

# New Stepping Stones Playgroup

Inspection report for early years provision

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	109227
<b>Inspection date</b>	23 November 2007
<b>Inspector</b>	Jane Nelson
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<b>Registered person</b>	New Stepping Stones Playgroup
<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 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?

New Stepping Stones Playgroup has operated at its present premises since 1995. It operates from a main hall and a small room in the Sea Scout hall in Mortlake. There is an enclosed outdoor area for outside play. Opening times are from 09:30 until 12:30, Mondays- Fridays during school term time. The playgroup is a member of the Pre School Learning Alliance and is managed by a parents committee. Children from the local community attend the playgroup.

A maximum of 30 children aged between two and five years, may attend the playgroup at any one time. There are currently 40 children, including 21 children aged three and four years who receive educational funding, on roll. Children attend for a variety of sessions. Systems are in place to support children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and children who speak English as an additional language.

A team of nine full and part time staff work with the children. Seven staff have Early Years qualifications equivalent to NVQ Level 2 or 3. One member of staff is currently working towards a recognised early years qualification. The setting receives support from the Local authority. The group implements the Foundation Stage Curriculum and Birth to three matters framework.

## THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

### Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Children have good opportunities for daily outdoor play and exercise which encourages their physical development, good health and awareness of space. They are able to choose when to play inside or outside during part of the session, which encourages their independence and enables them to move freely between both environments. The curriculum is extended into the outdoor area with activities, such as, construction, planting, and water play. Children have great fun floating boats on a water canal, riding bikes, digging in the sand pit and playing in the play house. They take part in daily indoor physical play, such as, using the climbing frame, slide and graduated stepping blocks and enjoy well planned weekly music and movement sessions.

Children receiving nursery education have good opportunities to develop their large physical skills as they climb over, under and through equipment, and ride tricycles in the outdoor area. They move their limbs and clap hands during music activities. Children have lots of opportunities to practise their fine motor skills as they thread cotton reels on to laces, pour their own drinks, and use scissors, glue spreaders and pencils.

Children enjoy healthy snacks and are able to help themselves to drinks of water when they are thirsty. They choose when to have their snack during a designated time of the session. Snack time is well organised, providing good opportunities for children to make choices and increase their independence. For example, children come to the café table, self register by taking their name from a board, and wait for a free seat. Staff serve raisins and sliced apple to children and small jugs of milk and water are provided for children to pour their own drinks. Children socialise during snack time, chatting to each other while they eat and passing the jug of milk to each other.

Children learn to take responsibility for their own hygiene through practices that are part of their daily routine, for example, they are often reminded to wash their hands after using the toilet, and before snack. Staff follow good hygiene procedure, such as, wearing disposable gloves when nappy changing and washing their own hands, which reinforces children's understanding of good hygiene procedures.

Children's health is protected by written information, documentation and parents' consents, relating to health and medical needs being in place. Several staff have attended first aid training and written records indicate basic first aid is administered appropriately when minor accidents occur.

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

The provision is satisfactory.

Children are cared for in a welcoming, secure and generally safe environment. They use equipment, furniture and play materials that are safe and well maintained. Space is generally well organised, enabling children to move around, and between indoor and outdoor environments easily and safely.

Children are able to help themselves, safely, to a range of play equipment set out by staff prior to children's arrival. They have free access to a good range of craft materials, and help themselves to creative materials, such as, stars and letters using sticky tape and glue to fix them onto paper. Children use equipment and play materials, safely, on low tables or on mats set out on

the floor. They have space to sit comfortably on a mat or cushions, and help themselves to books in the book area. The outdoor area is well planned for children to play and move about safely. A safety play surface is fitted and equipment, such as, a water canal, bikes and play houses are safe and in good condition.

Risk assessments are carried out by staff daily as they set out equipment prior to use of the outdoor area. Some areas of the floor are damaged and awaiting replacement, arrangements to make them safe in the meantime are generally effective, with the exception of an area near the main exit into the garden, which is used by children and staff, frequently. Children use an indoor climbing frame which is positioned in the middle of the hall and generally well supervised, however, on occasions younger children use the frame without supervision.

Fire precautions are in place, written evacuation procedures are displayed and records reflect that fire drills are held regularly, reinforcing children's understanding of what will happen, in the event of the premises needing to be evacuated in an emergency.

Children's welfare is protected by staff's awareness of child protection issues and the procedure to follow if they have concerns. Clear procedures are in place, providing guidance and information for staff, although, some relevant information is located in the complaints procedure.

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

The provision is good.

Children enjoy a varied, well planned and interesting range of activities and experiences, which are creatively presented by staff, and encourage children's exploration and interest. Children are happy and settled, they are excited on arrival at the playgroup and eager to begin their play. They are greeted by staff and separate well from their parents and carers. Children self register by choosing their name and placing it on the board, they hang up their coats, and immediately involve themselves in activities.

Children benefit from close and supportive interaction from staff, who plan and provide an environment that interests the children and promotes their development. Staff are calm and consistent, encouraging children's interest and involvement in all activities. For example, children are encouraged to observe, feed and spray water gently on, South African Snails kept as pets by the pre school. Children who are slightly reluctant are encouraged by watching another child use the water spray. Children concentrate and thoroughly enjoy mixing a variety of dry and wet ingredients during a pretend cooking activity. Children approach staff freely when they want help or assistance and use their names frequently. Staff offer suggestions, when children need help and extend children's language well by good use of questioning and repetition.

### **Nursery education**

The quality of teaching and learning is good. Staff plan and provide an interesting environment and good range of play experiences for children that encourages their development in all areas. They support children well in their learning, and are creative in presenting activities, such as model making, imaginative play and creative activities. Most areas of the curriculum are extended into the outdoor area. All staff have input in weekly planning during staff meetings, and lists of the activities that will be provided for that week in each area, are displayed. Children's development is recorded and observations used to focus future activities. Some evaluation is used following activities, however, this is not always used consistently. Good systems are used

to monitor, children's use of the computer, enabling staff to identify and target children who may not be showing an interest. Older children benefit from well organised small group time sessions doing activities, such as, playing matching and sorting games which provide suitable challenges and extend their learning.

Children are interested, excited and motivated to learn, they persist at activities completing tasks that capture their interest, such as, choosing various materials for a collage activity, completing a game on the computer and making a birthday cake with candles from play dough. Children have lots of opportunities to mark make and write with a variety of materials. They have access to a good range of books and enjoy listening to impromptu stories with a member of staff in the book area. Children have good opportunities to recognise their names, such as, self registering by finding their name and putting it on a magnetic board on arrival and reversing this process at snack time in the 'café'. They sound out the letter their name begins with and some older children recognise their friend's names. Children use numbers confidently in their play, they enjoy singing number rhymes and calculating how many monkeys are left. They talk about their ages, how many one more will make, and refer to parking their car in bay 10 in the car park in the garden. Older children recognise numbers, such as, 100 and know when they have reached this score on a computer game. Children learn about floating as they push boats along the water canal in the garden and have opportunities to weigh and measure ingredients during regular cooking activities.

Children have good opportunities to use, and find out about information technology. They have daily access to equipment, such as, computers, camera, telephones and calculators, which they use with increasing confidence. Children are excited as they use a new computer game, they recognise when they have successfully completed a game, pointing to the score and cheering. They observe growth and change through planting and growing vegetables and bulbs in the garden and caring for the playgroup's pet South African Snails. Children learn about the world around them, through topics, such as, people who help us and having access to a range of resources that reflect diversity.

Children enjoy exploring different textures during creative and tactile activities. They paint and mix colours and have fun painting boxes to make a model train. Children have good opportunities to use their imagination, for example, as they serve food and welcome their friends to the café in the role play area. They enjoy mixing ingredients and making a birthday cake from play dough. Children participate in planned weekly music sessions, they concentrate and enjoy the session, exploring the sounds different instruments make, moving their bodies and discovering how a spinning top works.

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

The provision is good.

Staff know the children well, and plan taking into account their individual needs, interests and preferences which helps children feel secure, confident and enjoy their time at playgroup. Supportive and effective arrangements are in place to ensure children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are well supported and participate fully in all playgroup activities. Systems, such as, signing and use of picture cards, are used to support children who are bilingual.

Children learn about the world they live in through access to a range of resources that reflect diversity, such as, dolls, books, dressing up clothes, puzzles and play food. Children behave well, they are busy, interested and involved in their play. They know the play group routine, for example, recognising it is tidy up time when gentle music is played, and that they can have

their snack when the café is open. Good strategies, such as, turn taking in games, with equipment and during music sessions, help children understand the concept of sharing, considering each other and waiting for their turn. This positive approach fosters children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

Partnership with parents and carers is good. Parents receive clear and detailed general information about the nursery education curriculum. Good systems are in place to share information regarding children's progress and development, through daily discussion and regular parents meetings. Daily lists of activities and play materials are displayed, although this is not extended to include what staff hope children will learn, and gain from activities.

Relationships between staff and parents and carers, are good, and result in a friendly, welcoming atmosphere and information about children's needs being shared well. Parents participate in the day to day running of the playgroup through the management committee, helping with the administration of the group, social events and fund raising. Parents praise the play group, and feel their children settle well and enjoy coming to the group. Parents have confidence in and praise the staff team, they feel they are dedicated to providing a welcoming, friendly, caring atmosphere and a good learning experience for the children.

## **Organisation**

The organisation is good.

The play group is a member of the Pre School Learning Alliance and follows their policies and procedures, most of which contain the necessary information, with the exception of some information in the complaints procedure. Procedures are in place and followed to ensure staff are suitably experienced, qualified and vetted and procedures are currently being implemented for the vetting of the play group's management committee.

The play group is well organised and the required documentation and written records are maintained and stored appropriately. The play group is well resourced with a good range of play materials and equipment for indoor and outdoor play that encourage children's learning and development in all areas. Space is generally organised well and furniture and resources presented, to encourage children's independence, interest and exploration.

Children's health, safety and welfare are protected well, with the exception of the safety of an area of flooring and consistent supervision of the indoor climbing frame.

The Leadership and Management is good. The play group's clear ethos of a welcoming environment that provides a good learning experience for children, and a friendly and supportive atmosphere for families, is implemented well by the manager and staff team. They are committed to providing a good experience for children and their families, and work well as a team. Staff's individual interests and strengths are valued, and they are allocated responsibilities for areas, such as, planning, gardening, creative activities and ITC. Staff have ongoing access to, and regularly attend training, to increase and update their childcare knowledge. The playgroup meets the needs of the range of children for whom it provides.

## **Improvements since the last inspection**

Following the last care inspection recommendations were set regarding the safety of plants in the garden, medication records being signed by parents and developing the child protection policy. The provider has made sure plants in the garden are safe, medication records are signed

by parents confirming they have received information relating to any medication that is administered, and the child protection policy contains information about informing Ofsted of any significant events.

Following the last nursery education inspection the setting were asked to give consideration to improving opportunities for children to select their own resources and use their imagination to design and create independently. Children have access to a range of craft materials enabling them to make choices and design and create independently.

### **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 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 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):

- ensure children are supervised consistently when using the indoor climbing frame
- make sure risk assessments identify and minimise potential risks.
- update complaints procedure and transfer relevant information to the child protection policy

#### **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 existing planning to include, consistent use of evaluation, and develop the information provided for parents about daily activities

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)