

A Step Ahead Pre-School Nursery

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	EY243714
Inspection date	13 March 2008
Inspector	Maureen Edith Sinclair
Setting Address	Leech Pond Hill, Lower Beeding, West Sussex, RH13 6NR
Telephone number	01403 891012
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Registered person	A Step Ahead Ltd
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?

A Step Ahead Pre-School Day Nursery opened in November 2000 and is registered for a total of 50 children under eight years of age. It operates from a purpose built building in the village of Lower Beeding, near Horsham. There are three main rooms, Monkey room catering for three and four year olds, Koala room for two to three year old children, the newly opened Ladybird room for babies, as well as a kitchen and an office. A fully enclosed area offers outside play. The nursery serves the local area and surrounding villages.

There are currently 54 children from birth to five years on roll. This includes 26 funded children. The setting has appropriate strategies in place to support children with learning difficulties and /or disabilities or who speak English as an additional language.

The group opens five days a week for 51 weeks a year. The nursery is open from 08.00 until 18.00. Children attend for a variety of sessions.

There are 12 staff working with the children. Over half the staff have early years qualifications to NVQ level 3 or above and two members of staff are currently working towards a recognised early years qualification.

The setting receives support from the Local Authority

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Children are learning about how to keep themselves healthy through good hygiene procedures. They are encouraged to wash their hands after playing in the garden, after going to the toilet and before snacks or meals. They know to use tissues for wiping their noses and to dispose of them in the bin. Staff generally follow good hygiene procedures when changing children's nappies, although occasionally nappies are changed in the toddler playroom, meaning that children's privacy is not always maintained.

The nursery's policy on sick children is shared with parents so children do not attend if they are unwell. This means that children's health is well protected. There is a very comprehensive procedure for giving medicines. Parents give written permission and are asked to sign the medication book to acknowledge entries. All medicines are given by two members of staff to ensure the correct dosage is given. Staff are trained to give first aid treatment and parents give permission for the nursery to seek emergency medical advice if the matter is more serious. All accidents are recorded and countersigned by parents.

Children thoroughly enjoy the freshly cooked, homemade meals. Snack and meal times are a very sociable occasion with staff and children sitting together. Children learn about healthy eating as they discuss which foods are good for them. They enjoy snacks of fruit and crackers and healthy, well balanced meals, such as chicken and asparagus pie or spaghetti bolognaise followed by fruit. Children are able to have drinks throughout the day as jugs of water and cups are easily accessible.

Children are learning about the benefits of fresh air and exercise. They use the fully enclosed play area whenever the weather allows. Their large muscles are developing well as they run, jump and ride tricycles and they throw and catch balls to improve their eye and hand coordination.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

Children benefit from being cared for in a bright, well planned environment. Rooms are spacious and laid out to provide areas where children can rest as well as play with small world toys or construction toys on the floor. There are separate areas for the differing age ranges of children but rooms are large enough to allow the age groups to come together. There are colourful displays of children's work and photographs of the children at play on the walls.

There is a wide range of good quality equipment. Toys and resources are stored on low level shelving and children can help themselves. The resources allow children to take responsibility for choosing their own activities and increases their independence. There is a well equipped baby room although no babies are currently being cared for as this a new area of the nursery.

Children's safety has high priority in the nursery. Security is good. Parents and visitors gain access by ringing a bell. The exit is secure as the door is opened with a push button out of reach of children. Daily risk assessments are undertaken before the children arrive at the nursery.

There are safety features in place, such as a gate across the kitchen door, safety hinges on the doors and electric sockets are situated high on the walls so children cannot reach them. There are regular fire drills to ensure children are familiar with the procedure. Visitors and bank staff are made aware of the fire exits and meeting point.

Children's welfare is well protected through the staff's good knowledge and understanding of local safeguarding children procedures. There is a well written child protection policy, including the procedure to be followed if an allegation of abuse is made against a member of staff. This policy is shared with parents.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

Children arrive happily at the group and quickly settle into the nursery's routine. Children who find it more difficult to leave their parents are supported by staff. Children are made to feel welcome as they look for their names to self register and put their belongings on named pegs. Staff know the children well and plan a wide range of activities to meet their needs. Children happily play with dolls and in the home corner. They bandage each other as they play at being doctors and nurses. Staff join in the game willingly and take the opportunity to extend children's language. Children are learning new words as staff introduce language such as 'splendid' and ask them questions encouraging them to think such as 'What is Thomas going to do now?'. They experiment with cars and tubes to discover how high they have to hold the tubes to allow the cars to roll down them and blow through the tubes to listen to the noise they make. Children are developing close relationships with staff and are happy to snuggle on their laps during circle time and talk about themselves and their families.

Nursery Education

The quality of teaching and learning is good. Staff plan an exciting range of activities to ensure children are making good progress in all areas of learning. They ensure that a good range of resources is available for the children to use as they arrive. Staff are experienced practitioners and have a good understanding of the Foundation Stage and the early learning goals. They are all involved in the planning. Plans are simple and easy to follow and show how staff are to be deployed and what resources are required. Staff make regular and detailed observations and use these to plan children's next steps. As staff know the children extremely well, they are very aware of which children need to focus on certain activities but the plans do not always show this. Staff evaluate activities to assess how effectively they have met the children's needs.

Children are very confident and are able to choose their own activities and resources. They are able to decide when they have their snack and serve themselves, thus promoting their independence. Photographs of the children at play help to promote their self esteem and make them feel comfortable at the nursery. They show great delight as they recognise laminated pictures of themselves, cutting them up to make a puzzle, talking about the shape and number of pieces and practising their scissor control. Good relationships are forming between the children. They play cooperatively and make up games for themselves. They play in the home corner, acting out scenes from home, talking about who would have to stay at home to look after the kitten and who would go out to work. Children use an increasing range of vocabulary as they play. Children have access to a wide range of dressing up clothes to support them in their role play.

Children make good use of the many mark making materials available. They use them to draw and colour and use them to take orders when the home corner is set up as a restaurant. Children enjoy using books and are encouraged to take home a book to read with parents. Children independently access books in the attractive book corner and read them to each other. They are beginning to recognise letters and the sounds they make. There are attractive displays of children's drawings of things that begin with A, B or C, as they move through the alphabet. Children see print in many forms as displays, resources and equipment are labelled and there are many letter lines around the nursery.

Children are beginning to use technology with increasing skill and confidence. They access the computer independently, operating simple programmes and performing simple functions with great skill. Their mouse control is excellent and they show good physical skill and control when moulding dough and using construction blocks. They learn about the community through visits from the fire brigade, police and ambulance services. Staff make good use of spontaneous events and bring in buckets of hail for children to examine and observe its changing form as it melts.

Children have many opportunities to be creative. They sing and dance and play musical instruments with great gusto. They have opportunities to paint and make models.

Children count and calculate in everyday activities as staff ask them to work out how many more cups are needed. They compare numbers and weight using scales and model dinosaurs. Children use mathematical language such as more than or less than, positional language over, under, on and below. Children recognise numbers and can confidently count to 10 and beyond.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

Children learn about the world and become aware of differences through activities and celebrations of different festivals. There are some resources that promote positive images of differing cultures and disabilities but these are not used in everyday activities and there are few displays of such images. There are good systems in place to support children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Staff have procedures to liaise with other professionals and parents.

Staff know individual children very well and plan a range of activities to meet their needs. They obtain detailed information about the children before they start at the nursery. Staff ensure that all children can enjoy the activities available, irrespective of ability or gender. Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered.

Staff act as good role models and encourage children to be kind and considerate to each other. Children behave very well. They respond well to simple requests and the consistent expectations of staff. The behaviour management policy is shared with parents to ensure there is consistency between the nursery and home.

The partnership with parents is good. Parents are given a comprehensive welcome pack that includes detailed information on the Foundation Stage and the early learning goals. Plans are displayed so that parents can see what their children will be doing and information is put on the notice board at the end of each session outlining what the children have done. The nursery has an open door policy and parents are welcome to help at any session. Parents are able to talk to staff about their children's progress at the end of the day. The observations made by

staff are shared and parents have access to detailed assessment records at any time on request and at open evenings. Parents are positive about the nursery and are confident to raise any concerns. There is a comprehensive complaints policy which is shared with parents.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

Children benefit from being cared for in a well organised environment. There are good staffing levels that ensure children receive care from well qualified and experienced staff. The staff rota is planned to ensure that ratios are met at all times. The leadership and management of the nursery are good. A recent change in manager means that the owner is more involved in the day to day running of the nursery and is providing support to the new manager. There is an effective system to oversee the planning of activities to ensure all areas of the curriculum are covered and that all children are involved in meaningful pursuits. Staff receive appraisals to help identify their training needs. There is a clear commitment to training and staff are encouraged to update their skills and knowledge and obtain further formal qualifications, where appropriate. Staff are very clear about roles and responsibilities and who they should report any issues to. They work very well as a team and are all actively involved in the planning by contributing their ideas and taking responsibility for planning individual activities. There is a good recruitment process that ensures that staff are suitable to work with children. New staff receive a thorough induction into the nursery's procedures and all staff are aware of the nursery policies.

All mandatory records are in place and there is a full range of well written policies and procedures. These are well organised and fully support the care and welfare of the children. They are available to parents at all times. Staff take care to ensure that confidentiality is maintained at all times and children's and staff records are kept in the manager's office.

The setting meets the needs of the range of children for whom it provides.

Improvements since the last inspection

At the last care inspection the provider was asked to make sure the equipment is clean, well maintained and safe. There is now a wide range of good quality equipment available. It is regularly checked to ensure it is in good condition and suitable for children to use. There were no key issues raised at the last nursery education inspection.

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):

- provide more images that reflect positive images of diversity and disabilities
- review nappy changing procedures to ensure children's privacy is maintained at all times.

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):

- improve plans to indicate how individual children will benefit from activities.

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