



## Stepping Stones Nursery

Inspection report for early years provision

<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	EY263166
<b>Inspection date</b>	01 September 2005
<b>Inspector</b>	Ann Law
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<b>Registered person</b>	Helen Williams
<b>Type of inspection</b>	Integrated
<b>Type of care</b>	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](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 good. 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 Nursery was originally established in 1991 and was registered to new owners in 2003. It is a private company and operates from a single storey building in the centre of Uppermill, near Oldham. The nursery is open each weekday from 07.45 to 18.00 all year round. All children share access to a fully enclosed outdoor play area.

There are currently 39 children aged from 6 months to under 5 years on roll. Of

these, 10 children receive funding for nursery education.

The nursery employs six staff. All of the staff, including the manager hold appropriate early years qualifications. The nursery operates within Quality for All, an endorsed quality assurance scheme.

## **THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION**

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

The provision is good.

Children are learning about the importance of good personal hygiene through well-established daily routines, such as washing their hands after using the toilet and after touching animals. Older children independently use pump soap and paper towels, which reduces the risk of cross contamination and prevents the spread of infection. All areas of the provision are maintained in a clean and hygienic manner which safeguards the health of children.

A good variety of healthy, nutritious and mostly home cooked meals and snacks are offered to the children. Staff provide age-appropriate support and supervision for children when eating their meals. This allows babies and toddlers to feed themselves using fingers, forks and spoons and try out developing skills with cutlery. Children's individual dietary needs are well catered for and any food intolerances, such as dairy or nuts, are given vigilant attention so that children's good health is not compromised.

Children enjoy a wide range of activities which contribute to their physical development. Daily outdoor sessions allow children to have access to large physical equipment, which children enthusiastically use to develop their gross motor skills. Indoor activity sessions allow children to listen intently to the audio tape and follow the simple instructions, moving appropriately as dinosaurs and negotiating the space well. They combine and repeat a range of movements such as clap your hands and tap your shoulders. This good attention to physical development fosters a positive attitude to exercise.

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

The provision is good.

Children are cared for in a safe environment where many policies and procedures are implemented to protect children. They use a wide range of safe and developmentally appropriate toys and resources which are well-maintained and checked regularly for safety. There is an effective system for reporting any defects or dangerous items to management. This ensures that no toys or resources pose a risk to children's safety.

Staff are good role models for children and sensitively give prompts, teaching them how to keep themselves safe. For example, reminders are given to children to blow your food before eating it or it might burn you. Children are learning the procedures for emergency evacuation, because staff regularly practice the procedure with them as part of their good attention to fire safety and protecting children.

Children's welfare is promoted appropriately; sufficient staff hold a first aid qualification and the designated persons for child protection have attended relevant training. A sound understanding is held of the responsibilities within the local Area Child Protection Committee procedures to safeguard children.

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

The provision is good.

Children are confident and eager to be involved in the play and learning activities provided for them. They benefit from staff who are very interested in them and give them lots of praise and encouragement. Younger children explore and discover using their senses in many opportunities to respond to the world creatively. Staff encourage babies to listen to the crackle sounds and feel the fluffy wool in a tactile book. Children delight in the sensory exploration and mess making regularly offered to them such as jelly play and pasta play. They spend time exploring paint and the different effects that can be made by touching the paint or rubbing your hands in it. Children are encouraged to express their individuality and their creations are valued by the supportive staff. Children are very happy and settled in the welcoming environment of the nursery. They demonstrate this by re-enacting familiar scenes with the help of resources, using story books to imitate staff members and 'read' the stories imaginatively to each other. However, the labelling of the toy boxes does not allow all the children to easily identify what is in them and restricts some children's independent access to all the toys.

Older children are developing a strong sense of self because staff are clearly interested in them. They warmly welcome the children by name when they arrive and give good levels of support to children who need reassurance when being left by parents. Throughout the day they interact with the children and talk, question, and explore areas with them in the nursery routine. For example, snack time is promoted as a social occasion and children are encouraged to develop their social and communication skills through good interactions from staff.

### **Nursery Education**

The quality of teaching and children's learning is satisfactory. Children make steady progress towards the early learning goals because staff have a sound knowledge of the Foundation Stage. Although they use this knowledge generally well to plan for the children's learning, there is limited differentiation in the plans to support children's individual learning and increase challenge for more able children. A sufficient and interesting range of activities are provided, for instance making a papier-mâché dinosaur and a visit from Zoolab as part of their current topic of animals. However, the planning systems do not ensure that all stepping stones will be covered sufficiently over time. As a result, some areas of learning are not given sufficient time and attention to ensure that children receive a broad and balanced curriculum. Assessments of children's learning are satisfactory. Staff complete observations and assessments of children's development, however these do not always clearly demonstrate their progress over time.

Children are curious learners displaying good levels of interest and most of them

demonstrate a positive approach to new experiences, for example holding a Madagascan hissing cockroach. They listen carefully to the rules of holding the animals and show care and concern for living things. Children eagerly predict and participate in favourite stories such as 'The smartest giant in town'. They are attentive and demonstrate increasing recall and recognise the rhythm of the story. Children have many opportunities to make marks and ascribe meanings to their marks in play, for instance using crayons, pencils and chalks and developing their hand-eye co-ordination. Children are making good progress in some areas of mathematics, for example using positional language when clapping in front and behind and using language to describe size when playing in the sand. They are confident and competent counters and make use of impromptu situations to count the legs on a spider. However, they do not routinely show an interest in number problems, such as working out how many knives they need at lunch time.

Children are keen to observe the changes in the weather and display their findings in the setting on a daily basis, developing their knowledge of the natural world. They are confident to talk about significant things that have happened to them and demonstrate a sense of time when describing a recent thunderstorm. They display good levels of imagination, for instance when making a desert island on the floor with sand and creating footprints in the sand. Children express themselves well and demonstrate excitement, wonder and awe when handling animals. They are enthusiastic in singing familiar songs, but do not have regular opportunities to show an interest in the way musical instruments sound or learn how they can be changed.

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

The provision is good.

Children experience a sense of belonging in the nursery. Many photographs and individually named items allow children to see themselves in the setting and feel valued and respected by staff. Children have access to comfort items from home, for example dummies and blankets, allowing them to be aware that staff understand some of their emotional needs. However, the key worker system for younger children does not include all personal care so that children are able to fully form a healthy dependence with a special person. A good range of toys and resources promote a positive view of the wider world and contribute to increasing children's awareness of diversity. Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered.

Relationships between the children are good; they are learning agreed codes of behaviour and work co-operatively together at tidy up time. Staff set clear boundaries for children and consistently use positive behaviour management techniques to encourage children to seek attention through good behaviour. For example, children receive stickers for being helpful and meaningful praise is given so that children experience a high self-esteem through the understanding of their achievements. As a result, children are settled and secure in the nursery.

Parents are provided with a variety of detailed information regarding the provision and staff ensure that parents of younger children are fully informed about their child's time in the nursery. This is essential for continuity and consistency of care. The

partnership with parents in relation to nursery education is satisfactory. Children's individual records of achievement are compiled, but they are not fully effective in informing parents of their child's progress through the stepping stones towards the early learning goals. Parents have access to good information regarding the Foundation Stage and receive regular updates regarding the activities their children will be taking part in. This encourages them to be involved in their children's learning.

## **Organisation**

The organisation is good.

The well-organised and relaxed environment allows children to feel settled and gives them the confidence to initiate their own play and learning. Staff are well-deployed and manage their time effectively to continually supervise children without stifling their independence.

A thorough understanding is held of the legally required documentation. This is all in place, regularly reviewed and contributes to children's health, safety and well-being. A comprehensive range of policies and procedures, which underpin the good standards of care, are shared with parents to ensure they have a clear insight into the provision offered. A high commitment to training and continual development is promoted by management and maintained by all the staff. This ensures an appropriately qualified and skilled workforce.

Leadership and management of the nursery is satisfactory and the setting are implementing the advice and support received from the local authority to continually improve the provision of nursery education. Regular staff appraisals and monitoring systems are used adequately to evaluate how well the setting delivers the Foundation Stage curriculum and management are pro-active in identifying some areas for improvement. However, recording systems are not systematic and staff do not have sufficient information about children's achievements or where their next steps for learning are. Overall, the provision meets the needs of the children who attend.

## **Improvements since the last inspection**

At the last care inspection the nursery was recommended to make improvements to: the staff induction programme; the confidentiality of records held and the contents of the first aid box. These have all been addressed satisfactorily and contribute to knowledgeable staff and the good organisation of the setting.

At the last nursery education inspection the nursery was asked to include clear learning intentions in the planning and to improve the quality of the information for parents regarding the Foundation Stage. These have been addressed satisfactorily and detailed activity sheets now focus staff into being aware of the intended learning of activities, which also assists them in making informed observations of children's learning. There is now a wide variety of good quality information displayed in the entrance area informing parents of the Foundation Stage and how the planned activities fit into the areas of learning.

## Complaints since the last inspection

There are no complaints to report.

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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 the key worker system to include all personal care and ensure that younger children are able to form a healthy dependence, essential for their emotional development
- extend the labelling of the toy boxes to ensure that all children are aware of their contents and improve their independent choice.

### 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):

- increase the availability of musical instruments to ensure that children can independently show an interest in the way they sound and they can explore and learn how sounds can be changed on a more regular basis
- extend children's opportunities to show an interest in number problems and simple calculation on a more regular basis
- develop children's individual records to fully show their progress through the stepping stones, clearly identifying the next steps in their learning and use the information to differentiate activities for children's individual needs. Ensure these records are shared with parents.

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