

# Stepping Stones Pre-School

Inspection report for early years provision

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	127646
<b>Inspection date</b>	14 March 2008
<b>Inspector</b>	Linda Patricia Coccia
<b>Setting Address</b>	Lynsted Little Hall, Linsted CP School, Lynsted Lane, Lynsted, Sittingbourne, Kent, ME9 0RL
<b>Telephone number</b>	01795 522736
<b>E-mail</b>	
<b>Registered person</b>	Stepping Stones
<b>Type of inspection</b>	Integrated
<b>Type of care</b>	Full day care, Out of School 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?

Stepping Stones Pre-school and Out-of-School Club (OSC) opened in 1999 and operates from two rooms in a modular building, in the grounds of Lynsted and Norton school, near Sittingbourne, Kent. A maximum of 20 children may attend the pre-school or the OSC at any one time. The group offer a breakfast club each weekday from 08.00- 08.50. The pre-school is open each weekday from 09.00 to 15.00 and the OSC is open each weekday from 15.15 to 18.00. All are open term time only. A holiday club operates during the school holidays. 08.45-15.15 All children share access to a secure enclosed outdoor play area.

There are currently 46 children aged from two years to under five years on roll. Of these 30 children receive funding for nursery education. There are 73 children who access the OSC and holiday clubs. Children come from a wide catchment area. The nursery currently supports a number of children with learning difficulties and disabilities. The nursery employs nine staff, of whom six, including the manager, hold appropriate early years qualifications to NVQ level II or above. A staff member is working towards a qualification. A staff member is the administrator who is also qualified and two qualified volunteers also work with the children.

## **THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION**

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

The provision is good.

Children benefit from the pre-school's range of good procedures regarding hygiene and health. There are lots of pictorial reminders posted for the children to follow for washing hands after the toilet and carrying out hygiene procedures before daily baking sessions. There are also plenty of written reminders for staff too such as, in the nappy changing area. Staff use gloves when changing children and ensure that changing mats are hygienically clean and that creams and wipes are suitable. The changing area itself protects children's privacy. Staff are aware of cross contamination issues and attempt to restrict cross infection, for instance, regularly changing the play dough. All regulatory paperwork such as accident, incident and medication records are descriptive, confidentially maintained and signed by parents. Children thrive in an environment which keeps them healthy.

Children have social snack times together. They eat a range of healthy food which is fresh and nutritious and are involved in many food activities which help them to understand how different foods are grown and made. Children help prepare food and have been making their own sandwiches for afternoon tea. Photographic evidence show children making loaves of bread, cakes for fund raising and tasting different fruits and foods for festivals and celebrations. They are proficient at using electric mixers and hand whisks. They grow different edible berries and vegetables in the garden in the summer. Children enjoy healthy eating.

Children have a good time in the garden. They use hoops, balls, bean bags and other small equipment for physical play. The floor is soft therefore, they have access to a garden climbing frame. Children free flow in and out of the garden during the day, apart from in the most inclement weather. They are not adverse to a spot of rain or snow, but high winds do limit them. Children make good use of the outdoor play area.

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

The provision is good.

Children use a bright, airy play area which is well maintained and very colourful. The pre-school manager and committee have an on-going, comprehensive risk assessment folder which is regularly updated. Staff carry out daily internal and external risk assessments. Toys are very clean and well maintained and are easily accessible to the children as they are stored in good quality storage units and trays. Children receive plenty of reminders about playing safely from staff and the numerous pictorial reminders displayed around the room.

A comprehensive outings procedure ensures that children are always safe off the premises and written permissions are obtained from parents. The pre-schools fire evacuation plan is posted in numerous places around the building. Staff use powerful whistles which cut through noise to attract children's attention during a drill. The staff conduct one drill per term. However, this means that not all children have the opportunity to take part. Children play within a safe environment.

Children are protected by the pre-school's range of well written safeguarding children policies and procedures. The manager and deputy have recently attended an up-date training course and staff are booked on further courses. In the meantime, the manager has cascaded training to staff and provided new booklets regarding keeping children safe and reporting any concerns.

All staff have a good understanding about their role in protecting children. The procedures also include the steps to be taken if an allegation is made about a member of staff. Any existing injuries to children are recorded and all visitors must sign in and out in the visitor's book.

There are also good procedures in place for children departing the premises with suitable adults. No child is allowed to leave unless their own parent collects or collectors provide code words. Children's well being is promoted.

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

The provision is outstanding.

Children happily enter the premises and are immediately greeted by organised staff who are ready to play. The pre-school has a number of excellent policies designed to give children self esteem and confidence. Their well being and involvement within the group are regularly monitored to enable staff to know that children are forming good relationships with their peers and adults. Staff make excellent use of the Birth to three matters framework to ensure that the younger children are developing well and are enjoying the range of interesting and exciting activities on offer to all of the children. For example, children make pretend bonfires and have indoor picnics, become racing drivers and astronauts or find treasure in the sand tray. Children are interested in the activities they choose. They can play alone, in small peer groups or with staff to investigate their environment. Outstanding care is given to children which ensures they are happy, show confidence and are eager to participate.

Nursery Education.

The quality of teaching and learning is outstanding. Staff have a very good understanding of the Foundation Stage and how to use it to their advantage. With the help of parents they carry out base line assessments of the children to gauge how best to help children progress. The exciting planning is flexible and caters for each child's individual needs. Observations are carried out in a variety of different ways, such as using a Dictaphone. This encourages staff to be very clear about the different areas of learning that are reported on. Written notes are transferred into a log which all staff have access to. This efficient method of recording children's next steps

ensures all staff can immediately offer relevant challenges to each child. The flexibility in the planning allows for a great deal of differentiation between the children's abilities. The pre-school has an excellent staff team.

Children are making outstanding progress towards the early learning goals because staff provide exciting opportunities for them to explore the world. They relish role play activities from selling books in the bookshop to making appointments and seeing the doctor in the hospital. They are enthralled as they watch caterpillars grow and change into chrysalis and then help release the emerging butterflies into the wild. Children use a variety of different mediums to make marks. They make lists, use diaries, write in sand and shaving foam. Many of the children are proficient in writing the letters of their names and understand that words have meaning. For example, they use menu and recipe cards. Children have a very good understanding of mathematical concepts, they investigate weights and measurement as they measure their height or proficiently weigh out ingredients for baking. Most of them are able to calculate two groups of numbers using their fingers. Their creative development is nurtured as they model sand and dough or investigate colours with paint, crayons or using the computer to colour in pictures. Indoors, children can use a variety of large construction equipment. They can build child size houses or erect garages for their cars. They enjoy music and movement to favourite songs and

nursery rhymes. Outside children learn about their bodies as staff talk to them about healthy heart rates and keeping warm through exercise.

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

The provision is good.

Children are highly valued as individuals. They develop a positive attitude to others and gain a good understanding about the wider world and community through celebrating festivals, tasting food from a variety of cultures and having access to a good range of play resources which show positive images of culture, ethnicity, gender and disability. Children with learning difficulties or disabilities receive individual attention when required. For example, all staff engage children with speech difficulties in extra conversations, asking open questions which need answers. The group has an experienced Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator who supports the children and their families. Disabled access and a disabled toilet is available. Children's individual needs are met.

Children are well behaved, play well together and co-operate well with staff. They happily take turns without any prompting from staff. They show a good understanding of rules and understand why they are necessary. They understand they are part of a team and happily affirm that fact during social times. Staff constantly praise children and discuss their achievements. Children play within well defined boundaries. Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered.

Parents are extremely happy with the care offered to their children. They report that they think staff are brilliant. They receive regular newsletters, updates about the different activities available and the general running of the group. They have access to the operational plan and all policies and procedures. They receive information about the Birth to three matters framework which staff use to assess the progress of the younger children. They are regularly required to sign the accident book or incident records and give written permission for a variety of different aspects of care. For example, administering sun creams and allowing children on outings. Children benefit from continuity of care.

Partnership with parents is good. The parents of children in receipt of nursery education, report that they are very happy with the progress their children are making towards the Early Learning Goals. Those parents interviewed, reported that they are aware that staff carry out observations on children and know they can see them at any time. However, a couple of parents felt the records were a bit confusing because they contain so much information. They all report that they enjoy talking to staff about their children's progress and get verbal updates almost daily. The pre-school produces plenty of written information about the Foundation Stage and the different areas of learning. Parents report that they are not sure how they are involved in their children's learning, despite the fact that they send in interesting items for social time, can borrow books from the pre-school to read with their children at home and help children send postcards to the group from holiday destinations.

### **Organisation**

The organisation is good.

Children benefit from a good range of policies and procedures which aim to ensure that staff are suitable. Staff are selected by robust and rigorous recruitment and vetting procedures. They undergo a well thought out induction programme and have regular appraisals. Students

and volunteers are also governed by a set of procedures to ensure they understand their responsibilities for safeguarding children. Children have contact with suitable persons.

The pre-school displays their registration certificate and insurance certificates. The operational plan is comprehensive and available to parents in the entrance area. The pre-school has a full staff folder containing all staff contact details and training certificates. The attendance record is well maintained and clearly shows children's arrival and departure times. All other regulatory paperwork is in place. Children's records are well maintained, are confidential and stored appropriately. The setting meets the needs of the range of children for whom it provides.

Leadership and management are good. The pre-school parent committee are very aware of their responsibilities, especially with regards to their charity status and ensuring enough funds are available for the smooth running of the group. They employ a very experienced manager and deputy to ensure the efficient day-to-day running of the group. Toys and equipment are selected in accordance with the selecting toys policy and are always of good quality and safe. Staff are effectively monitored and managed by the manager, who is constantly evaluating procedures and practice. The deputy effectively monitors all paperwork. Staff report they feel valued and their input into the running of the group is welcomed. They are offered training to enhance their knowledge. The delivery of the Foundation Stage is also effectively monitored by the manager and deputy whose knowledge and understanding of it are exemplary.

### **Improvements since the last inspection**

At the last inspection the pre-school received two recommendations. They were to extend the operational plan to ensure all relevant information is included and review procedures for keeping parents informed about their child's assessment procedure and helping them to become involved in their child's learning. Since then the provider has produced a very comprehensive operational plan covering all the responsibilities of running a pre-school. They have also introduced a number of ways for parents to get involved with their children's learning and provide information for them about the assessment procedures.

### **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**

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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):

- ensure all children have the opportunity to participate in the emergency evacuation drills at the earliest opportunity

### **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):

- clarify parents understanding of being involved in their children's learning. Also, consider ways to make the wealth of information in the children's observation records have more clarity for parents.

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