

Stepping Stones

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	EY281815
Inspection date	13 November 2007
Inspector	Deborah Kerry
Setting Address	Chilton Fields, Chilton way, Stowmarket, Suffolk, IP14 1SZ
Telephone number	01449 770645
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Registered person	The Trustees of Stowmarket And Area Opportunity Group
Type of inspection	Integrated
Type of care	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.

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, is a charitable organisation and was registered in 2003. The provision aims to provide inclusive care for all children. It operates from a building in a residential area on the outskirts of Stowmarket. The group has sole use of the building, which includes a secure, enclosed outside area.

A maximum of 23 children may attend at any one time. There are currently 55 children from birth to under eight years on roll. Of these 12 are in receipt of funding for early education. Children attend for a variety of sessions. The setting currently supports a high proportion of children with special educational needs.

The group opens five days a week, Monday to Friday all year round. Sessions are from 09:00 until 15:00. The pre-school session is from 12:30 until 15:00 and the out of school club from 15:00 until 18:00. Monday, Tuesday and Thursday mornings are opportunity sessions available for parents from 09:00 to 12:00. Wednesday is a communication morning from 09:00 to 12:00. Fridays is a toddler session from 09:00 to 12:00.

The opportunity group employs five members of staff. Four of these work within the nursery. Of these all hold appropriate early years qualifications. The setting receives support from a teacher from the Early Years Development and Childcare Partnership (EYDCP).

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Children's health is effectively promoted as there are clear procedures in place for dealing with sick children which helps to prevent the spread of infections. There are good procedures in place for dealing with accidents and for administering any medication and staff ensure that parents sign the record. The nursery has excellent hygiene procedures in place. For example, tables are sprayed and cleaned before snack. Children are developing a good understanding on how to promote their own health as staff say 'that they need to wash their hands to remove germs'. There are good procedures in place for changing nappies which minimises any risk of cross-infection.

Children have daily access to the outside play area for physical play to promote their healthy growth. There is soft seating in the book area should children need to rest or sit quietly; there is a travel cot available which is placed in the sensory room if children need to sleep. Children are provided with healthy options at snack time which effectively promotes their health, for example, they have apple, raisins, banana and breadsticks. Children help themselves to drinks freely from named water bottles which are placed within their reach; children ask staff which one is theirs which ensures that bottles are not shared. Children's individual dietary and health needs are recorded on their records; individual care plans are readily available to staff to ensure that children's needs are met effectively.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

Children's safety is promoted as a bell sounds whenever the entrance door is opened which enables staff to be aware of all visitors to the setting. There is an inner gate which is kept bolted and provides added security which ensures that children cannot leave unsupervised. Staff follow a daily checklist when preparing for children's arrival each day which minimises any potential risks to children. The outside play area is fully enclosed, checked and prepared ready for children's arrival each day. The outside area is partly covered which enables children to access at any time regardless of the weather. Separate toilet facilities are located within the main play area which helps to promote children's independence. There is a separate sensory room with soft cushions, music, and changing coloured lights to support children with sensory difficulties. There is also a soft room with a ball pit which enables children to experience physical play in a safe area free from potential hazards.

Children's health and safety is effectively protected as there is a comprehensive risk assessment in place which is updated regularly. All required fire equipment is in place and checked annually. Staff carry out regular fire drills and each has a set responsibility to ensure that children's safety is effectively maintained. Staff remind children to sit on their chairs which helps to promote their understanding of keeping themselves safe. Children's welfare is maintained and protected as all staff have a clear understanding of their responsibilities on safeguarding children. The policy conforms to the Local Safeguarding Children Board procedures and includes local contact numbers should staff have any concerns about the welfare of a child.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

Children are provided with a range of resources and activities that are suitable to their ages and individual abilities. The sessions are organised so that children are able to choose if they want to play inside or outside. There is a separate area for messy play where children have free access to a range of resources for their art and craft work. Children's independence is effectively promoted as they are free to initiate their own activities around their individual interests. All children's individual communication and social skills are effectively developed as staff use sign language when talking to all children regardless of their abilities. Staff include some ideas from the 'Birth to three matters' framework in their planning to promote the needs of the younger children. However, not all aspects are being included.

Nursery education

The quality of teaching and learning is good.

Staff have a good understanding of the Foundation Stage and more experienced staff provide peer support to less confident staff to develop their knowledge and understanding around curriculum planning. All staff are included and have input with ideas for planning of activities for children's learning. The staff are an effective team and work well together ensuring that children's individual needs is a high priority. Children's independence is effectively promoted as staff encourage them to try to do things for themselves which helps to boost their confidence. Staff undertake regular observations based on both child-initiated and planned activities to record the children's progress. There are weekly planning meetings and staff use children's individual interests to inform planning and they are beginning to plan to promote the next step in the children's learning. However, this is not currently being recorded in their progress files. Short-term plans show the area of intended learning and are clearly linked to the stepping stones. However, this does not always show differentiation for children's individual needs. The plans include a balance of adult- and child- initiated activities and shows resources, the grouping of children and activities for the outside play area which ensures that children are provided with a broad and balanced curriculum. The adult- focused activity shows clear differentiation for all individual children's abilities, ensuring that they are all able to participate. Staff are beginning to evaluate activities to see if the intended learning outcomes are achieved so they can be used to inform future planning.

Children have developed good manners, as they say 'please' and 'thank you' at snack time. Staff give children clear explanations on what is expected of them which helps them to behave well. Staff offer children positive praise for their efforts, as they help to tidy away resources before snack. Children are settled and have built close, trusting relationships with staff and other children. Staff encourage children to put on their own aprons before an art activity and to wash their hands after using the toilet. All staff use sign language when talking to the children which promotes effective communication skills in all children regardless of their abilities. Staff use effective questioning techniques to promote children's thinking skills. Children enjoy listening to stories and join in with familiar songs and rhymes. Children look for their name card at snack time and they share books together; they are provided with a range of resources to promote their early writing skills. For example, they have pens, chalks, and have fun making marks in shaving foam.

Staff offer support when children count the numbers present and some are able to recognize the numerals that match. Children add the number of boys and girls together and sing songs

about five little monkeys. Children use scales, to weigh, match, balance and compare objects in their role play. Children show great delight in exploring shaving foam, as they make marks and squeeze it through their fingers. Children build using Duplo and use construction resources to build 3-D shapes. Children are developing an excellent understanding of technology as they access electronic toys. Children are beginning to develop awareness of time as staff use sand timers to show children how much time they have before a change of activities. Children are developing an understanding of the wider world through a range of dressing up clothes, book's and by celebrating a range of different world festivals.

Children enjoy taking part in physical play, as they run and jump outside or move and dance to music. Children are able to move around each other safely and find a mat on the carpet for circle time. Children are able to manage their own personal hygiene needs and staff offer support for less able children if required. Children are provided with a range of small and large equipment. For example, outside they can ride, push, climb and slide and they use tools for threading, play dough and sand. Children create colourful pictures of fireworks using glitter and tea bags to create sparkly pictures and splatter paintings. Children experiment with sound using musical instruments and join in with singing action rhymes. Children are provided with a range of resources to support their imagination, as they dress up using wigs and handbags. They cook dinner in their 'restaurant' and sell fruit in their 'shop'.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

All children and parents are made to feel welcome. Children learn about the wider world through a range of planned activities and by celebrating different world festivals. The fully inclusive practice ensures that children are developing an excellent understanding of others needs and abilities, which may be different to themselves and promotes the inclusion of all children. The nursery supports a high proportion of children with disabilities and provides a fully integrated setting where children of all abilities are welcomed. They are able to learn in a warm, welcoming setting and activities are adapted to meet children's individual needs and level of ability. Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered.

Staff are good role models for children and encourage them to say 'please' and 'thank you'. Staff use consistent strategies for managing children's behaviour around their developmental needs. The nurseries 'golden rules' are displayed in Makaton sign language as well as in writing to ensure that all children can understand what is expected of them. All children's individual needs are recorded on their registration forms and individual care plans are kept readily available to ensure that all children's needs are being met.

Partnership with parents and carers is good.

All parents and children are greeted warmly on arrival and spend time exchanging information with staff to ensure that they are aware of children's individual needs. Information for parents is displayed on notice boards in the entrance and kitchen area ensuring that parents are kept up-to-date with all plans and activities happening within the session. Parents are invited to join the committee of the opportunity group to support and be fully involved with their child's early education. Parents speak highly of the setting, not just for the individual support their children receive but also for the valued time and support that is given to them from the dedicated staff. Parents are free to come to the setting for support for their needs as well as for their children's. They are free to input as much time as they are able or to take time for themselves to rest to meet their own needs. Parents are given an information pack when their children

start which provides them with information on the early years curriculum. Children's progress files are sent home at the end of each term so that they can read and add to if they wish. As part of the annual general meeting the nursery held an open day so parents could come in and see the range of activities in which their children participate. The group sends out regular newsletters to keep parents updated with all planned activities, topics and outings.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

Parents sign themselves and their children into and out of the setting; staff also take registers during a session which helps to promote children's safety. There are clear, effective procedures in place for staff induction which ensures that all staff are made aware of their roles and responsibilities. All staff hold appropriate early years qualifications which helps them to support children's developmental needs effectively. The group has a range of policies and procedures in place to support effective practice. There is clear staff deployment and designated staff roles to ensure the smooth running of each session. There is a high staff to child ratio which enables staff to offer effective support to meet children's individual needs well. All the required documentation is in place and stored confidentially.

Leadership and management is good.

The planning has recently been adapted to include activities around children's individual needs and interests. All staff have undertaken additional training around supporting children with additional needs. The staff work well as a team; they spend time each week planning activities for children's learning and updating their progress records. The group has clear aims and objectives in place for children's learning that is fully inclusive for everyone. There is effective communication between the staff ensuring that children's individual needs are a high priority. Staff all have job descriptions which sets out their duties to promote children's learning and progress effectively. The committee carry out appraisals and staff are supported with funding for additional training for their personal development and to enhance their knowledge and to benefit all children. Overall children's needs are met.

Improvements since the last inspection

At the last inspection the group were asked to ensure the contact details of the regulator are included in the complaints procedure made available to parents. The group now has the 'poster for parents' displayed which includes the contact number for Ofsted. The group were also asked to ensure that the procedures to follow in an event of an allegation being made against a member of staff or volunteer includes contacting Ofsted. The policy has been amended and now includes Ofsted contact details which are also shown on the parents poster.

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.

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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):

- continue to develop the planning to show how activities for children under three are provided for.

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):

- continue to develop the short term planning to show differentiation for children's individual abilities and ensure that activities are evaluated to show if the learning objective was achieved
- develop children's records to show the next step in their learning.

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