

# Stepping Stones Playgroup

Inspection report for early years provision

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**Unique Reference Number** 106331

**Inspection date** 25 February 2008

**Inspector** Anne Legge

**Setting Address** Georgeham Village School, Putsborough Road, GEORGEHAM, Devon, EX33 1JT

**Telephone number** 01271 890899

**E-mail** 01271 890 440 (school number)

**Registered person** Stepping Stones Playgroup

**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](http://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 Playgroup opened in 1997. It operates from a Portacabin within the grounds of Georgeham Primary School, and serves the local area. The group has sole use of the premises, which include a playroom with kitchen area, and toilets. A fully enclosed playground is available for outdoor play.

The pre-school is registered to care for up to 20 children, aged from three to five years. There are currently 21 children on roll, including 16 who receive nursery funding. The group is open for four sessions a week during term time, from 09:00 to 12:00 on Mondays, Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Fridays. There is also a rising fives session each week during the summer and autumn terms, on Wednesdays, from 13:15 to 15:15.

There are two members of staff working with the children, as well as a supply teacher for emergency cover. The supervisor holds an early years degree and is working towards early years professional status. The setting receives support from the Local Authority.

## THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

### **Helping children to be healthy**

The provision is good.

Children develop healthy lifestyles, as they engage in a wide range of physical outdoor play, at each session. They use the school playground to run freely, ride wheeled toys, play parachute games or use bats, balls, hoppers and streamers to develop their physical skills. They sometimes walk through the village, visiting a local farm or shop. Children benefit from eating very healthy snacks, including plenty of fresh fruit, as well as dried fruit and bread or savoury snacks. They drink milk or pure fruit juice and have constant access to fresh drinking water, ensuring that they maintain good fluid levels. Special dietary needs are carefully recorded and effectively met.

Children are very well protected from infection. The premises are kept very clean and staff are meticulous in disinfecting surfaces regularly, especially where food is served. They have clear routines for managing hygiene in the kitchen area, where one sink is used for different purposes, and a dishwasher has been installed, to avoid washing plates and cups by hand. Children learn good routines regarding hand washing. They operate a ticket system at snack time, ensuring that each child washes their hands before going to the table. Children receive good care when they are unwell or injured. There is always a qualified first aider on site during sessions and first aid resources are regularly checked and replaced. Records of accidents are comprehensive and shared appropriately with parents. Medication is rarely administered and records are almost comprehensive, although they lack some details.

### **Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe**

The provision is good.

Children's safety is given a high priority within the setting. Staff and the committee implement regular risk assessments and very effectively address hazards. For example, a new storage system has improved children's ability to access toys and resources independently and without risk of harm. They choose from a very good range of play materials, which are maintained in a very good condition, through regular checking for cleanliness and safety. Children are safe in emergencies, as appropriate fire safety equipment is in place and checked regularly. Evacuation procedures are practised each half term, on several days of the week, so that all children and adults know the routines.

Staff have carefully risk assessed play areas, daily routines and activities. Children's security is assured, as access to the building is through the school and the playgroup door is always locked during sessions. The playground is fully enclosed with a high fence and heavy gates, which ensure that no-one can enter or leave unnoticed. There are very clear routines for escorting children between indoor and outdoor play areas and for managing times when parents arrive to deliver or collect children. Good use is made of heater guards, gates and socket covers, to protect children from harm. Staff have a good understanding of all safeguarding issues and procedures, so they are able to offer children effective protection from abuse or neglect, although the safeguarding policy is out-of-date in some details.

## **Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do**

The provision is good.

Children choose from a very good variety of play opportunities, which very effectively promote their development. Staff provide a wide range of resources and activities at each session, enabling children to move around the well organised room, accessing creative and imaginative play, as well as activities which challenge their ability to construct or solve problems. Children become very independent, as they make choices, organise their own play or take part in daily routines, such as tidying up or giving out tickets for snack. They concentrate very well during free play and more structured activities, such as story time or carpet time.

### **Nursery Education**

The quality of teaching and learning is good. Staff plan interesting topics and activities, covering all aspects of the Foundation Stage curriculum and clearly identifying learning intentions for children of different ages or abilities. They know children very well and record their progress each term, setting clear targets for future learning. Development records do not clearly track children's progress towards the early learning goals, which reduces the information available to parents, but does not impact on children's learning, as staff are skilful in meeting all individual needs. Children benefit from the staff's very good understanding of the curriculum and their effective interactions, which successfully challenge or support learning.

Children speak confidently and develop good listening skills, as staff patiently teach them to focus their attention by 'switching on their brains and ears'. They learn about letter sounds and begin to recognise and write their names, through daily routines, such as naming their work or identifying their own mat at snack time. Children enjoy sharing books and engaging with stories, as staff use effective questioning about characters and plots. Children develop their understanding of number patterns, as they count in free play and work out, for example, how many more cups are needed to lay a table in the role play area. They make shapes with streamers and use mathematical language when comparing quantities in the water tray.

Children learn about the natural world, as they visit a farm to see the lambs or plant cress and watch it grow. They develop a good sense of time and place, as they engage in constant discussions with staff about events in their lives or places they know. They use keyboards, tills and telephones to develop their understanding of technology. Children create freely with paint, dough and craft materials. They use their senses to explore a good variety of different substances, including soapy water, pasta and dry sand. Children enjoy imaginative role play, such as in a shop or café, ably supported by staff. They sing familiar songs and use a range of musical instruments. Children develop their physical skills, using small equipment, such as pens, scissors and brushes, with increasing control. They run, climb and balance, learning to negotiate large spaces outdoors, as well as smaller spaces in the play room.

## **Helping children make a positive contribution**

The provision is good.

Children thrive in a caring environment, where their individual needs are known and met. Staff manage children's behaviour with positive, consistent strategies, which very effectively promote their self-esteem. For example, they carefully explain why children should consider the needs of others and they teach them how to manage their feelings, without harming other children. Consequently, their self-esteem is promoted and they learn to share and take turns. Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered. All families are welcomed and

included, and alternative cultures and traditions are valued by the group. Children celebrate different festivals and use resources, such as dolls, books and puzzles, which promote positive images of diversity. There are no children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities on roll, but staff are appropriately trained and there are effective systems for monitoring and supporting any children with additional needs.

Children receive consistent care, due to the playgroup's good systems for communicating with their parents. Parents are very involved in the running of the group, through serving on the committee and a helpers' rota. They are well informed about all aspects of their child's care, through regular discussions with staff and the effective use of newsletters and a notice board. The playgroup's partnership with parents and carers, relating to the nursery education, is good. Parents receive good information about the curriculum in newsletters or by reading weekly plans, which are displayed. They look at their child's progress records each half term and discuss targets for future development, so that they are able to support learning. However, records do not include the systematic tracking of children's progress towards the early learning goals, so this information is not available for all areas of learning.

### **Organisation**

The organisation is good.

Children are cared for by competent and dedicated staff, who, together with the committee, are reflective in their practice and committed to constantly improving the quality of provision. They have drawn up an action plan for future development, accurately addressing the areas where they could improve, and they are systematically implementing their proposals. Leadership and management of the nursery education are good. Staff appraisal systems are in place and the supervisor works closely with school staff, providing support for her work and good continuity for children. She is well qualified and is currently working towards early years professional status. She is committed to the ongoing development of her skills and the training of other staff, for the benefit of the children.

Sessions are very well organised to promote children's welfare and development. Staff provide a safe, clean and attractive environment and children receive very good individual attention, due to the effective deployment of adults. Activities are well planned and exciting for children, who enjoy attending and engage enthusiastically in all tasks offered to them. Children's care is underpinned by all the required documentation, although two documents are slightly out-of-date or lack sufficient detail. The committee has implemented good systems for regularly updating policies and procedures. The playgroup meets the needs of the range of children for whom it provides.

### **Improvements since the last inspection**

At the last care inspection, the playgroup agreed to develop and implement all the required policies and procedures, to support children's welfare. A complete set of policies and procedures is now available and is mainly comprehensive in underpinning all aspects of children's care.

At the last nursery education inspection, the playgroup was asked to consider developing systems for monitoring staff develop and identifying training needs. There are now effective systems for regularly appraising staff and identifying relevant training courses, ensuring that their knowledge is regularly refreshed.

## **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.

## **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):

- make sure that children's care is always underpinned by current and comprehensive documentation, including an up-to-date safeguarding policy and detailed records of medication administered.

### **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):

- further develop assessment systems, so that children's progress towards the early learning goals is clearly tracked and make this information available to parents, so that they can fully support their child's development.

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](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)