

Stepping Stones Day Nursery (Dogsthorpe)

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number 256827

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Inspector Sheena Osborne

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Registered person Janet Baker

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 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 Day Nursery is one of two privately owned nurseries. It opened in 2000 in its present building having moved location and operates from six rooms in a converted house.

It is situated in Dogsthorpe, a suburb of Peterborough. A maximum of 65 children may attend the nursery at any one time. The nursery is open each weekday from 08:00 to 17:45 for 52 weeks of the year. All children share access to a secure enclosed outdoor play area. Children come from a wide catchment area as most parents travel to work in and around Peterborough.

There are currently 62 children from birth to five years on roll. Of these, 23 children receive funding for nursery education. Children come from the local area. Children attend for a variety of sessions. The setting is able to support children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, and those who speak English as an additional language.

The nursery employs 12 staff. All staff, including the manager hold appropriate early years qualifications.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Children's health is well promoted because staff ensure that the premises are clean and hygienic. Through daily routines and guidance from the staff, children learn the importance of following good hygiene practices as a way of staying healthy. For example, they know the importance of washing their hands after visiting the toilet and know to discard food which has fallen on the floor as a way of preventing the spread of infection. Staff are able to respond and deal with any accidents the children have effectively, because all staff hold current first aid qualifications. All of the required documentation which supports children's health is in place. Most are used effectively with the exception of the medication record. Occasionally the specific time that medication is administered to the child is not clearly recorded, instead the record states, for example, 'lunch time'.

Children develop a good understanding of the benefits of exercise as part of healthy living. They take part in daily outdoor activities which are challenging, stimulating and fun. They enjoy energetic racing games and music and movement activities. They develop control of their bodies as they move with growing confidence fast and slow, high and low as they move in time to the music. Younger children are active and are becoming increasingly independent, acquiring control over their bodies through practical activities such as feeding themselves. Babies have their physical needs met because they have room to crawl and roll around, and appropriate furniture supports their newly emerging walking skills as they put themselves to the standing position. They have regular opportunities to go outside and benefit from playing in the fresh air.

Children eat their meals and snacks seated at tables in small groups so they enjoy social conversation and develop their good manners. They enjoy a varied range of healthy meals and snacks that meet their individual needs, and discussion with parents ensures children's meals take into account allergies or special requirements. Children are encouraged to have regular drinks throughout the session and benefit from being able to freely access these, developing an awareness of meeting their own bodily needs.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

Children are cared for in a welcoming and secure indoor and outdoor environment. All areas are clean and well maintained. Overall staff have a good understanding of the group's safety procedures and policies which are generally implemented effectively, reducing the risks to children from potential hazards. For example, they monitor access to the premises, keep a record of all visitors and ensure areas routinely accessed by children are free from hazards.

Children use stimulating and safe equipment which is appropriate to their age and stage of development. This is stored in accessible shelving or containers. This enables the children to move around with ease, independently selecting toys, activities and equipment which support their individual interests. Staff explain dangers to children so that they understand and learn to keep themselves and others safe, for example, why it is unsafe to run inside. Children and staff practise the fire drill regularly so that they begin to develop an understanding of how to respond in an emergency.

Children's welfare is further promoted due to the staff's good knowledge and understanding of the provision's safeguarding policy. There is an identified person to take the lead in this area, and staff training is updated regularly. This ensures that they fully understand their responsibilities in protecting children from harm.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

Children separate happily from their carers because they enjoy warm and positive relationships with the staff and each other. They have many opportunities for self-initiated play so they develop at their own pace and follow their own interests. As a result, they are happily and purposefully occupied. Children enjoy stories and singing songs, helping to foster their language and literacy skills. Staff sit with babies and use eye contact, facial expressions and voice intonation to enhance the babies' communication skills.

Babies and toddlers benefit from flexible routines that enable them to rest or play according to their needs and parents' wishes. Staff in the babies and toddlers rooms are using the 'Birth to three matters' framework when planning activities for children aged under three years. They make observations of what children can do and use these effectively to inform future planning. This helps babies and toddlers to benefit from a wide range of age-appropriate activities that enable them to progress in all areas of their development. Children in these groups enjoy a number of activities that stimulate their senses such as playing with musical toys, a game of peek-a-boo, water play, treasure baskets, messy play with pasta, dough and 'gloop'. This helps them make sense of their world through touch, texture and smell in fun and exciting ways.

Nursery Education

The quality of teaching and learning is good. Staff are well qualified and they have a good working knowledge of the Foundation Stage curriculum. Effective teaching strategies are used to ensure children make good progress in their learning. They plan meaningful activities that build on children's interests and enable them to learn across all areas. Planning and assessment is mostly effective. It details the stepping stones and learning intentions of activities. Staff know the children well and make regular observations of what children can do which contributes to the children's assessment records. However, assessment records do not always clearly show children's next steps in learning. Staff make good use of time and resources to support children's learning. They encourage children to extend their language skills as they observe the falling of the autumn leaves by introducing descriptive words such as 'flittering, fluttering, floating down'. Staff listen to children, answer their questions and respond to their comments, which ensures children feel valued.

Children are confident, independent learners who are keen to join in the planned activities and make choices and decisions on their own. They help each other tidy away and are becoming responsible for their own self-care. They interact well with their peers, enjoying extended role play activities like going on an imaginary train journey, involving adults confidently in their play and sharing and taking turns with the resources. The free-flow pattern of activities gives children good opportunities to be creative and imaginative as they have time to develop and extend their ideas and complete their self-chosen tasks.

Children are confident speakers who chat happily to their friends and staff. They are learning letter sounds and some are able to sound out the letters in their name. Writing materials are readily accessible and staff encourage children to try writing or mark-making by writing their

names on their own artwork. Children understand that print carries meaning. They recognise familiar words such as their names and those of their friends. They enjoy story time, listening carefully to a familiar story and are encouraged to predict and remember what comes next.

Children count, measure and use mathematical language spontaneously throughout the day. They develop basic calculating skills and an understanding of shape, measure and numerals during planned activities. They explore size during role play as they measure each other's feet whilst playing in the shoe shop. Children enjoy a good range of first hand experiences that allow them to explore and investigate. They dig in the garden and look for worms, observe bird's feathers and smell the herbs they have grown. Children build and construct using a range of objects and tools. They gain some awareness and understanding of technology and how things work through the use of toys and equipment such as tape recorders, cameras and friction cars .

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

Children are well behaved in all areas of the nursery. They have warm and affectionate relationships with staff and each other and play together harmoniously. Staff have suitable strategies in place to help children understand the rules for good behaviour so that they know what is expected of them. Children are aware of the similarities and differences between themselves and other people. They gain an understanding of their local community, benefiting from people such as the police visiting the setting. Their understanding of the wider world is extended as they share their experiences with each other of the different countries they have visited as holiday destinations with their families. Children learn about a range of cultures and beliefs through activities linked to special events and festivals. For example, they celebrate their birthdays with friends and explore Chinese New Year. Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered.

Children attending with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are well supported and their needs are met. Staff work extremely well with the parents to ensure that the necessary support and care is provided to meet their child's needs. Information is gathered from other professionals with additional support in the form of one to one workers if necessary, and activities are adapted to ensure that children are included.

Partnership with parents and carers is good. Children benefit from the good relationships and informal contact between their parents and staff. Children's individual needs are met as the nursery collects information from parents that enables them to provide appropriate care and attention. Parents are well informed about the nursery through a variety of ways, including information in the parent prospectus, details displayed on the notice board and regular newsletters. Parents are encouraged to contribute ideas through parent questionnaires. Staff provide parents with good information on the Foundation Stage curriculum and the 'Birth to three matters' framework. Children's progress records are available for parents to read at all times and meetings are arranged for parents to discuss children's development with their individual key worker. Parents speak highly of the setting and have conveyed this in writing, 'all staff involved with my child's care have always been very helpful and communicate well with me', 'great relationship, my child always comes home happy and talks about all staff members'.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

Children are happy and content as staff in all areas of the nursery have developed warm and caring relationships with them. The registered person uses effective recruitment procedures, which ensures that the staff have suitable experience and qualifications to work with children. Staff keep abreast of new childcare initiatives and have started preparing for and looking at how they can adapt their practices to enable the smooth implementation of The Early Years Foundation Stage when it is introduced in 2008. Overall children's needs are met.

All of the required records and legally required policies and procedures are in place. However they are not all used effectively. For example there is no system to record when staff and children leave the premises to go on walks and visits.

The quality of leadership and management is good. The management and staff team work well together, supporting each other and forming good working relationships. They have a good knowledge and understanding of how children learn. They are an enthusiastic and dedicated staff team who are aware of their roles and responsibilities and share good practices. Staff are carefully monitored and an appraisal system is in place. Management has a clear vision for progress and staff are motivated and keen to continue to improve outcomes for children.

Improvements since the last inspection

At the last childcare inspection no actions or recommendations were raised. However, the provider was asked to give consideration to the following: Staff involved in direct cooking for the children have obtained their basic food hygiene certificate. All staff directly involved in cooking have current food hygiene certificates. This enhances children health and safety.

At the last nursery education inspection no actions or recommendations were raised. However, the provider was asked to give consideration to the following: Ensure all opportunities are used within the daily routine to develop children's counting skills. Staff effectively used opportunities within the daily routine to promote children's counting skills. This support children's mathematical learning.

Complaints since the last inspection

Since 1st April 2004 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.

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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):

- develop medication records to ensure that specific times for medication to be administered are clear
- ensure that the registration system effectively shows who is on the premises at all times.

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):

- continue to develop opportunities for children to develop their information technology skills
- continue to develop assessment records so that they clearly show children's next steps in learning.

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