

Stepping Stones Pre-School

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	EY275967
Inspection date	12 December 2007
Inspector	Caroline Hearn
Setting Address	Meadway School, Dunsfold Road, Tilehurst, Reading, Berkshire, RG30 4NP
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Registered person	Stepping Stones Pre-School
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 a committee run pre-school which first opened in 1972. It is located in two classrooms within the Meadway school in Tilehurst and serves the needs of families in the surrounding area. A maximum of 24 children may attend the pre-school at any one time. They are open Monday to Friday from 9.30 to 12.00. The pre-school also operates a lunch club Tuesday to Thursday from 12.00 to 13.00. All children share access to a secure enclosed outdoor play area.

There are currently 26 children on roll. Of these, 21 receive funding for nursery education. The pre-school currently supports a number of children with learning difficulties and also supports a number of children who speak English as an additional language.

The pre-school employs seven members of staff. Of these five hold appropriate early years qualifications and one member of staff is working towards a qualification.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Children are encouraged to wash their hands before snack time and after using the toilet. They understand the reasons for these simple effective routines and comment that they are washing off the germs. Children are well protected from the spread of infection. Staff gently remind them how to reduce the spread of infection by encouraging them to not lick their hands while selecting their snacks from the communal serving dish. Children receive appropriate treatment for any minor accidents as most of the staff have current first aid certificates and know how to put this knowledge into practice.

Children are provided with a balanced healthy snack. These are varied each day and include fresh fruit or vegetables. Children with allergies have these recorded and staff have good access to this information to ensure children are always offered appropriate snacks or drinks. Children have good access to drinks at all times, in addition to the snack time drinks a jug of water and cups is set out for the children to freely use each session.

During fine weather children enjoy opportunities for outside play and learning in the pre-schools outdoor area. The pre-school also has an appropriate range of suitable indoor equipment which they use during wet weather such as slides and climbing frames. On these they develop their coordination, climbing, jumping and balancing skills. Children are able to handle tools, objects, construction and malleable materials safely and with increasing control.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is satisfactory.

Children are made to feel welcome as the staff make time to greet them individually as they arrive. Due to this the children come in to the group enthusiastically and are keen to start the activities for the day. Their art work is creatively displayed all around the room. Showing that staff value their efforts. Children have good access to a wide range of well used resources and equipment which is clearly displayed and at their height. All of the toys and resource boxes are clearly labelled to help children know where everything goes. Children treat the resources with respect and carefully tidy them away at the end of the session.

Children's safety is well thought through at all times. Staff constantly consider their surroundings and make any changes such as moving play equipment placed on the floor by the children in walkways. Risk assessments are recorded and acted upon. The building is due to be demolished and is in a rather run down state. Due to the layout the children can not use the toilet and other areas without being escorted by the staff. This situation will be resolved in the spring when the group moves to new premises.

Children are safeguarded as all staff have undertaken appropriate training. They clearly understand how to put it into practice to ensure the children's wellbeing.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

Children know the routines of the group well. They come in and separate with relative ease from their parent's and carer's. They know where to hang their coats and the process for self

registration. The same activities are offered to all funded and non-funded children. Staff know how to tailor the activities to the age and stage of the children involved. During a number activity younger children may be asked to name the numbers and older more able children begin to look at concepts such as addition. This clear differentiation ensures all children are sufficiently challenged. The pre-school maintain development records for the younger children, however, they have not fully implemented the Birth to Three Year Framework when working with this age group.

Nursery education

The quality of the teaching and learning is good. Children make good progress towards the early learning goals of the Foundation Stage. The planning is closely monitored and fully evaluated. It effectively covers all of the six areas of learning to ensure children develop quickly across these. Development records are maintained for all children. These are not always dated making it difficult to highlight children who are developing at a different to expected rate and may need outside support.

Children have many opportunities to use counting and other basic maths skills in everyday situations. The staff ask the children to count how many shapes they may have or how many children are playing in the home corner. Children are developing a good understanding of shapes and patterns. They sit with staff and sort and name shapes then look around the room for objects which are squares or triangles. This encourages children to be alert to their environment and what shapes the different objects are.

Children are provided with a well stocked book area and they make good use of this space. They freely select books and sit and read in groups or just look at picture books. Staff ratios allow for staff to sit and read an impromptu story to children. Through these activities children develop a clear enjoyment of reading and books. Children clearly understand print carries meaning. Older more able children are able to read their friends names while younger children may be able to name the first letter in their names. To support them with this the staff have labelled items and have letters displayed around the room at child height. Children are also able to freely practise their emergent writing skills in a variety of different ways such as, traditional pens and paper to large chalks in the play ground.

Children learn about the world around them during a variety of both planned and impromptu activities. These range from discussing other cultures to sharing stories of what it is like to have a new baby in the family. Children's role play is well resourced a child using the home corner did washing in the washing machine then hung it on the line, he was completely absorbed in this task. Children show clear enjoyment when undertaking music and movement sessions. They are able to move in time to music and know when the beat changes to adjust their movement accordingly. Children have lots of good opportunities to undertake a wide range of art and craft activities. They learn about mixing colours or baking Christmas decorations. Their work is prominently displayed around the room and the children take pride in pointing out their efforts.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

Children gain a good understanding of both their own and other cultures. They learn about different festivals such a Diwali and Sangha Day. During these sessions they make friendship bracelets or look at how other cultures celebrate such as Henna hand painting. Staff clearly

take time to find out about each child and their family. This knowledge ensures that they can then offer each child care which meets their individual needs and preferences. Children with special educational needs have these well met as staff undertake appropriate additional training and are clearly aware of how to implement this effectively.

Children are encouraged to consider the impact their behaviour has on other people. Staff support them in this by asking them to think about how they would feel if other children did not share the toys and resources. Children clearly understand these discussions and as a result are considerate to the needs of others and are generally well behaved. Children's, spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered. Children are taught about different cultures, right/wrong and discuss how others would feel in different situations.

The partnership with parents and carers is good. Parents state that they have regular opportunities to discuss their children's educational progress and that they are always presented with a clear picture of their children's level of attainment. Parents also note that they are regularly given information about current topic work so they can continue this at home with the children should they wish. This level of information exchange ensures the children receive good continuity of care between home and the pre-school.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

The quality of the leadership and management of nursery education is good. The staff are committed to developing their existing childcare knowledge and they regularly attend relevant training. This develops their existing good practice which in turn raises the standard of childcare and education. New staff receive a full induction and are thoroughly vetted to ensure they are suitable to be working with children. Once appointed they are linked to an experienced member of staff to support them and show them the routines of the pre-school. This enables new staff to settle in quickly. The staff are well supported by the highly proactive committee. Who ensure they work closely with the staff in delivering positive outcomes for children.

All documents relating to the children are comprehensive and contain all of the required information. The policies and procedures are very much working documents. The committee and staff regularly review these to ensure they continue to be relevant to the children and staff. The setting meets the needs of the range of children for whom it provides.

Improvements since the last inspection

Following their last care inspection the group was set one recommendation. This was to, ensure children have opportunities for outside activity everyday. The pre-school now has access to a secure outside area. This is directly outside their base room and weather permitting is used every day.

Following their last inspection of nursery education the group was set two recommendations. Firstly they were asked to provide a less structured and adult led snack time to promote and encourage the children's independence. The children have the opportunity to self select from a range of healthy food and drinks and are also encouraged to pour their own drinks and clear away after themselves. This fully supports their developing independence skills. The second recommendation was to ensure they had written evaluations of planned activities. Staff fully evaluate all activities. This information is then used when undertaking future planning to ensure they continue to develop their activities to meet the on going needs of the children.

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.

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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):

- further develop the use of the Birth to Three Years Framework.

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):

- ensure systems used for recording children's development make it easier to plot when each child achieves the various developmental stages.

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