

Stepping Stones RAF Leeming

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	400084
Inspection date	20 September 2007
Inspector	Pauline Pinnegar
Setting Address	Royal Air Force, Leeming, Northallerton, North Yorkshire, DL7 9NJ
Telephone number	01677 457592
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Registered person	RAF Leeming Childcare Charity
Type of inspection	Integrated
Type of care	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.

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 RAF Leeming is run by a committee with a supervisor employed to manage the childcare. It has been registered since approximately 1987 but has moved premises since then. It is located in purpose built premises at RAF Leeming, close to shops, the local school and other facilities for families. Children are cared for in age appropriate groups, in five rooms. Outdoor play is provided in an enclosed area with a grass and paved surface. A maximum of 121 children may attend the nursery at any one time. The nursery is open each weekday from 07.30 to 17.30 all year round excluding bank holidays and between Christmas and New Year.

The nursery serves children from the local and surrounding communities. There are currently 95 on roll. Of these, 28 children receive funding for nursery education.

There are 16 members of staff working with the children on a regular basis, all of whom hold a relevant childcare qualification. Two members of staff are working towards a further qualification. There is also a nursery administrator and cook. The nursery receives support from the Local Authority and is a member of the Pre School Learning Alliance.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is satisfactory.

Children play outside each day, enjoying lots of exercise in the fresh air. They use the space well, as they ride around on bikes, run fast and play chasing games. They develop coordination skills, as they clamber on the large climbing frame. They use other large play equipment such as parachutes, tunnels and have fun with obstacle courses. The attractive outdoor play area has recently been developed. Children use balancing beams with skill as they learn to balance carefully. Physical play is well planned to help children develop coordination and control. Children are developing a healthy independence, because staff give support to explore and try out new challenges. Toddlers have sturdy toys to push along to support their developing mobility. They love playing in the large ball pool. Staff plan well to ensure children enjoy a good variety of play experiences using the outdoor environment. Older children in the 'Jesters Club' enjoy outdoor play each day after school. Pre-school children also have opportunities to explore 'physi-fit' sessions in the school hall.

Staff understand the importance of good health and hygiene practices. Parents are clearly informed that sick children cannot be cared for and information about infectious diseases is shared, so that children are protected from infection. Arrangements for first aid and administering medication meet requirements and effectively protect children. However, medication records for children under two years are not countersigned by parents and copies of the records are not retained on the premises. This does not fully safeguard children's welfare. Children know why they must wash their hands before they have lunch and they think carefully about good hygiene when using the toilet. They use paper towels, and younger children have individual bedding. Staff consistently promote clear health and hygiene routines within everyday practice, so that children learn how to keep themselves healthy. They become increasingly independent in attending to their own personal care. Key staff liaise with parents to ensure rest and sleep routines flow with each child's needs. Children enjoy close interactions with well known staff.

Parents are fully consulted about their child's health and dietary needs. Children are well nourished and enjoy a varied menu of freshly cooked, nutritious food. Menus are shared with parents in the two-way diaries and displayed on a wipe board in the reception area. Snack and lunch times are enjoyable, relaxed occasions where staff and children sit together, sociably sharing conversation. Staff encourage conversations about healthy eating. Although children are offered drinks regularly older children do not independently access water whenever they wish.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is satisfactory.

Children are cared for in warm and welcoming premises. The new outdoor play facility provides children with an exciting and attractive space to develop their physical skills. Children learn to use the play environment purposefully, as staff enable them to use all areas of the environment with safety and independence. Children's art work and photographs are displayed which promotes children's sense of belonging. Children are protected from potential hazards, as staff check the premises daily and take appropriate steps to minimise risks, both indoors and out. However, the premises are not secure at all times to prevent unauthorised access to unwanted visitors. This compromises children's safety. Fire safety requirements are adhered to appropriately. Fire

drills are held regularly, so that children understand what to do in the event of an emergency. Clear risk assessments are conducted for all activities. Arrangements for collection of children from school are well organised to ensure children are kept safe.

Staff talk to children about risks, for example, not running indoors, to help raise their awareness of safe practice. They use daily routines to develop children's awareness of how to use activities and resources safely. For example, younger children walk safely to the outdoor play area using the 'rope line'. Older children explore activities relating to fire safety. Children have access to sufficient, safe space to allow them to enjoy a variety of activities. They choose from a suitable range of toys and play materials. Resources are of sound quality and they are mostly organised in low level storage, making them easy for children to reach. The play environment allows children to move around freely and safely, developing their own play ideas.

Staff have a sound understanding of their responsibility to protect children. The designated person recognises that the child's welfare is paramount and ensures she acts in the child's best interests at all times. Most staff have attended child protection training and the child protection policy clearly reflects current guidance. Systems for recording of incidents are established and a visitors register is maintained. Procedures for checking that staff are suitable to work with children are robust, further ensuring the safety and protection of children in the nursery.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is satisfactory.

Babies and toddlers are secure and play contentedly, learning to enjoy being with others. The baby room is relaxed and homely. Children enjoy close physical contact in the form of cuddles. They explore treasure baskets and 'feely boxes', which stimulate their senses and curiosity. Staff respond intuitively and sensitively to non-verbal communications, showing respect for children's individuality. Warm interactions enable children to play happily and caring relationships foster their self-esteem. Staff provide a stimulating environment to help children learn. Planning and assessments for children's development links to the 'Birth to three matters' framework to promote the outcomes for children. Children settle happily and enjoy their time in the nursery. They independently select activities and are confident to make choices about their play. They explore activities freely, such as small world and construction, and they use the role play resources well. Opportunities for independent creativity are well resourced and children enjoy exploring sand, water and paint. Children also have opportunities to explore other media, such as jelly, 'gloop', corn flour and shredded paper.

Staff offer support and reassurance, so that children feel secure and content in the nursery. Children play well together and make friends. They enjoy singing and join in well with familiar songs. Children aged over two years enjoy exploring with rice and pasta and swirling in the water filled with glitter and stars. They also use chinks, stencils and finger painting to make marks. During the recent topic of 'Me Myself And I' children observed their reflection in the mirror and explored different feelings. Colour, shape and animal matching games are also favourites with the children. Older children in the 'Jesters Club' choose freely what they want to do after school. They enjoy playing games of snooker, playing with computer games and various art and craft activities.

Nursery Education

The quality of teaching and children's learning is satisfactory, so that children make sound progress towards the early learning goals. Staff have a sound understanding of the Foundation

Stage curriculum. They have high expectations for children's behaviour. They help children understand what is expected of them in terms of acceptable behaviour. Appropriate use of the daily environment ensures that children enjoy a varied range of appropriate activities and experiences, which sustain their interest. Children are motivated and enthusiastic. They learn to concentrate and persevere well with activities they enjoy. However, detail in planning does not clearly identify differentiation for all children to continue to ensure appropriate challenge. Staff have developed systems to observe children's interests and monitor their individual progress. Assessments of progress are clearly linked to the stepping stones. However, staff do not always fully utilise this information and keep it updated in order to challenge children appropriately.

Children communicate confidently, using language well to share their own ideas. They show care and concern, for example, when one child fell over, her friend asked if she was 'okay'. They enjoy being the 'special helper' for the day and talk proudly about their home life and community. Although children's independence is developing well in their personal care and when choosing activities, opportunities to extend this further at snack and mealtimes are not always used. Children love stories and sit and listen well to their favourites such as, 'The Best Loved Bear'. Most are confident to speak to others about their wants and interests. Although mark making resources are available to children, they have limited opportunities to write for real purposes in their role play and for more able children to begin to write their own name.

Children occasionally use mathematical language during play and count well when supported by staff, for example counting the animals on the jigsaws. They are beginning to recognise shapes and quickly form a circle at group time. Everyday situations, for example, counting plates at snack time and the number of children in line to go outdoors, are not always used to promote their mathematical understanding.

Children enjoy exploring and investigating. They have good opportunities to look at how things grow in their new garden, for example, peas, beans, tomatoes and flowers. Children are developing sound designing and making skill as they build with different materials including wooden block and plastic bricks. Although computer equipment is available in both rooms, children are not always encouraged to develop their interest in information, communication and technology. Children happily engage in role play based on first hand experiences. They mimic adults taking the register, and cooking in the kitchen. They enjoy using a range of materials such as paint, sand and jelly. They engage in many craft activities, such as making salt dough fridge magnets and also paper aeroplanes which they take outside to fly. Children are enthusiastic singers and happily join in their favourite songs such as 'heads shoulders knees and toes' successfully joining in with the actions.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is satisfactory.

Children feel a strong sense of belonging to the nursery. They are very familiar with routines, which enhances their sense of security. Staff work closely with parents to find out what is important to each child, so that children know they are valued as individuals. They listen to what children say and find out about their interests. They offer support and reassurance, so that children feel secure and content in the nursery. Children play well together and make friends.

Children understand responsible behaviour and behave well. The 'golden rules' are displayed for older children. Children generally play harmoniously with others, particularly in role play

areas, during imaginative games, and outdoors. Children develop good self-esteem and respect for others because staff positively promote this throughout the session. They are able to successfully share resources, take turns on the climbing frame and show kindness towards others, for example, when sharing teddies at the 'teddy bears picnic'. Children's social, moral, spiritual and cultural development is fostered. Secure procedures are in place for supporting children with learning difficulties and disabilities.

There are insufficient opportunities available for children to learn about the wider world, as staff plan limited activities to raise their awareness of the lives and cultures of other people. However, there is a suitable range of resources which promote awareness of difference and diversity. Outings are occasionally planned to help raise children's awareness of their local community and immediate environment. For example, children enjoy trips to the local church, post office, and school on the base. However, the trips are not extended outside the base camp to raise children's awareness of the wider world. Children are encouraged to use initiative and make choices and decisions as they plan their own play.

Partnership with parents is strong. Written feed back from parents indicates that they are very happy with the provision. There are good arrangements in place for sharing information. This is done verbally, by the informative notice boards outside each room, by newsletters and formal open days. Lots of photographs are attractively displayed within the nursery. However, written consent from parents has not been obtained. Partnership with parents with regard to nursery education is good. Parents receive good, well-presented information about the Foundation Stage through the notice boards, newsletters and the nursery prospectus. They are well informed about their child's progress by means of an open door policy and more formal arrangements, such as a written report and open days.

Organisation

The organisation is satisfactory.

The nursery is sufficiently organised. The consistent staff team have a wealth of experience between them, are welcoming and enjoy being with children. This allows both children and their parents to experience a sense of familiarity and security from the stability provided. A range of policies and procedures are in place to ensure children's welfare is safeguarded. However, policies are currently under review and not effectively organised. The complaints procedure does not include the full contact details of the regulator. Recruitment procedures are robust, ensuring that staff are suitably skilled and experienced to work with children. Well planned induction procedures, together with ongoing staff monitoring and appraisal, ensure staff are able to support children effectively. Required documentation which contributes to children's health, safety and well-being is in place.

Parents' wishes regarding their child's care influence day to day practice and clear written agreements are recorded. Children are cared for by a high number of qualified staff and most hold a current first aid certificate, which exceeds minimum requirements and protects children. Younger children are cared for in small groups and are appropriately supported by their key carer, which contributes to their care and well-being. Ratios of adults to children are always well met. This ensures continuity of care for children.

Leadership and management of the nursery education is satisfactory. Staff are supported effectively to work together as a cohesive team. There are some weaknesses linked to the provision of funded education. Staff all share the same vision which is to improve and develop their setting to ensure children achieve their potential. Although there are systems in place to

monitor the quality of teaching and its impact on children's learning, these are not sufficiently robust. There are gaps in the curriculum and not all documentation is kept up to date.

Overall, the provision meets the needs of the range of the children for whom it provides.

Improvements since the last inspection

At the last inspection the provider was asked to; ensure that Ofsted details are included in the complaints policy; ensure that children are able to access all areas of the garden to maximise their opportunities for physical play; continue to develop a suitable range of activities for the younger children, for example, by using the 'Birth to three matters' framework.

A written complaints procedure is now in place for parents. However, it does not include all contact details. Children are able to access all areas of the outdoor play area which has recently been updated. This has improved children opportunities for fresh air and promotes their physical development. Staff have a sound understanding of the 'Birth to three matters' framework and use it to plan appropriate activities for children under three years.

In relation to the provision for funded nursery education the provider was asked to; provide opportunities for children to develop their independence; improve access to mark making resources and further use of writing in children's play.

Opportunities for children to develop their independence have improved satisfactorily and children help to set the table at snack time. The provision for mark making resources has improved but this still remains an area for development.

Complaints since the last inspection

Since the last inspection there has been one complaint made to Ofsted that required the provider to take action in order to meet the National Standards. Ofsted received concerns in relation to National Standard 4 Physical Environment and National Standard 5 Equipment. The Complaints, Investigation and Enforcement Team contacted the provision. The provision provided an investigation response regarding the concerns raised. Ofsted are satisfied the provider remains qualified for registration.

The provider is required to keep a record of complaints made by parents, which they can see on request. The complaint record may contain complaints other than those made to Ofsted.

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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 the opportunities for children to access fresh drinking water
- review recording systems to ensure medication records for children under two years are countersigned by parents and copies are kept on the premises
- ensure the building is fully secure
- develop the opportunities for children to learn about the wider world
- obtain consent from parents to take photographs of children
- review the written policy regarding complaints and ensure all policies are organised appropriately.

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):

- provide opportunities for children to show an interest in information, communication technology
- develop planning to clearly identify differentiation for individual children
- ensure all development records are up to date so children continue to be appropriately challenged
- develop systems for monitoring the nursery education to ensure any gaps in the curriculum are identified and that documentation is kept appropriately.

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