

Stepping Stones Playgroup (Wells)

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	143013
Inspection date	13 September 2007
Inspector	Elaine Douglas
Setting Address	Stoberry Park School, North Road, Wells, Somerset, BA5 2TJ
Telephone number	01749 677011
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Registered person	The Trustees of Stepping Stones Playgroup (Wells)
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?

Stepping Stones Pre-school is run by a parents' committee. It is situated in an Elliot building within the grounds of Stoberry School in Wells. A maximum of 18 children may attend the nursery at any one time. The group is open term time only Monday to Friday from 09.00 until 11.30 and, Tuesday and Thursday from 12.30 until 15.00 during the Autumn term. They are open for all ten sessions during the Spring and Summer terms. All children share access to a secure enclosed outdoor play area. They also have use of the school hall, the ICT suite and the playground.

There are currently 45 children aged from two and a half to under five years on role. Of these, 28 children receive funding for early education. Children come from Wells and the surrounding villages. The group currently supports a number of children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities.

The pre school employs six members of staff. All staff hold appropriate early use qualifications. They group receive support from the local authority.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Children's health is protected by good standards of hygiene; good equipment and procedures help prevent cross contamination. For example, staff wear disposable gloves to change nappies, and the mat is cleaned after each use, using disposable, disinfected cloths. Children's individual health needs are well met. Accidents and medication are recorded appropriately. Staff regularly check the first aid equipment to ensure this is sufficient and all staff hold a first aid qualification. Good information is provided for parents in the event of a head injury and clear written procedures help protect children from illness.

Children develop good hygiene practices for themselves through their daily routines. They visit the toilets independently, and know to wash their hands using the liquid soap and paper towels provided; staff check to ensure children do this effectively to protect their health. Children are able to help themselves to fresh drinking water, and wear sun hats and sunscreen to protect them from the effects of the sun. They are provided with a variety of fresh fruit for their snack, as well as milk or water.

Children have daily access to outdoor play and a range of equipment, which helps develop their large muscle skills and spatial awareness. They cycle with confidence, steering, to avoid collisions. Staff use the Foundation Stage curriculum to plan a good range of activities to promote the children's physical development.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

Children's risk of accidental injury is minimised through good supervision. The thorough annual risk assessments are well documented, however, there is no formal system for making daily checks to ensure consistency in checking the premises both inside and outside. Very good procedures ensure that children only leave the premises with an appropriate adult. For example, when parents arrive to collect their children, they come in through the fire exit, sign their children out and leave by the main door; staff monitor the doors and the children throughout this process. There is a good range of developmentally appropriate resources, which are well organised and stored securely. Low level storage is clearly labelled, to enable children to select resources and make choices. Children safely and independently access the toilets and the enclosed garden. A stairgate prevents them accessing the kitchen area and fixed guards protect them from the heaters.

Children develop a good awareness of helping with their own safety through regularly practising the emergency evacuation procedures. Staff gently remind them of ways to keep themselves safe, such as holding dressing-up clothes away from their feet as they climb steps.

Children's welfare is safeguarded by the staff's good knowledge of child protection issues. The policy and procedures are part of the staff induction as well as child protection training. Appropriate documentation is in place to provide further guidance.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

Children from two to three years are fully involved in all the activities planned for the older children. They benefit from staff using the Birth to three matters framework to identify their individual developmental needs. Effective interaction ensures they benefit from the activities and are enabled to take part at their own level of ability.

Nursery Education.

The quality of teaching and learning is good. Children make good progress towards most of the early learning goals. Staff have a secure knowledge of the Foundation Stage curriculum and the learning intentions of the activities. They know how to adapt activities to meet the developmental needs of the children and promote new skills. Clear plans cover all areas of development and children have good opportunities to revisit activities to consolidate their learning. Children are able to make choices and access resources both inside and outside, so children are motivated to learn. They are pleased with their achievements and are encouraged to keep things to show to their parents at the end of the session, this helps promote their self esteem.

Children are interested in the activities and remain at them until they have finished them to their own satisfaction. They have a good awareness of routines and take care of their personal hygiene which supports their independence. Staff are effectively deployed providing good interaction, asking open-ended questions and engaging children in conversations to find out what they know, consequently children are becoming good communicators. Staff make good use of most daily routines to teach. For example, children recognise shapes and colours to find their keyworker group, and know how many points there are on a square or triangle. Children regularly link sounds to letters and the older and more able children form recognisable letters when writing their names.

Children learn to use a good range of tools, for example, when cooking, using the workbench or manipulating playdough. They regularly explore paint and a range of materials, and different techniques to join and construct. For example, one child uses a tape dispenser to stick their pictures to the paper. Children use programmable toys to develop an awareness of ICT and access resources which provide positive images of peoples differences. However, there are limited opportunities or activities for children to develop an awareness of other people's cultures or beliefs. Staff make regular observations of the children's achievements and cross reference examples or photographs, although some have not been dated to ensure there is a clear record of progress. Overall children make good progress considering their starting points and abilities.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

Children settle very quickly to the activities and routines, and are happy and confident within the setting. Many children are new to the group, however, sensitive interaction and an inviting environment means children soon get engrossed in the activities. Children are well behaved and respond positively to the consistent praise and encouragement they receive from staff. They are confident to express their needs and feelings in appropriate ways and are confident to initiate interaction with others, as they know they will receive a warm, positive response from staff. Children help to take care of the environment and listen to each other during whole group activities.

Children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are appropriately supported. The SENCO is seeking further training and outside agencies are involved when applicable, to support children within the setting. Children are gaining some awareness of people's differences through raising money for charities and accessing a range of books and puzzles. Staff use some basic sign language with all the children to promote inclusion. Good information ensures staff are aware of children's individual needs and staff respond well to children's requests. For example, while one child says they are hot and want to remove their jumper another says they are cold and want to put their jumper on. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered.

The partnership with parents and carers is good. Parents are kept well informed of the activities and topics through the newsletters and notice boards; they have good opportunities to attend the sessions and be involved in their child's learning. New parents are invited to an open-afternoon and receive good information through the welcome pack and prospectus. Staff are available each day to exchange information and parents are informed that they can access their child's development records at any time. In the summer term parents attend an open-afternoon to see their child's development file. However, there is no system to ensure all parents are kept informed of their child's development on an ongoing basis or to be involved in planning for their next stages of development.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

Children's care and welfare is effectively promoted through the staff competently putting into practice the policies and procedures. These are well organised and regularly reviewed to ensure they remain relevant. However, the complaints policy does not provide information for parents on the timescales to resolve complaints and there is no system to ensure relevant information is recorded in the event of a complaint. Accurate documentation is confidentially stored and used to ensure children receive appropriate care. Children are cared for by experienced qualified staff who continue to seek training to update and extend their knowledge. The committee and staff are aware of their roles and responsibilities which protects children and ensures good quality care. The setting meets the needs of the range of children for whom it provides.

The leadership and management of the nursery education is good. Ongoing self evaluation is used well, to identify areas for improvement in the provision and the activities are evaluated each week. All staff are given equal responsibility for the smooth running of the sessions, and planning and leading activities; consequently staff work well as a team. Annual appraisals are used to monitor and identify staff development. The pre school leader recognises the strengths of individual members of staff and uses these effectively to benefit the children.

Improvements since the last inspection

At the last inspection the group were asked to write an outings policy and were asked to consider providing more opportunities for children to link sounds to letters.

Since that inspection they have written clear procedures which are followed to ensure that children remain safe when on outings. Children now focus on letters of the week and have daily opportunities to link sounds to letters, for example, when finding their own names.

Complaints since the last inspection

Since April 1 2004 there have been no complaints made to Ofsted that required the provider or Ofsted to take 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 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):

- devise a formal system for daily risk assessments
- provide more detailed information in the complaints procedure so that parents are aware of the timescales to resolve complaints and devise a system to keep relevant records

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):

- plan to provide more opportunities and activities for children to gain an awareness of other peoples cultures and beliefs
- ensure all observations are dated to show children's clear progress and share these with parents on an ongoing basis to plan for their next stages of development

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