

Stepping Stones Nursery

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	EY276264
Inspection date	30 January 2008
Inspector	Gillian Little
Setting Address	55 Glanville Road, Oxford, Oxfordshire, OX4 2DD
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Registered person	Natalie Alexandra Greatbatch
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 inadequate – notice of action to improve. The registered person does not meet the National Standards for under 8s day care and childminding.

The quality and standards of the nursery education are satisfactory.

WHAT SORT OF SETTING IS IT?

Stepping Stones Nursery has been operating with the present management since December 2003 but was originally established in 1990. The nursery operates in a converted detached house situated in East Oxford. The accommodation comprises of three playrooms, toilets and a small kitchen on the ground floor, and two play rooms, a toilet and an office on the first floor. An enclosed outside area is available for all children. Children come from the local and surrounding areas.

The nursery is open Monday to Friday from 08:00 until 18:00 all year round. A maximum of 25 children may attend the nursery at any one time. There are currently 45 children aged under five years on roll. Of these, 17 children receive funding for nursery education. The nursery currently supports a number of children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, and also supports a number of children who speak English as an additional language.

The nursery employs 14 staff, of whom seven hold appropriate early years qualifications. Five staff are working towards a qualification.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is satisfactory.

Children enjoy and benefit from physical activity as they play outside daily and have regular outings to the local park, library and market. Older children enjoy organised physical games such as running to the fence on hearing the whistle blow or touching their toes ten times. They enjoy riding around in cars and they squeal with delight as they chase each other round the playground. Younger children can sleep according to their own routines and cuddle up to staff when they are tired.

Children are able to play in a clean environment as staff follow a regular cleaning rota and there are hygienic procedures in place for nappy changing, including disposable gloves and aprons. Older children know that they need to wash their hands before snacks and are mostly supervised appropriately by staff.

Satisfactory procedures are in place to ensure that children receive appropriate care in the event of an illness or accident. For example, all health records are in place and several staff hold first aid certificates.

Children have regular meals and snack times and the nursery provides healthy food, including toast, fruit, cheese cubes and chicken strips. However, snack times are crowded and there is not enough space for staff to sit with children. This creates a rather chaotic atmosphere and some children become restless and start crying. Staff are aware of this problem and split the groups at lunchtime to provide children with more space. Fresh drinking water is available for older children at a drinking station in the art room but this is not yet available on the first-floor.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is inadequate.

The provider is using the first-floor of the premises and has not notified Ofsted of the commencement of this arrangement. This is a breach in regulation and does not allow Ofsted to carry out checks on the suitability and safety of the premises, which puts children at risk.

Children do not always have sufficient space to play and move around comfortably. Pre-school children use a first-floor room for some of their time in the nursery, but this becomes crowded, sometimes resulting in children becoming fractious and snatching toys. An adjacent play room is not currently available for children as it is used for storage. The current organisation of the premises sometimes makes it difficult for staff to supervise and support children appropriately without disrupting learning activities. For example, the layout of the first-floor means that staff often have to supervise children to use the toilet which takes their time away from supporting learning activities. Rooms are reasonably well maintained, mostly with appropriate furniture and equipment, although there are few suitable chairs for pre-school children who often have to use very small stools which offer no back support. Children are able to play with a suitable range of toys and resources which they can access independently.

Staff appropriately assess risks to keep children safe. For example, stair gates and window locks are in place, the premises is secure, and written risk assessments and a safety policy are in place. However, the kitchen door adjacent to the art area is propped open, and although staff generally supervise children well, there are occasions when children are at risk of accessing the kitchen unsupervised, which increases the risk of injury. Satisfactory procedures are in place for fire

prevention and evacuation. For example, staff practise fire evacuation with the children regularly. The provider confirms that a fire officer has checked the building but there is no documentation to support this.

The outdoor area is enclosed and staff supervise children closely. Children stay safe on outings as staff follow appropriate procedures, such as talking to children about road safety and ensuring children have sticky labels for identification should they become lost.

Children's risk of harm from others is minimised as staff are familiar with possible signs and symptoms of abuse and are confident about procedures for reporting and recording concerns.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is satisfactory.

Children show interest in what they do and develop a range of skills as there is a suitable variety of activities for each age group. For example, babies enjoy exploring plastic construction toys, books, a tunnel, and bead toys. They enjoy lots of cuddles with staff who are kind and caring and who offer appropriate interactions to encourage children to engage with the toys. Toddlers enjoy exploring the outside space, throwing plastic balls and playing throwing and catching games with staff. Indoors they enjoy playing with plastic construction toys, sorting toys, trains and a track, and a shop with some resources. Pre-school children enjoy a range of activities across all areas of the curriculum. Children are generally happy and settled and develop close relationships with staff.

Staff throughout the nursery are kind, caring and support children appropriately, although the layout and use of space sometimes limits learning opportunities. Planning for the younger children covers a variety of different activities to include sensory experiences, imaginative play, movement and real-life experiences, such as a pretend Post Office, puzzles, prams and dolls. Assessments of younger children include observational notes and records in each area development. Staff are using the Birth to three framework appropriately as part of their planning and assessments.

Nursery Education

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. Children's attitudes and behaviours are generally positive. For example, children join in enthusiastically with a French lesson and enjoy other group times such as registration when they confidently count each other. Children generally play well together and alongside each other although they sometimes become fractious when space is limited. Staff encourage children to develop some independence, for example putting on their own shoes and coats before outdoor play, and they encourage children to be kind and to respect each other.

Children's achievements are satisfactory and they are making sound progress towards the early learning goals. Children enjoy a variety of interesting activities such as making baked apples, potato print shapes and necklaces from cereal hoops and string. Staff appropriately support children and encourage them to talk about their play. Children confidently count to twenty as part of a game and enjoy making clocks with paper plates. They have opportunities to learn about people in the community such as the police and enjoy exploring a pretend police station which helps them to develop their imaginative skills and to practise early writing skills. However, the layout of the rooms does not allow easy access to a wide range of activities. Activities are

time restricted depending on staffing and organisation and are therefore not available to children throughout the day.

Teaching appropriately meets the needs of all children as staff are enthusiastic and involve themselves keenly with the children. They include all children and give additional support to those who speak English as an additional language or children who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Planning covers each area of learning and relates to the stepping stones within the Foundation Stage, ensuring that children are able to make suitable progress. Staff generally update assessments each term and collect observational evidence to support their judgments of children's progress.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is satisfactory.

Children become aware of wider society as they have access to an appropriate range of resources reflecting diversity, such as books and dressing up clothes. Staff help children to learn about different cultures and religions by celebrating festivals, such as Divali. Staff supervise children appropriately to ensure that they have equal access to toys and resources and they give children equal attention. Staff gain detailed information about children's individual needs and backgrounds, ensuring that they know them well.

Children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are able to make satisfactory progress as staff work with outside agencies to assess children's needs and they adjust activities and interactions as appropriate. Staff with suitable training ensure that other staff working with children are aware of their particular needs and agreed strategies for support.

Children learn about responsible behaviour as staff act as good role models and promote positive social skills amongst children, such as sharing and taking turns. Staff use consistent methods such as talking to children and discussing issues as they arise. However, the organisation of the nursery sometimes restricts the space available to children and can result in fractious and frustrated behaviour. Overall, spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered.

Children benefit from appropriate continuity between the home and the nursery as staff develop good relationships with parents. Staff ensure that parents have appropriate information about the nursery, including a prospectus and daily verbal information about children's welfare and progress. For children receiving nursery education, the partnership with parents and carers is satisfactory. Information about the curriculum is available in the nursery prospectus and parents' evenings are held regularly. Staff encourage parents to become involved in their children's education by asking them to bring in resources for special activities.

Organisation

The organisation is inadequate.

At the time of the inspection the provider was in breach of the conditions of registration. A baby unit was in operation which had not been registered. Ofsted had therefore not been able to carry out necessary checks and the breach risked invalidating the public liability insurance for the nursery, putting children at risk.

The organisation of the space within the nursery has some adverse impact on children's welfare and learning opportunities. The provider has not notified Ofsted of the commencement of the use of the first floor which is a breach in regulation.

Most documentation is in place and works appropriately in practice. However, records of children's attendance do not accurately show their times of arrival and departure. This is a breach in regulation and puts children at risk in the event of an emergency.

Appropriate recruitment and vetting procedures are in place to ensure that all staff working with children are suitable to do so. Suitable induction procedures ensure that new staff are familiar with policies and procedures and are therefore able to support children appropriately. An appraisal system is in place to support staff development but this is now overdue. Staff have appropriate qualifications and have regular opportunities to attend further training to develop their knowledge and understanding of childcare and education. The dedicated staff team show commitment to making positive improvements within the nursery. However, the management of the nursery is currently not meeting the National Standards. The self-evaluation carried out by the nursery does not appropriately reflect the weaknesses in the setting.

Leadership and management of the nursery education is satisfactory. Staff are enthusiastic and work well together. They ensure that appropriate planning and assessments are in place and that a suitable variety of activities are available to help children make progress across all six learning areas. All staff are involved in long-term and medium-term planning. However, the organisation of the nursery and use of space has some adverse impact on the education programme as it limits the availability of resources and space for children to explore them.

The nursery does not meet the needs of the range of children for whom it provides.

Improvements since the last inspection

At the last inspection the nursery was asked to extend the complaints procedure to include Ofsted's telephone number. This is now in place ensuring that parents can contact Ofsted if they wish.

The nursery was also asked to provide fresh drinking water for children at all times. A drinking station is now in place in the art room so that children can help themselves to water. However, drinks are not freely accessible in other rooms.

Complaints since the last inspection

Since the last inspection a concern was raised that the nursery opened late leaving children outside in the care of temporary staff. This concern relates to National Standard 1: Suitable Person and National Standard 2: Organisation. Ofsted asked the provider to conduct an investigation into these concerns and to report back. A written response was received detailing how the concerns had been addressed and that measures had been put in place to prevent a similar incident being repeated. Ofsted are taking no further action and the provider remained qualified for registration at the time the investigation was closed.

The provider is required to keep a record of complaints made by parents, which they can see on request. The complaint 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, the registered person **must** take the following actions:

- ensure that Ofsted are notified of any changes to the premises or their use
- devise an action plan detailing how the space in the nursery will be used to provide appropriate care for children
- ensure that the registration system shows children's hours of attendance.

These actions are set out in a *notice of action to improve* and must be completed by the date specified in the notice.

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):

- ensure that the use of space within the nursery provides a full range of activities for children to explore freely.

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