

Steeple Aston Pre-School

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	133615
Inspection date	05 March 2008
Inspector	Jan Leo
Setting Address	Fir Lane, Steeple Aston, Bicester, Oxfordshire, OX25 4SF
Telephone number	01869 340863
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Registered person	Steeple Aston Pre-School
Type of inspection	Integrated
Type of care	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.

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?

Steeple Aston Pre-School is a committee run group which opened in 1971. It operates from two rooms in the former village school building, opposite the church and primary school in the centre of the rural village of Steeple Aston in North Oxfordshire. A maximum of 25 children may attend the pre-school at any one time. The setting is open each weekday from 08.55 until 14.45 during school terms. All children share access to a secure enclosed outdoor area.

There are currently 54 children from two to under eight years on roll. Of these, 23 children receive funding for early education. Children come from the local and surrounding area. The nursery currently supports a small number of children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities.

The nursery employs eight staff to work with the children on a full time, part time, and occasional basis. Of these, five, including the manager, hold appropriate early years qualifications to level 2 or above. A further two staff members are working towards a qualification.

The group is supported by the local authority.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Children follow a very healthy lifestyle at the setting in order to develop good habits for later life. They all have free access to the outdoor area for the majority of the day, in order to benefit from fresh air and exercise, and they learn the importance of keeping their hands clean and blowing noses to avoid the spread of infection. The children see the staff cleaning tables and mopping up spills throughout the day, to keep the environment in a clean and hygienic condition, and they receive supervision when washing themselves after outdoor play, to ensure they remove germs and dirt effectively. All children receive a warm and cheerful welcome on arrival and rapidly form strong bonds with staff to develop emotional security. The staff hold two first aid boxes on site, one of which is used for outings. They keep both well stocked with up to date supplies and ensure a first aider is always present in order to administer treatment promptly if children are injured. The staff develop children's interest in food by linking snacks to topic work. For example, during 'French week' the children eat French bread and cheeses, croissant, and brioche buns. All sit sociably together to eat and staff encourage the children to try new foods and broaden their tastes. The children have free access to drinking water and bring their own packed lunches from home. Whilst staff endeavour to remove used beakers from the drinks table, there is currently no effective system of ensuring they are discarded to avoid the spread of germs. Children sometimes have a plate or napkin to eat off, but staff do not routinely provide these to promote etiquette and contain mess.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is outstanding.

The children consistently receive a very high level of supervision in order to safeguard them from harm. A secure entry system is in place and staff deploy themselves extremely effectively to oversee all areas and maintain safe play. Staff diligently supervise unchecked adults, giving priority to children's safety at all times. The children use a wide range of stimulating resources to provide them with appropriate challenges, with most of the equipment being easily accessed from low storage units around the room. The staff carry out daily safety checks to remove or reduce hazards and they remind children how to play safely and avoid accidents. A formal, half-termly, resource audit helps ensure that items remain suitable for the children who attend and stay in good condition. Meticulous checking procedures prevent unsuitable adults working in the setting, and staff use a password system to identify adults who collect children. The staff continually review accident records in order to identify trends and address hazards that may cause injury. For example, some scooters are no longer freely available, now being offered under close supervision away from the grassy bank to prevent others getting run over. The staff work together, preferring to find solutions to hazards, rather than removing items and inhibiting children's development and enjoyment. All staff fully understand their responsibility to safeguard children from harm and know what to do if they have concerns about a child. They all complete either in-house or external child protection training to build their knowledge and confidence, and hold useful reference material on file to enable a rapid response when prompt action is necessary.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is outstanding.

All children receive a very high level of attention and consequently settle exceptionally well, rapidly becoming fully engrossed in the activities. The staff accurately assess individual needs when children start at the setting, and they provide precisely the correct level of support to help them become fully included as welcome members of the pre-school community. As a result, all ages play exceptionally well together and alongside each other. The children freely choose what to do and where to play, successfully create their own games and show a very high level of interest in all they do. All ages benefit from an extensive range of experiences to help them learn about modern life and explore their local environment. All staff join in, without inhibition, and contribute unreservedly to children's enjoyment and achievements.

Nursery Education.

The quality of teaching and learning is good. Each member of staff gets to know all of the children well and celebrate their achievements, sharing information in meetings and informal discussions to ensure every member of staff can develop children's ideas at the right pace and level. A key person system is in place to speed initial security but strong ties and working groups are child led rather than being enforced by adult allocation. This, and the fact that the staff form an exceptionally strong and effective team, ensures that children receive high quality input from all staff to develop their ideas, promote thinking and reasoning, and aid their understanding. Staff plan a very varied and stimulating programme following themes, such as a French week. They wear berets, make flags, count and greet others using French words, and eat French food while French songs are playing, in order to get a full flavour of another lifestyle. The staff link learning to reinforce what children know, making it relevant and ensuring they have fun. The children have choices and staff value their opinions and ideas. Some opt to build an Eiffel Tower out of assorted boxes and containers, while others decide what to use to catch water dripping from the roof as the ice melts. Paint brushes interest some children as they 'paint' the toys with melted ice, practising gross motor movements and developing co-ordination. The staff instinctively build on what children do by, for example, showing how to cross over the stepping stones using outstretched arms to aid balance when a child can already manage the journey with a hand to hold. All staff give very clear explanations of how to do things in order to guarantee success, but they do not consistently give reasons to help children fully appreciate why. For example, staff explain clearly how the balance beams see-saw up and down, and the importance of waiting for the previous child to move away before beginning the course. They do not stress the possible consequences of ignoring the advice in order for children to understand why rules are necessary. The staff are extremely dedicated. They diligently observe children at play, record their progress clearly, and update children's profiles frequently to provide an accurate record of children's ability and rate of progress. These records, along with clear, colour coded, weekly planning sheets are available for parents and carers to see to help them become more involved in their children's learning. As a result, the children thoroughly enjoy their time at pre-school, make new friends, gain in confidence and share their ideas freely. All children are eager to try what is on offer and they use what they know during their own free play. For example, one child jumped, using two feet together, from number to number on the rocket in the playground. She recited 'one, two, four' as she jumped, showing an awareness of sequence and the value of numbers in everyday life. The children freely link with others, some holding hands as they come indoors and saying 'it's because we love each other'. All children have opportunities to develop their independence by selecting what to do, washing their hands without help, and being a helper at snack time. At times, the staff do too much for the children by, for example putting their coats on for them when the children are very capable

of doing so without help. All children use tools and equipment well and successfully move in a number of ways without disrupting others. They enjoy sounding out letters and some make recognisable marks when 'naming' their work. The children listen well at circle time, confidently share their thoughts and feelings, and make themselves easily understood.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is outstanding.

Children learn to value other cultures because of the wonderful, all round experiences they have within the activity programme. All feel valued because they have choices and staff respect their ideas. The staff work closely with parents and carers to ensure the setting meets the needs of every individual and provides a level of consistency to help children continue to develop and learn with confidence. All children remain gainfully occupied throughout the day because of the praise and encouragement they receive from the staff and the successful use of resources to inspire play. As a result, all children behave very well and show consideration and concern for others. To promote community values, staff encourage children to recycle unwanted items and feed uneaten food to the birds. The children eagerly act as monitors to hand out snacks and willingly help pack away when it is time to come indoors.

The partnership with parents and carers is outstanding. As a result, there is a true partnership of care and education. Families are welcome to share any special skills or knowledge with the children to increase their learning opportunities and they freely contribute resources, such as foreign food and costumes, to enhance topic work. The planning is on display to enable adults to continue learning at home if they wish, and they have access to informative, up to date information about their children's progress. The staff are very approachable and welcome ideas to improve the setting. They provide a website for easy access to current information and they hold regular parents evenings as an opportunity to discuss children's progress in more detail. Staff send out newsletters at regular intervals and keep everyone informed of policy and practice changes. This helps families understand how the setting operates and feel they can contribute ideas if they wish. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

The setting meets the needs of the range of children for whom it provides. The children benefit from a very well organised day and an extensive range of opportunities to explore both indoors and out. They are supervised by an extremely capable staff group who work exceptionally well together to support individual learning and development and keep children safe. Most aspects of health and hygiene are well met and children are becoming increasingly capable of managing their own personal care. Children learn to value diversity and the natural world and they show a good understanding of right and wrong.

The leadership and management of the provision are good. Staff undergo robust checking procedures before commencing their employment, and annual appraisals, and regular supervision as a means of monitoring performance. They are a cohesive and dedicated staff group who willingly attend relevant training to increase their skills. All strive to maintain very high standards and some are extending their qualifications to update their knowledge and further enhance what they do. The setting has very clear, formal, written policies and procedures which they review on a rolling programme to ensure they remain relevant and effective. Some documents do not display the review date to clearly indicate which is the most current. All documentation,

required by regulation, is in place and the setting also has a range of reference numbers and leaflets to improve the efficiency of the service. Some policies do not contain useful contact numbers within the text to avoid spending time searching the folders for the information.

Improvements since the last inspection

Following the last inspection, there was one recommendation made regarding the care aspect of the setting and two to improve the nursery education. Staff were asked to obtain a copy of a child protection leaflet, which they now hold on file to aid referrals if they have concerns about a child. The setting was also required to make better use of the outdoor area to cover all areas of learning, and make resources more freely available to children. The staff now operate a free flow policy to enable children to move around as they play and make excellent use of the outdoor area. They set out a wide variety of resources to stimulate ideas and then extend child initiated activities to incorporate all areas of learning and help children explore concepts in different weather conditions. The staff now use low storage units and boxes to house a range of basic materials and equipment. These are freely accessible to children to develop their independence and stimulate their curiosity.

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):

- improve hygiene and fully promote etiquette by providing children with appropriate equipment to eat off

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):

- consistently explain possible consequences to the children to help them understand the reason for doing things.

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