

# Stepping Stones Playgroup

Inspection report for early years provision

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	152868
<b>Inspection date</b>	31 January 2008
<b>Inspector</b>	Sue Boylan
<b>Setting Address</b>	Alpha Road, Surbiton, Surrey, KT5 8RS
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<b>Registered person</b>	The Trustees of Stepping Stones playgroup
<b>Type of inspection</b>	Integrated
<b>Type of care</b>	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 is committee run and opened in 2000. It operates from Surbiton Children's Centre Nursery. The premises consist of a main play room, entrance hall, toilets, and kitchen area. There is a fully enclosed garden available for outside play. A maximum of 24 children may attend the playgroup at any one time. It is open Monday, Tuesday, Thursday and Friday from 09:15 to 11:45 during term times only. The playgroup serves the local area.

There are currently 31 children aged from two years and six months to under four years on roll. Of these, 12 receive funding for early education. Children attend for a variety of sessions. The group supports children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and children with English as an additional language.

The playgroup employs seven members of staff to work with the children. Of these, five hold appropriate early years qualifications and one is working towards a qualification.

## THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

### Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Children benefit from playing in a clean and well maintained environment; where there is natural light and ventilation. Children are leading a healthy lifestyle with good opportunities to be outside in the fresh air. They access a well equipped garden where they, for example, dance to world music, run over the bridge, play instruments and use natural resources, such as logs and hanging saucepans in their role play.

Children are beginning to understand the importance of personal hygiene. They spend time washing their hands with liquid soap before eating and after going to the toilet, visual aids promote consistency. Children's health is mostly protected because there are good everyday routines, for instance, kitchen roll is used as a place mat for snack. However, children often have runny noses, this does not help prevent cross contamination. Most staff are first aid trained so children are treated quickly and effectively if they have an accident or minor injury. If children are taken ill during a session, they are taken care of appropriately until the parent/carer arrives.

Children enjoy the social interaction at snack time. The menu is healthy and nutritious and offers a daily selection of dried and fresh fruits and raw vegetables. Children help themselves to a drink from the water fountain. This promotes independence and prevents dehydration. They are learning the importance of a healthy diet and take delight in making fruit smoothies from milk and banana.

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

The provision is good.

Children play in a safe environment because suitable steps are taken regarding security. This means they cannot leave the premises unsupervised and visitors are unable to enter the building without staff's knowledge. The main play room is welcoming with children's art work and photographs of them at play, attractively displayed. This promotes a sense of belonging and contributes to children's wellbeing. Children are encouraged to be independent, for example, going to the toilet, however, their movement around the room is sometimes restricted because of the layout of the tables and activities. Children benefit from the range of resources and equipment which are in good condition and suitable for the ages attending.

Children's safety is protected because staff are vigilant in their supervision. A daily check is conducted of the building and outside space with an annual risk assessment carried out thoroughly. If children are taken on an outing staff make sure there is no potential risk to them before they go. There are good fire safety precautions and children are familiar with the emergency escape plan because they practise on a regular basis. The smoke alarms and automatic doors are checked weekly. Children are learning to keep safe, for instance they are reminded 'not to put a knife in your mouth, because you might hurt yourself' and they enjoy participating in the 'traffic club game'.

Children's welfare is safeguarded because staff have a good understanding of child protection. They all attend regular training and know who to contact if they have concerns a child is being abused or neglected. There is a clear written policy and the appropriate safeguarding guidance to refer to.

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

The provision is good.

Children arrive happily in the morning and separate well from their main carer. They receive cuddles and reassurance when upset, which contributes to their emotional wellbeing. Children show excitement and interest on seeing all the activities and resources laid out. They are keen to get involved and begin their play, for example, making a model out of junk and using the wooden train set. Staff have a good understanding of the Birth to three matters framework and have implemented this very well into the planning. They use observations of children's development to plan for individual needs.

Young children gain confidence as they become competent in their skills. They learn from each other and have started to form special friendships. Children's self-esteem is promoted when they stand up in front of the group, for example, to talk about their finished 'dog feeding bowl'. All children have a love of books, they listen intently to a favourite story, for instance, 'The Hungry Caterpillar'. Children have good concentration levels and participate with enthusiasm when spreading their toast with jam or marmite, cutting the bread and eating it. They cooperate in small groups as they take turns to tell 'the bear' the name of the shape and show him how to make a picture of a boat or rocket.

### **Nursery Education**

The quality of teaching and learning is good. An outstanding feature of the provision is the ability of staff to make excellent detailed observations on the children. This means they are able to involve the plans based on individual needs and next steps. Staff have a good understanding of the Foundation Stage and organise activities that offer variety and challenge. There are focus activities which are usually linked into the half termly theme, for example, 'the five senses'. Children are making good progress towards the early learning goals. However, sometimes their enjoyment of a resource is hindered, for example, they tear up newspapers available in the doll's hospital for them to read, this makes it look untidy so other children decide not to play in there.

Children's knowledge and understanding of the world is developing well. They enjoy planting bulbs in the garden and looking at the changes they see through a magnifying glass. They are becoming skilled at using the computer and other programmable equipment such as a CD player. Children benefit from trips out, for instance, going to a local allotment to dig and posting a letter they have written to home. Children are encouraged to be independent, for example, hanging up their aprons, putting on coats and helping to serve out drinks at snack time.

Children involve themselves in sensory activities, for instance, playing with ice, jelly, clay and corn flour. They join in enthusiastically when singing a favourite song, such as 'Twinkle, Twinkle Chocolate Bar' and 'Wind the Bobbin Up', joining in with the actions. There are good opportunities to make marks as pencils and paper are available in different areas of the room, children can make lists and paint freely. However, they are limited in resources to make and design their own ideas. Children are beginning to be confident with number, some are able to recognise numerals and others are able to calculate what comes next. They enjoy exploring volume, for example, pouring water and filling up small cups, using spoons. Children love to communicate and staff encourage them to talk about their home life, asking challenging questions when appropriate.

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

The provision is good.

Children's awareness of diversity is promoted through the provision of positive images and planned activities, such as Chinese New Year. Staff work well with children who have English as an additional language. For example, they use Makaton signs to reinforce words, such as 'thank you', and make sure the children are in a small group at the front for a story. There are good opportunities for children to experience the local community. They love to go to the shops to buy fruit and visit the engine at the fire station. All children are included in the day-to-day routine of the playgroup. Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered.

There is good partnership with parents. Children benefit because there is effective communication through verbal daily feedback. Parents are invited to consultation meetings when they discuss their child's progress with the key worker. Parents are encouraged to be involved with their child's learning and are invited, for example, to come and read a story and help with an outing. There are various fund raising events and coffee mornings for parents to be involved in. They are given appropriate information about the Foundation Stage and are aware they have access to their child's individual records. A form relating to their child's individual needs is completed by parents so staff can be informed of any specific likes and dislikes. This contributes to children's wellbeing and consistency in care.

Children behave well and understand acceptable boundaries. They are cared for in a friendly environment and follow a structured, but flexible routine. Staff use positive strategies to manage children's behaviour, for instance, they ring a bell to get their attention and explain what is going to happen, for example, at tidy up time and when listening for the smoothie maker, 'when it is turned on you might find it is very noisy'. Children are learning social skills and sit patiently, waiting their turn to see the snail in the pot as it is passed around the circle. Children's self-esteem is fostered because staff praise at every opportunity, they encourage the children to 'give a clap to each other', as the junk models are shown to the group.

## **Organisation**

The organisation is good.

Children are cared for by an experienced, dedicated and caring staff team who work hard to ensure the success of the playgroup. There are effective procedures for appointing and vetting staff. The operational plan includes the policies and procedures so staff manage and organise the provision consistently. The required documentation is accurate so children's health, safety and wellbeing is maintained. Staff are very keen to attend external and internal courses, this means they keep up to date with changing childcare practice.

Leadership and management is good. There are three managers who work well together and have their own specific roles and responsibilities within the setting. An outstanding feature of the provision is the commitment to evaluate the teaching, learning and care offered to the children. Staff take every opportunity to discuss and record improvement to the service, they have started to observe each other and listen to the feedback. Staff make good use of outside support from the local authority advisory team. The managers lead by example and are able to confidently delegate tasks to other staff members.

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

## **Improvements since the last inspection**

At the last Children Act inspection the provider agreed to ensure the equal opportunities policy includes procedures to challenge discriminatory behaviour. The policy was reviewed and amended.

At the last Nursery Education inspection there were no significant weaknesses. However the provider was asked to review snack time to promote children's independence and include the next steps in learning for children's assessments. Children are pouring their own drinks, choosing their snack and children's individual progress charts link into their next steps.

## **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):

- ensure children begin to learn the importance of keeping their nose clean
- improve the layout of the play room so children can move around easily.

#### **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 opportunities for children to make and design their own ideas.

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)