

# Stepping Stones (The Knares Basildon)

Inspection report for early years provision

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	402243
<b>Inspection date</b>	17 October 2007
<b>Inspector</b>	Lisa Paisley
<b>Setting Address</b>	Lee Chapel South Community Hall, Kibcaps, The Knares,, BASILDON, Essex, SS16 5RX
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<b>Registered person</b>	Stepping Stones Pre-School Committee
<b>Type of inspection</b>	Integrated
<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 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 pre-school is run by a committee. It opened in 1964 and operates from a hall in a local community centre in Basildon, Essex. A maximum of 26 children may attend the setting at any one time. The pre-school is open every week day morning from 09.00 to 11.30 and on Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday afternoons from 12.45 to 14.45, term time only. All children share access to a secure enclosed outdoor play area.

There are currently 36 children aged from two to under five years on roll. Of these, 25 receive funding for nursery education. Children come from the local area. The pre-school currently supports a number of children who speak English as an additional language.

The pre-school employs six staff. Four of the staff, including both managers, hold appropriate early years qualifications. The setting receives support from the local council.

## THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

### **Helping children to be healthy**

The provision is satisfactory.

Children benefit from being cared for in an environment where hygiene practices are encouraged by the staff. They learn about hygiene routines through washing their hands appropriately, for example, after using creative activities. Children have access to tablet soap, hot and cold water, however, the shared hand towels in the hall and toilet areas are not suitable as children are at risk of cross infection. Half of the staff are first aid trained, ensuring children receive suitable care and attendance in the event of an accident and when administering medication.

All children enjoy regular opportunities to engage in physical activities and have access to a range of outdoor play equipment to support their whole body movements. For example, children confidently use tricycles, scooters, prams and the climbing frame. Children use a range of tools and equipment to promote their finer manipulative hand skills, such as threading activities, peg boards and puzzles. As a result, children are making secure progress in all aspects of physical development and their skills are challenged appropriately.

Children are provided with a range of snacks, however, they are not always appropriate for promoting healthy eating and as a result children are not developing an awareness of the importance of a healthy lifestyle. Fresh drinking water is freely available throughout the session and children are able to help themselves independently. This ensures that children remain hydrated throughout the session. Staff maintain appropriate written records for each child to ensure their individual health and dietary requirements are met.

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

The provision is satisfactory.

The pre-school has suitable measures in place to ensure that risks to children's safety, both indoors and outdoors, are minimised. For example, the radiators and low level sockets are protected, the main entrance is secure and all fire safety equipment including the fire extinguishers are suitably maintained. Clear arrival and departure procedures allow for the safe arrival and collection of the children to and from the pre-school. The group has clear written safety procedures in place which are consistently applied by staff, such as the lost child policy. Staff have sufficient awareness of how to organise space, furniture and equipment appropriately to enable children to move freely and with independence between activities and different play areas. As a result, children feel confident within the setting and are safe and secure.

Children benefit from using a range of toys and play equipment which are maintained to a good standard. Children enthusiastically select their own play resources which are appropriate to their ages and stages of development. Resources and play equipment are organised at child height, allowing children to self select promoting their independence and choice. Children learn about keeping themselves safe through gentle reminders from staff such as no running and practising regular fire drills to ensure they know how to evacuate the building quickly and safely in the event of an emergency.

Children are adequately safeguarded because staff are generally aware of their role in protecting children. A written policy is in place and there is a designated staff member responsible for safeguarding children. However, the pre-school has not obtained current information with regard to the Local Safeguarding Children Board and the policy has not been amended to reflect

the changes. Consequently, staff do not have updated knowledge and understanding of current child protection procedures to ensure the welfare of children is not compromised.

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

The provision is satisfactory.

Children enjoy their time at the setting and are happy and settled due to staff relating to them sensitively and providing a range of activities which are generally interesting. Staff have developed warm and effective relationships with the children, enabling them to feel secure and develop a strong sense of their own self-worth. They participate in a range of creative activities, such as sand, painting and water. A range of themed resources including the home corner allow children to develop their imagination. Children use the outdoor area confidently when developing their physical, investigative and exploratory skills.

The pre-school has obtained the 'Birth to three matters' framework and the staff are suitably using the approach in their practice to improve the quality of care and play experiences for young children.

### **Nursery Education**

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. Staff use the Foundation Stage to plan a balanced range of activities to promote the six areas of learning. However, the range of teaching methods are not always fully extended limiting children's learning experiences. Planning is detailed, covering all the required elements of the curriculum, including the differentiation activities. However, focus activity plans have not yet been implemented, as a result staff are unable to identify next steps in children's learning to inform future plans. A key worker system is in place and staff use individual profiles to record children's developmental progress. However, initial profiles are not completed, consequently staff are unable to assess children's starting points in their development. The structure of the session is mainly free play incorporating registration and snack time and the children clearly enjoy their time at the pre-school. However, the organisation of snack time, lay out of resources and the use of the outdoor area potentially limits children's play and learning opportunities.

Daily activities adequately cover the six areas of learning, however, planning for mathematical development, creative development and knowledge and understanding of the world are limited. Consequently, children's learning is not fully extended in these areas. Children are keen to participate in the range of activities provided and are encouraged to independently select resources and initiate their own activities and games. Children show a strong sense of belonging as they greet staff and each other upon arrival. They work well together and understand the importance of co-operation during group activities. For example, children negotiate with each other and agree turn taking when engaging in small world play, such as the farm. Children are becoming confident speakers, using words effectively and a range of vocabulary to convey their experiences both real and imaginary. They listen attentively to each other and join in during group story times. Children have access to a range of age appropriate books, they are confident and enjoy looking at stories, for example ' Five little ducks'. Children confidently use tools and resources to make marks and more able children are beginning to write their names independently. Older children can count up to ten and beyond. Counting and number recognition is suitably promoted through daily routines and activities, for example, singing number rhymes. The range of mathematical equipment allows children to measure, weigh and link up items. Cooking and dry sand activities help children's understanding of weight, measurement and capacity.

Children have adequate opportunities to find out about the natural world such as collecting leaves and conkers. Children go on trips out into the community such as the local library and park and people are invited into the pre-school to talk about their work, for example, the local police officer. They are developing a sound awareness of the use of information and communication technology in everyday life and are able to operate equipment such as cash machines, telephones and tape measures. Their physical skills are promoted through a variety of mediums such as the climbing frame, tricycles, balls, hoops and bean bags. Children's finer manipulative hand skills are suitably promoted through the range of activities such as threading, puzzles and building with small bricks. Children's imaginations and free expression is promoted through a range of activities such as, sand, play dough, painting, role-play, craft activities and music and movement. They enthusiastically enjoy music and movement where they can practise moving their bodies rhythmically, stamping their feet and nodding their heads.

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

The provision is satisfactory.

All children are warmly welcomed into the setting which helps them to feel happy and secure. Children benefit from having access to a range of play resources which promote positive images of diversity and from participating in activities which promote their awareness of different festivals and cultures. For example, Chinese New Year, Diwali, Easter and Christmas. Children's individual needs are discussed with parents in detail. Any special requirements or information are discussed and regular information exchanges takes place between the staff and parents. Children who have English as an additional language are effectively supported within the pre-school.

Children settle well at the pre-school as staff work with parents to ensure children's individual needs are met. Staff obtain all the required information from parents before a child starts at the pre-school regarding their interests and abilities. This enables staff to build on and develop children's previous knowledge, understanding and skills. Children are well behaved and benefit from having consistent boundaries set by staff. Children are appropriately supported by staff who regularly use praise and encouragement to promote children's self-esteem. They learn to share play equipment and take turns and increasingly take responsibility for their own actions. Their understanding of right and wrong is promoted sensitively by staff through gentle reminders to care for their environment, the equipment and each other. Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered.

Partnership with parents and carers is satisfactory. Staff inform parents and carers about the day-to-day running of the pre-school. There is a flexible settling in procedure and staff find out about children's individual needs and their developmental progress before starting. Informal procedures are in place with regard to staff meeting with parents to discuss children's developmental progress. The group's notice board provides parents with general information about the pre-school, including the registration certificate and the Curriculum guidance for the foundation stage. Ensuring parents are fully informed with regard to their child's developmental progress, topic work and any events or celebrations.

Parents are aware of how to make complaints about the provision and these are dealt with in a prompt and professional way. Staff listen to parents' concerns and, where appropriate, adapt their policies and procedures accordingly.

## **Organisation**

The organisation is satisfactory.

Children's care is supported by the satisfactory organisation at the pre-school. Children are able to move freely around the setting accessing a range of activities which support their play and learning. Resources are suitably laid out for children, however, designated play areas are not easily identified and the organisation of daily routines such as snack time and the use of the outdoor area potentially limits further purposeful play and learning opportunities for children and hinders their ability to make choices and increase their independence skills.

The leadership and management of the pre-school is satisfactory. The manager and staff work closely together to ensure the day-to-day running of the pre-school runs smoothly. Staff are generally aware of their roles and responsibilities and they are deployed suitably within the pre-school. Staffing ratios are maintained throughout the session ensuring children are well supervised and supported during activities. Staff have a sound awareness of the policies and procedures which are in place and staff training needs are supported. Consequently, children are cared for by an experienced staff team and benefit from continuity of care.

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

## **Improvements since the last inspection**

At the last care inspection the provision agreed, to review the organisation of snack time to provide further opportunities for children's social and independence skills, review the provision of resources so that children have opportunities to access further equipment by themselves to support and extend their own independent play and learning. The provision also agreed to, review the information in the child protection policy with regard to if allegations are made against a member of staff to ensure that it is in line with the Area Child Protection Committee procedures. The pre-school reviewed the organisation of snack time to further promote children's social skills and independence, children are now able to access a range of resources to support independent play and learning and the child protection policy has been amended to include a statement with regard to an allegation being made against a staff member. Overall, some progress has been made, however, further development is still required.

At the last education inspection the provision agreed, to develop the planning of the curriculum to show how and what children are expected to learn from activities across the six areas of learning and how individual children will be supported or extended in the activities to ensure that they build on previous learning and make progress through the stepping stones; develop all staff's awareness of the stepping stones of learning to enable them to participate in planning the curriculum and to deliver the curriculum more effectively. Changes have been made to curriculum planning, including what the learning outcome is, how children are going to be supported and differentiation. All staff have attended Foundation Stage training and they are all activity involved in planning activities for children. As a result, some improvements have been made, however, further development is still required.

## **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

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 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):

- review hand washing procedures for children to ensure that positive steps are taken to prevent the spread of infection
- review food policy to ensure that healthy eating is promoted
- update staff's knowledge and understanding of safeguarding procedures, this relates to obtaining information with regard to the Local Safeguarding Children Board
- review the organisation of daily routines such as snack time, the lay out of resources and the use of the outdoor play area to further foster children's choice and independence.

#### 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):

- develop a range of teaching methods to further extend children's learning
- devise initial profiles for children that include their starting points and develop focus activity plans providing clear learning intentions
- extend the range of play experiences for problem solving, reasoning and numeracy, creative activities and knowledge and understanding of the world.

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)