

Stepping Stones Pre-School

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	218625
Inspection date	06 February 2008
Inspector	Janice Rizvi
Setting Address	Alrewas Village Hall, Wellfield Road, Alrewas, Burton-on-Trent, Staffordshire, DE13 7HB
Telephone number	01283 791 951 and 01283 791177
E-mail	sarah.brown@int-bar.org
Registered person	Stepping Stones 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?

Stepping Stones Pre-School opened in 1992 and is run by a committee. It operates on two levels from rooms within a village hall. It is situated close to the centre of Alrewas village. A maximum of 38 children may attend the pre-school at any one time. The pre-school is open each weekday from 09.15 to 15.00 during school term times. All children share access to a secure enclosed outdoor play area.

There are currently 54 children aged from two to under five years on roll. Of these 27 children receive funding for nursery education. Children come from a wide catchment area. The pre-school currently supports a number of children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and also supports children who speak English as an additional language.

The pre-school employs nine staff, most of whom, including the managers, hold appropriate early years qualifications.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is satisfactory.

Children's health is generally promoted appropriately in the setting. Adults ensure that areas used by the children are kept clean and that food is prepared according to published guidelines. Children are familiar with hygiene routines such as washing their hands after using the toilet. However, the staff are less proactive in promoting and teaching children about other good health practices so the children are less knowledgeable about why good hygiene is important. For example, Children are using a communal bowl to wash their hands prior to eating their lunch, they are able to get tissues to wipe their noses, but there is no procedure in place to teach children of the hygienic disposal or prompts for them to wash their hands afterwards, consequently there is a risk of cross-infection.

Children are developing appropriate physical skills at the setting. Children are agile and move easily around the room. They love to be outside and enjoy being in the fresh air. This aspect is well planned and resourced with good learning intentions to ensure that children are effectively challenged to make good progress in this area of their development. Appropriate accident and medication records and policies are in place. This helps staff manage children's health and medical needs effectively.

Children enjoy nourishing and well-balanced snacks of fresh fruit. They bring their own water bottle which is readily available. Older children's independence is encouraged as they act as helpers and share out the plates and cups at snack time. Everyone sits together at lunch time to enjoy their packed lunch from home. Adults sit alongside children to eat their lunch and talk to children about their favourite foods and which ones are healthy.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

Systems to monitor the safe arrival and departure of children are effective because details of adults authorised to collect children are in place and high regard is placed on security within the premises. For example, adults ensure all children are signed in and out of the setting and all visitors are vetted before entry is permitted. A visitors' book is maintained.

Procedures for monitoring safety within the setting are overall effective because staff ensure the environment is checked daily for safety and formal risk assessments are completed. The outdoor play area is secure. Children show a good understanding and willingness to keep themselves safe. For example, when walking up and down stairs they learn the rules to hold onto the banisters, to be careful and not to run or push. Staff plan activities to teach children about their own safety. They learn to be cautious about strangers and staff use books and stories to help children say no to unwelcome cuddles. This enables children to have confidence and begin to take some responsibility for their own safety and well being.

The furniture, toys and equipment provided are varied, appropriate for their purpose and help to create a stimulating environment. For example, adults make full use of the range of equipment to ensure children have a balance between focused activities for their learning, painting and messy play for their creativity and exploration, including a climbing frame to develop their large muscle and body movements. All activities are well supervised. Regular practise of the fire drill ensures all children are familiar with procedures to follow in the event of an emergency. In

addition, fire extinguishers are checked regularly and there is a fire blanket located in the kitchen area. Procedures for recording accidents are good and ensure parents are informed promptly. All staff continue to update their knowledge and understanding of issues and procedures relating to child protection contributing to children's safety.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

Children are eager to attend and relish their time in the vibrant and safe setting which puts them first. They collect their names as they enter and put them in the box to self-register. New children are reassured and supported by staff. Once they become familiar with the setting they become interested in the wide range of activities provided to support their learning. The environment is thoughtfully prepared and set out by staff to be fully inclusive for children of all abilities. Children are animated and enthusiastic as they make choices about their activities and care.

There is good differentiation for different age groups of children to support their learning. There are separate sessions for different age groups. This is operated with flexibility, allowing siblings to attend the same session as agreed with parents. Children fully participate in all the activities and particularly enjoy circle time, when they are asked to remember what they have done during the day. They are able to recall their activities and connect these to other experiences from home. They sit attentively as adults inform children of the activities for the day. Children's self-confidence is increased by having a sense of belonging. Staff know the children well which is reinforced through key worker groups, where children have the opportunity to contribute their ideas, be aware of their own needs and show concern for others. They listen to adult instruction and behave appropriately. Children under three benefit from staff using the 'Birth to three matters' framework for planning their activities and assessing their progress. All children's independence and confidence is promoted through everyday routines.

Nursery education.

The quality of teaching and learning is good. Children are making good progress through the stepping stones towards all areas of the early learning goals because most staff has a good knowledge of the Foundation Stage. More knowledgeable staff and key workers have a clear aim of what skills they are trying to help children learn and what children are expected to gain from their activities. Planning is completed to cover the six areas of learning. These are incorporated into the themes and topics of the term. Staff make regular visual assessments of children's achievements and meet together to agree each child's next steps. These are recorded in the key workers file and available for reference. However, these individual targets are not carried forward into the daily activity plan, to share with less experienced adults to guide and inform them as to which children the activity is most appropriate for, to fully support individual children's learning. Children enjoy a good range of resources and activities. Ongoing assessments are dated and clearly show how children are progressing. These are available on request to share with parents. Children's individual needs are taken into account and staff are flexible when implementing any planning.

More able children's concentration spans are very good. Some will persist at an activity until completed. They play well together, being able to take turns and knowing what is right from wrong. Older children negotiate with staff and are confident in expressing their own ideas. Children confidently choose from the activities available and initiate their own play. Their independence is encouraged as they help at tidy-up-time and help to give out the cups and

plates and pour their own drinks at snack time. Children become engrossed in a wide range of purposeful and developmentally appropriate indoor and outdoor activities which provide high levels of challenge appropriate to their age and stage of development.

Children are developing their competencies well across the four aspects of communication, speaking listening, reading and writing. Less able children enjoy making marks in a variety of ways and regularly use paint. More able children are beginning to write recognisable letters. Younger children use large crayons to colour in their work sheets of Pancake Day. They have freedom to use their imagination and draw pictures of their own choice. For example, older children sit and talk about their drawings of family and friends. Children make good use of the book corner and spontaneously choose their favourite books, sitting together looking at the pictures and turning the pages. They show enjoyment of rhyme and rhythm as they eagerly choose their own nursery rhymes, fully participating, knowing the words and actions.

Children have opportunities to use numbers and counting as they play. They begin to develop the language of shape, space and measures and early calculating skills. For example, during indoor games, they hold out their arms to measure their space. They begin to learn mathematical language and count and compare as they play dominoes, looking for a 'double' picture.

Children are encouraged to find out about and explore the world around them. They learn about their own culture and those of others through planned themes and topics. They learn about the origins of Pancake Day, colouring in the picture of a person tossing a pancake. During a planned activity children become excited as they are given their own pancake to taste, spreading it with sugar and lemon. They roll it up and are then asked to smell and compare what it tastes like. Some children think it tastes of strawberries. During the Chinese New Year activity, younger children enjoy a bowl of noodles and eat with chopsticks quite skilfully. Older children cut up vegetables and help prepare a Chinese dish for their lunch. This learning is supported with very good displays and books to stimulate children's interest. However there are fewer opportunities for children to explore day-to-day technology and programmable toys.

Children have many chances to use tools for a purpose. During role play they pretend to cook the pancakes and use spoons, pots and pans. They pretend to mix the pancake mix. While making their biscuits they use a spoon to beat the mixture. Children enjoy a wide range of physical activities that help them to develop their confidence and skills both when using large and small apparatus, tools and equipment. They are developing a positive attitude towards physical exercise and a growing awareness of how it can help them to stay healthy. Children are very active and really enjoy balancing through obstacle courses and show an awareness of space when moving their bodies to music. They dance using colourful ribbon rings when re-enacting Chinese New Year. Children are able to be creative, expressing their own ideas and thoughts through art, music, dance, role play and imaginative play. They use their senses and imaginations to create their own work and to communicate their feelings. Children use a widening range of materials and tools to help them to express their creativity. Younger children enjoy making and decorating heart shaped biscuits exploring how the ingredients change. They use different types of painting techniques such as marbling to create the marks on their paper pancakes. Children are very imaginative and during role play they use puppet dinosaurs to pretend they are taking and eating the pancakes from the role play. They make good use of the construction toys as they sit together cooperatively making a train with plastic construction blocks. They use facial and body movements to express themselves and play out different situations in role play. Children have free access to musical instruments and enjoy all creative activities. Children are making good progress towards the early learning goals.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

Children are valued as individuals, treated with respect and encouraged to show kindness and respect to one another. Children learn about differences in lifestyle, culture, belief, tradition and the wider world through the celebration of festivals from around the world. In addition, children have access to a range of resources that reflect diversity in a positive way. Young adults from different cultures visit the setting, to learn about children and their favourite toys and activities. This helps children to have an awareness and positive interaction with different people. Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered.

Children's individual needs are discussed with parents in detail. Any special requirements or information are discussed and consistent communication and information exchange takes place. Any additional needs of children are recognised and met sensitively. Individual play plans are developed with other professional agencies to help children develop their skills and communicate. These are discussed fully with parents for their views and guidance. As a result, adults demonstrate a strong commitment to providing an inclusive service that meets the needs of all children attending the setting.

Partnership with parents and carers is good. Parents are greeted warmly by adults, they speak highly of the provision and the care provided. Parents know their child's key worker and they feel well informed of their children's progress, both through the informal verbal exchange of information and regular access to their children's developmental records. Parents of children in receipt of funding for nursery education are provided with good information relating to the Foundation Stage curriculum. In addition, most parents feel involved in their children's learning because the staff team are approachable and responsive, demonstrating a keen interest in the children and their well-being. Details of the group's policies and procedures are included in the group's prospectus and are available to parents upon request. In addition, newsletters and information of topics and themes being introduced keep parents informed of all relevant issues relating to the smooth running of the group.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

The day-to-day organisation of the setting is good and contributes to the positive outcomes for children. As a result, children are provided with good opportunities to access a broad range of interesting and stimulating activities to develop and support their learning. Most of the staff hold relevant qualifications in childcare and education, with others working towards further qualifications. They also continue to access regular short courses and in-house training to build on their skills and enhance their practice in the pre-school. Recruitment and selection of staff is the responsibility of the committee who checks to establish the suitability of staff working in the group is in place. There is a strong commitment amongst the staff team to continue to improve the quality of care provided within the group, this is achieved through regular staff meetings and opportunities for all staff to reflect on practice, in order to instigate change and secure improvements. All of the mandatory documentation is in place. The certificate of registration is displayed along with details of the group's public liability insurance; as a result, parents are easily able to confirm details of the pre-school's registration.

Leadership and management of the setting is good. The adults work well as a team and benefit from support and guidance of the local authority. All staff demonstrate a strong commitment to provide a service that is underpinned with quality and one that is conducive to the needs of

the children. Systems for monitoring, reviewing and evaluating the effectiveness of the nursery education within the setting continue to evolve and the supervisor and staff team continue to build on their knowledge and understanding of the Foundation Stage curriculum. All staff contribute to the planning, as a result, children receive a broad and balanced range of learning opportunities to help move them on to their next steps in learning. All staff undertake observations on the children and information gained is used to inform future planning. Overall the provision meets the needs of the range of children for whom it provides.

Improvements since the last inspection

At the last inspection of care the provision was asked to: ensure children's times of arrival and departure are recorded; ensure written permission is gained from parents to seek emergency medical treatment and advice and to review and amend the child protection policy to ensure it complies with Area Child Protection Procedure (ACPC) and includes appropriate procedures to be followed in the event of an allegation against staff or volunteers.

Documentation has been reviewed and maintained this includes; a new registration system of signing in and out sheets for parents to complete which staff monitor, emergency medical and treatment advice has been requested from parents should it be required for the future and the Child Protection Policy has been reworded to include procedures to be followed if allegations are made against a member of staff.

At the last inspection of early education no key issues were identified, but the provision was asked to give consideration to improving the following; provide easily accessible resources for writing to enable children to write for a variety of purposes.

Staff at the provision have attended courses on children's literacy and sought advice from the Local Authority advisors and local infant schools, on the latest methods and letters to introduce for pre-school children. They have increased the range of activities to enhance these skills of mark-making throughout the provision. The settings attention to the above issues has improved the quality of care and outcomes for children.

Complaints since the last inspection

Since 1 April 2004 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):

- continue to reduce the risk of cross-infection to children by reviewing the procedures for the hygienic disposal of tissues and hand washing, with reference to the communal bowl.

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):

- expand children's opportunities to find out about and identify the uses of everyday technology and use information and communication technology and programmable toys to support their learning
- continue to develop the system of planning, to ensure information gained through observation is used effectively to inform daily activity plans, that these are sufficiently detailed to guide inexperienced staff ensuring that children are being challenged at their appropriate level.

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