

Stepping Stones Pre-School

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number EY277182

Inspection date 20 November 2007

Inspector Gill Moore

Setting Address 17 Harrow Scout Group Roxborough Park, Headquarters Rear of Catholic Church, Roxborough Park, Harrow-on-Hill, Middlesex, HA1 3BA

Telephone number

E-mail

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 group and opened in 2004. The group operates from within the scout headquarters in Roxborough Park in the borough of Harrow. Children have use of three different rooms and access to an outside play area. The setting serves the local community. A maximum of 26 children may attend the group at any one time. The pre-school is open Monday to Friday, 09:15 to 11:45 during the school term.

There are currently 23 children aged from two to under five years on roll. Of these, 15 receive funding for nursery education. The group accept children from two years and nine months. They support children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and also support children with English as an additional language. The committee employ a qualified supervisor to be responsible for the day to day running of the group. In addition, three staff work directly with the children, one of whom is qualified. One practitioner is currently working towards a recognised early years qualification.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Children are beginning to learn the importance of good personal hygiene as practitioners talk to them about the need to wash their hands before snacks. They use running water, soap and hand dryers after using the toilet facilities and recognise why it is important to implement these routines. Children stay healthy because good standards of hygiene are maintained and practitioners implement effective health and hygiene procedures. Their health is promoted in an emergency situation because written parental consent is requested to seek emergency medical treatment and practitioners have relevant up to date first aid training. Accurate records are maintained of accidents and the administration of medication and details of these are shared effectively with parents.

Children learn the importance of healthy eating through discussion with practitioners at snack times and through the healthy range of snacks offered to them. They make their own decisions about when they want to have their snack as the pre-school operate a snack bar. Children talk about which types of food are good for their bodies and discuss the need to be careful of some berries because they are poisonous and would make them feel unwell. Children have a wide selection of fresh fruit, including blueberries, plantain chips, dried green bananas and other healthy options such as bread sticks. Drinks of water and milk are also available during snack time. They help themselves to fresh drinking water across the session from the cooler, recognising when they are thirsty and their bodies become hot and tired. Information is obtained regarding children's dietary requirements, which helps ensure their individual needs are fully respected.

Children thoroughly enjoy engaging in physical activities and opportunities are provided every day for this, which helps increase children's understanding of the importance of regular exercise. They learn to move their bodies in different ways stretching up as tall as a tree and curling in a ball like a mouse. Children squeal with delight chasing after their peers and practitioners playing 'What's the time Mr Wolf?' They laugh with excitement as they join in circle games, such as 'Isn't it funny how a bear likes honey?' Children benefit from opportunities to practise their ball skills, learning to throw at a target and practise throwing and catching with practitioners. They use a good range of small equipment, including balls, bean bags and coits and enjoy participating in bug and spoon races. Children engage in obstacle courses, providing more challenge to older children using tunnels, benches, mats and cones and enjoy playing with the parachute. They also enjoy participating in music and movement sessions and dancing to different types of music.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

Children benefit enormously from the well-organised, bright and vibrant play and learning environment. Their work is valued and displayed brightly around the room and children are keen to show visitors what they have been doing, sharing their experiences with confidence. Practitioners are extremely effective in the way in which they use the available space, creating small areas within the large hall promoting children's development across all areas of learning. Children have access to an extensive range of resources and play materials that are suitable for their age and stage of development. Secure procedures are in place to ensure that all furniture,

equipment and all play provision is clean and well maintained and this is included as part of the risk assessments.

Children benefit enormously because they wander freely and safely around the inside environment because practitioners are vigilant and ensure all risks and hazards are minimised to provide a safe and secure environment. Daily risk assessments are completed and practitioners keep an overall view of the setting during the sessions. For example, they ensure all plug sockets are covered and chairs are not stacked too high. Large tables are also stacked against the wall and are secured effectively to prevent them falling. Children are beginning to learn about keeping themselves safe, for example they discuss why it is not safe to run inside until it is physical activity time. They practise regular fire drills, enhancing their understanding of the procedure to follow in an emergency situation and secure systems are in place to log and evaluate all fire drills. Children recognise they should not walk around carrying scissors and must sit in chairs properly at tables. Practitioners are extremely effective in using discussion and stories, as well as experiences linked to topics, to help promote children's understanding of safety. For example, they discuss what might happen if you do not stay with mummy when out shopping and children learn about how to keep safe around fire during discussions around fireworks.

Children are extremely well protected because practitioners have a secure knowledge of child protection issues and recognise their role with regards to protecting children in their care. Practitioners have all attended child protection training and are booked on the new course which covers multi-agency working to further increase and develop their knowledge of how to fully safeguard children. Practitioners have a very good understanding of the pre-school and local procedures to implement when concerns are raised and secure systems are in place to ensure children are protected from visitors and anyone who has not been vetted in the group, which helps to keep them safe.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

All children arrive happily to pre-school. They are extremely familiar with the daily routine and hang their coats up as they arrive before coming in to the room to find their name card and self register. Children help themselves to a book and sit down on the carpet exploring these with their peers as they wait for all their friends to arrive. Practitioners are extremely welcoming to children and parents and children come rushing in excited to tell them things that have happened at home. Children run up to practitioners for a cuddle developing extremely positive relationships with them.

Younger children are exceptionally well supported within the group and fully integrate with their peers across the session. They become extremely competent learners, showing very good concentration working out how to attach pipes together. Children manage to create a long tunnel and have much fun driving the cars through this. They enjoy playing independently, although confidently seek reassurance and support when they need it. For example, one child struggles to negotiate how to use the screwdriver and asks the practitioner to help him unscrew the model. Practitioners are extremely effective in supporting children develop their skills and use of tools. Group times are extremely well organised and the younger children have a separate group time to their older peers. This is because practitioners recognise they have a shorter concentration span and have different needs and abilities to the older children in the group. They enjoy a wonderful story time together with the practitioner. Children practise counting sorting the red apples from the green ones. They recognise they can make two sets, each set

with five apples. Practitioners use very effective questioning techniques, enabling children to put the sets together and count 10 in total, showing a very good understanding of number and developing their early mathematical skills.

Nursery education

The quality of teaching and learning is good. Children's learning is significantly enhanced because practitioners have a secure knowledge of the Foundation Stage curriculum and show a very good understanding about how young children learn most effectively. The use of time and accessibility of resources enables children to initiate much of their own learning, which has an extremely positive impact on their behaviour. Consequently, children are fully engaged in the session and play a dynamic role in their development. They display exceptionally high levels of confidence and self assurance within the group making their own choices about what they play with from the extensive range available to them. Children confidently make decisions and solve problems by themselves and co-operate exceptionally well with their peers. For example, they use sand timers to help take turns when using the computer.

Children confidently use a wide range of mathematical language in their play, comparing size and shape and counting frequently. They construct models from different materials and talk about why wheels are round. Children compare the shapes of the equipment recognising that if they built square wheels on their models the car would not roll along the table. Practitioners extend children's learning making excellent use of routines and incidental opportunities. They support children as they sort different colour and sizes of compare bears into sets and show great interest in using the weighing scales. Children suggest comparing the weight of the bears to the acorns they collected from their nature walk. Practitioners adapt their questioning techniques encouraging the more able children to work out how many acorns they might need to balance the teddies in the scales. Some children confidently add and subtract groups of objects, showing a very good understanding of the comparison of number.

The learning environment is extremely well presented and children confidently help themselves to a wide range of tools and materials. For example, they use pencils to label their own work and confidently handle a range of cutters and rolling pins when playing with dough. Children compare the different patterns each rolling pin makes on their dough and use descriptive language to talk about what they are making. They use paintbrushes at the easel, glue sticks and competently learn how to use tools, such as screwdrivers to take models apart and put them back together, exploring how things are made. Opportunities for children to practise mark making are available through a wide range of writing tools and materials in the writing area. This includes envelopes, diaries and an extensive range of writing tools, although children do not make full use of this area across the session.

Children's curiosity and investigative skills are well promoted and they show a real interest in finding out about how things work and why. They ask lots of questions about seeds and trees, which is promoted through the creative activity available. Practitioners talk to children about the different seeds and extend their understanding by showing them posters and books talking about the different trees, conkers and fruits that come from each tree. They explore their local environment examining signs of Autumn and use magnifying glasses as they examine and collect twigs, leaves and fir cones. Activities, such as planting bulbs and cookery, help develop children's understanding of time. Resources, including torches and magnets enable them to explore their environment and investigate different materials.

Children express wonderful imagination exploring creativity making collages with a range of different seeds and painting pictures at the easel. They show high levels of independence putting aprons on for themselves and hanging their pictures up when they have finished painting. Children use sieves and funnels when playing with sand and the skilful interaction from practitioners helps them explore weight and measure and make predictions about how many cups of sand it will take to fill the bottle. They have very good opportunities to express their imagined ideas through role play selecting costumes to dress up in and playing in the home corner. Children cook dinner, iron and hang the washing on the line with pegs. They laugh and giggle with their peers, negotiating roles and practitioners are extremely supportive in helping children to extend their imagined ideas. They have ample opportunities to explore a wide range of media and activities, such as fruit tasting, encourage children to explore their senses.

The routine of the day provides opportunities for children to engage in large and small group times, as well as independent play. These are exceptionally well organised and pitched at the right level ensuring all children are fully involved and effective learning takes place. Children delight in participating in songs and action rhymes and participate enthusiastically in story sessions. Practitioners make excellent use of the story of Goldilocks, using props and puppets, to extend children's understanding of number, size and weight. Children shout with excitement making predictions about what will happen next and they are very familiar with sounds and letters, which are promoted through the use of name cards and displays around the room.

Assessment procedures are robust and show an excellent picture of children's individual progress. Practitioners set individual targets for children each term and develop these into individual play plans. This information is used to help plan activities and experiences on a weekly basis, which forms part of the overall planning and monitoring of the wonderful educational programme delivered to children. The learning environment is extremely stimulating and practitioners make very good use of the local area to help promote children's learning. There is a small outside area available to the group, although maximum use is not currently made of this area. The pre-school, have plans to re-structure and re-develop the area, and have applied for a grant in order to help achieve this.

Children's learning is significantly enhanced because practitioners implement an exciting and inspirational range of teaching techniques, which really helps to boost their learning and fully capture their attention. All children thrive in the setting and the use of time, space and resources successfully contributes to the opportunities available to them. The wonderfully skilful interaction from practitioners, and their excellent knowledge of children's individual needs, abilities and targets, ensures every child develops at their own rate. Consequently, children are extremely well supported, provided with sufficient challenges and able to achieve their individual potential during the time they spend within the group.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is outstanding.

Children display exceptionally high levels of independence and self assurance within the group. Their confidence is boosted because practitioners continually praise children for their efforts and recognise and value their individual achievements. Children's behaviour is exceptional throughout the session because they know exactly what is expected of them and are fully engrossed in everything they do. Children talk about the pre-school rules every morning and show an extremely good understanding of the importance of playing nicely together. They discuss how they feel when they are hurt and are kind and sensitive towards their peers when

they are feeling sad or unwell. Children develop an extremely secure sense of belonging and responsibility enjoying taking on roles within the pre-school and helping to pack away resources when it is time to do so. They share resources and solve problems for themselves and consequently display extremely high co-operation and negotiation skills building excellent relationships with their peers.

Children's understanding of diversity is exceptionally well promoted through the physical environment and the resources available to them promoting positive images of gender, culture, disability and ethnicity. Practitioners are extremely effective in using discussions and stories, as well as planned activities and experiences, to help increase children's awareness of the differences and similarities between themselves and others. They discuss their individual families and bring in photographs from home increasing their understanding about different family units. Children visit places in the local area, including the toy museum, and learn about the various roles people play in their community and how they help them. They explore different countries and examine where these are in relation to where they live. Children use a map, which is displayed, and attach pictures and photographs of places they have visited as they talk about their holidays. They explore different clothes people wear, food they eat and climate and gain an exceptionally good awareness of other cultures and beliefs through activities linked to special events and cultural festivals. For example, children try a range of different foods, engage in creative activities making candle holders and learn how people celebrate special occasions. Consequently, children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered.

Practitioners plan extensively for children's individual needs. They have an excellent knowledge of their home and family circumstances and highly effective procedures are in place to register and induct new children and families into the pre-school. Extremely secure procedures are implemented to support children with learning difficulties or disabilities and those who speak English as an additional language. Practitioners work exceptionally closely with parents and outside agencies, where appropriate, to ensure children receive a high level of support and their progress is monitored, assessed and reviewed on a regular basis. Link books are used between home and the setting, which really helps to enhance the already well established systems of communication between parents and practitioners. All children benefit immensely from a truly superb partnership with parents. Detailed information is exchanged, both formally and informally, and observations are made during children's initial visits to the group, which really helps practitioners gain a secure understanding about children's abilities and individual interests. This enables them to assess children's individual starting points and consequently, pitch their teaching and activities effectively. Parents receive detailed information about the pre-school and have access to the full range of policies and procedures, which are displayed in the foyer entrance.

The partnerships with parents of children who receive nursery education are outstanding. Parents are exceptionally well informed about the Foundation Stage curriculum through a variety of ways and really helped to understand how children learn through play. Information included in the parent pack is extensive and this is complemented with an extremely detailed parent notice board. Children's learning is significantly enhanced because parents are actively encouraged to play a full and active role in their early development. Parents receive weekly newsletters, which provides detailed information about the activities and experiences children are involved in during the coming week. It shows the links between the areas of learning, helping parents to understand how experiences link to the various aspects of the curriculum. They are exceptionally well informed about their child's ongoing progress and achievements and are fully encouraged to play an active role in the planning and assessment of their individual progress. Parents receive written information and discuss this with their child's key worker

every term, sharing their assessment records. They are well informed about their child's individual learning targets and discuss and agree these with their child's key worker. Practitioners make suggestions about activities they can try at home to help support children's individual learning. Parents are invited to contribute to the development of children's individual play plans, boosting opportunities for them to play a full and active role in their child's early development. Parents receive an extensive portfolio, which includes developmental records, samples of their child's work, written observations and photographs providing them with a very clear picture of the progress their child has made during their time in the group.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

Children's care and learning is significantly enhanced because management and practitioners share the same vision and work exceptionally well as a team to promote successful outcomes for children. Clear roles and responsibilities are defined and highly effective communication takes place between the committee and practitioners, both informally and formally through regular meetings and daily discussions. Consequently, the pre-school is extremely well organised and sessions run smoothly. As a result, the setting meets the needs of the range of children for whom it provides. Robust procedures are in place to recruit, appoint and induct new staff, which ensures children are cared for by suitably qualified and experienced practitioners. A mentor is assigned to new staff working in the group and review meetings take place throughout the induction programme, which ensures strengths are recognised and areas for development identified. However, systems to ensure the ongoing suitability of those practitioners already working in the setting have not yet been fully introduced.

Children are exceptionally well supported by all practitioners and this is significantly enhanced through the implementation of the key worker system. The deployment of practitioners is highly successful across the session ensuring all children are fully supported and develop an exceptionally strong sense of self assurance and belonging to the group. Children's health, safety and well-being are extremely well promoted because all practitioners have a very good knowledge of the pre-school policies and procedures and ensure these are implemented to a high standard across the group. All the required records are in place and these are accurately maintained. Secure procedures are in place to record children, practitioners and visitors to the group, although times visitors arrive and leave the premises are not requested. Records are exceptionally well shared with parents and secure systems are in place to ensure confidentiality is maintained.

Leadership and management of nursery education are good. Practitioners plan and implement an extremely well balanced curriculum, where every child's individual needs and abilities are truly catered for. Exceptionally secure systems are in place to monitor the curriculum, ensuring all aspects are sufficiently included, and to assess the impact this has on children's individual progress. All practitioners play a full and active role in the planning and assessment of children, meeting every week, and secure links are in place between information gained from assessment and individual learning targets identified. Practitioners are extremely skilful in the way in which they question and extend children and fully recognise the potential of every child. Secure systems are implemented to monitor and evaluate staff performance and development, which impacts on the learning opportunities provided for children. The supervisor influences practice on a daily basis as she works directly with the children. In addition formal staff appraisals are implemented annually, which include an element of self appraisal. Individual strengths are recognised and valued and training needs identified. All practitioners update their skills and

knowledge by attending regular training opportunities and the impact this has on children's learning is continually monitored and evaluated.

Children flourish during their time at pre-school because they are cared for by exceptional practitioners who show real dedication and commitment to their role. They benefit immensely from their time in this secure and nurturing early years environment, where their individual strengths are recognised and as a result, their individual potential is truly achieved.

Improvements since the last inspection

At the last care inspection the group were asked to ensure activities offered meet the individual needs and interests of all the children, allowing them opportunities to make choices and decisions. They were asked to ensure sufficient staff are engaged with children at tidy up time and snack time and develop the child protection policy to include clear procedures to follow if an allegation is made against a member of staff.

The system for planning has been developed since the last inspection and now fully ensures that all children's individual needs, interests and abilities are truly catered for. This is achieved through the implementation of individual learning targets and individual play plans. In addition, the structure of the session and accessibility of resources provides maximum opportunities for children to make their own decisions about what they play with. The arrangements for snack time have changed to incorporate a snack bar and this is supervised constantly by one practitioner as children choose when they want to go and have their snack. The deployment of practitioners is extremely effective during times when it is time to pack resources away and all children are fully involved in this part of the session. The child protection policy has been developed to include procedures should an allegation of abuse be made against a member of staff.

At the last nursery education inspection the pre-school were asked to develop the programme for Knowledge and Understanding of the World and provide materials and opportunities, which enable children to explore, experiment and find out how things work, plan, design and construct. This has been fully achieved and secure procedures are implemented to monitor this and assess children's progress in this area of development. Children's curiosity and investigative skills are extremely well promoted because many resources are provided, which can be accessed independently. They use a wide range of resources, including construction materials, enabling them to build and construct and explore how different things work.

The group were also asked to ensure planning is sufficiently detailed to demonstrate the purpose of activities and clear learning intentions and to organise resources, enabling children to make more choices and decisions about what they play with. The system for planning has been developed and clear learning intentions are identified, ensuring all practitioners have a very good understanding about the learning intentions from activities and experiences offered. The accessibility and presentation of resources have been reviewed and re-organised to provide opportunities for children to freely access an extremely good range across the session.

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 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):

- further develop the procedures to ensure the ongoing suitability of those already working in the setting
- further develop the procedures to record visitors, to include the time of arrival and departure

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):

- monitor children's use of mark making materials throughout the session and continue to develop the outside learning environment

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