Children enjoy the session as staff join in, they all complete stretching activities before starting physical activities and playing group games. This combination of activities help develop children's co-ordination, balance and confidence.

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

The provision is satisfactory.

Children are cared for in a warm, welcoming and clean environment. Space is effectively organised to enable children to move around activities freely and safely. Staff display children's work which makes the room look inviting and stimulating. They have access to a wide variety of toys and equipment which are in good condition, provide a good level of challenge and are appropriate to the children's age and stage of development.

Staff give good priority to identifying hazards and reducing risks of injury to children. This is because staff have a good awareness of health and safety issues. Children benefit from a good range of safety measures. For example, the entrance door is locked when the session is in progress and a coded door lock prevents unauthorised access to the playroom. Access to the premises is monitored by staff who check identification and record details of visitors to the setting. Staff are deployed effectively and are vigilant about children's safety, for example, staff supervise children while using the bathroom. Children are developing a good understanding about safety in the setting, through good staff explanations, for example, discussions about emergency evacuation and using equipment safely. There is a written policy in place for uncollected children and this is shared with parents. Although staff are aware of the procedure to follow if a child is lost, a written procedure is not available to ensure children's safety and well-being is fully protected.

Children's welfare is generally safeguarded because staff have a sound understanding of child protection. Staff understand the procedures to follow with any concerns. The child protection policy is shared with parents. However, the policy does not include the procedures to be followed

in the event of an allegation being made against a member of staff or volunteer. Potentially, this compromises children's safety.

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

The provision is good.

Children enjoy their time in the playgroup and they show eagerness and enthusiasm within their play. Those who are new to the setting are helped to settle by staff who are sensitive towards their individual needs. Children respond well to the staff's gentle responses, smiles and praise during play. They are sociable and readily engage their peers, staff and visitors in conversation. They are keen to share what they can do, for example, the pictures they have coloured and how high they can jump! Good friendships are developing, children play well together and have fun. The room is well-organised and resources are attractively set out to promote independence and stimulate interest in learning.

Children's independence is promoted through a variety of opportunities and they move around freely accessing toys and play equipment. Staff have a good understanding of the range of experiences which enable children to make progress in all areas of learning and play. Children are fully involved in a broad range of enjoyable activities which develop their mathematical thinking, imagination, language and creative development, for example, role play, construction, singing number songs and creative play. Children enjoy painting, play dough and using a variety of resources for creative activities. They enjoy looking at books accessing them independently in the book corner. Children's communication skills are developing well. Staff extend their vocabulary effectively and further children's thinking by asking them questions during activities.

Staffing interaction is good and all children benefit from warm relationships with staff who are interested in what they say and do and give them lots of praise and encouragement. During the session children sit with staff for discussion time, staff encourage children to listen to each other and take turns to speak. Staff use this opportunity to give children stickers for their achievements, one child built a good model with bricks and another child waved his mum off happily that morning, children clap and staff praise the children. This enhances children's confidence and self-esteem.

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

The provision is good.

Children are valued and respected as individuals. All children are welcomed into the group and staff know the children well. They are aware of their individual needs and preferences and this helps children feel secure and settled. Children develop a positive attitude to others and an understanding about the wider world and local community as they walk to a local park and visit the library. The setting is positive about inclusion and ensuring children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are included in all aspects of play and make good progress. Good consideration has been given to sources of support for children with English as an additional language.

Children behave well and are beginning to understand right and wrong through consistent boundaries and age-appropriate methods used by staff. For example, distraction and explanation. Staff talk calmly to children at their level and encourage children to play alongside each other sharing both space and toys. Children are encouraged to be kind, helpful and polite. They are given lots of praise and encouragement and they respond positively to the praise offered. This helps develop their self-esteem and confidence.

Partnership with parents and carers is good. Sensitive settling in arrangements helps children, parents and staff get to know each other. Children benefit from effective information sharing with parents through informal exchanges each day. Useful information is displayed on the notice board, for example, policies and procedures, daily routines and activities. This ensures parents are well informed about all activities their children are completing and how the setting operates. Parents are warmly welcomed by staff to speak with them at any time should they be concerned about any aspect of their child's care or learning. Parents speak positively about the setting, and how well their children have settled in, how they enjoy attending and that their confidence is enhanced.

## **Organisation**

The organisation is satisfactory.

Children are cared for in a well-organised environment. Indoor space is laid out to maximise play opportunities for children. Staff are clear about their roles and responsibilities, they are enthusiastic and friendly. This ensures children are effectively supported and their needs are met. Recruitment and vetting procedures are sufficiently robust to ensure children are well protected and cared for by suitable, qualified staff. A clear understanding of the ratios ensures children receive a good level of support. Children benefit from being cared for by staff who consistently interact with them and give children good support, care and encouragement. This helps children feel secure and confident and promotes their well-being and development.

Most of the required documentation for the safe and efficient management of the setting is in place. However, the system for registering children's attendance does not show their hours of attendance in order to fully promote their safety. Staff continue to further their knowledge and expertise through training and developing good practice. Overall the provision meets the needs of the range of children for whom it provides.

## **Improvements since the last inspection**

At the last inspection, to improve the standards of care, the provider was asked to: ensure the carpet area is made safe; ensure children's arrival and departure times are recorded; ensure children's development and progress is recorded to help plan the next steps in children learning; increase the range of resources which promote positive images of culture, gender and disability and obtain a copy of the Code of Practice.

The carpet in the playroom has been replaced with new carpet and non-slip flooring. This is a positive step and promotes safety within the setting. The system for recording children's attendance is not effective as the children's hours of attendance are not recorded. As a result has been carried through as a recommendation at this inspection to ensure children's safety. Children's individual needs are met as staff observe children during activities and plan the next steps for their play, learning and development. Staff discuss children's progress with parents. Resources which promote positive images of culture, gender and disability are increased. This includes a range of puzzles, play food, puppets and dolls. Children have equal access to resources. The setting is positive about inclusion; this is supported by experienced staff and the setting

has a copy of the Code of Practice for the Identification and Assessment of Special Educational Needs. This ensures children welfare and development is effectively promoted.

### **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**

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.

### **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 records show children's hours of attendance
- review the Local Safeguarding Children Board procedures to include the procedure to be followed in the event of an allegation being made against a member of staff or volunteer
- ensure the policy for uncollected children includes written procedures to be followed in the event of a child being lost
- obtain written parental consent to seek emergency medical treatment or advice.

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](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)