

# Stepping Stones Nursery and Afterschool and Holiday Club

Inspection report for early years provision

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| <b>Unique Reference Number</b> | 127641  |
| <b>Inspection date</b>         | 23 April 2008   |
| <b>Inspector</b>               | Susan Jennifer Scott  |
| <b>Setting Address</b>         | Lansdowne CP School, Gladstone Drive, Sittingbourne, Kent, ME10 3BH |
| <b>Telephone number</b>        | 01795 410499  |
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| <b>Registered person</b>       | The Trustees of Stepping Stones                                     |
| <b>Type of inspection</b>      | Integrated  |
| <b>Type of care</b>            | 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](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 Nursery, After School and Holiday Club opened in 1995. The holiday club is active but the After School Club is not currently operational. The nursery and holiday club are managed by a committee and operates from a mobile classroom in the grounds of a primary school in Sittingbourne.

A maximum of 40 children may attend the group at any one time. The nursery is open each weekday, term time only from 08:45 to 15:15. All children share access to a secure enclosed outdoor play area. There are currently 73 children aged from two to under eight years on roll. Of these 43 receive funding for early education. Children come from the local area. The group currently supports a number of children with learning difficulties and disabilities.

The setting employs 12 members of staff. Of these, 11 hold appropriate early years qualifications. The group receives support from the local authority.

## **THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION**

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

The provision is outstanding.

Children benefit from an excellent choice of healthy foods and drink at snack times when they enjoy an extensive variety of vegetables, fruits, cereals and breads. They thrive on the social opportunities offered to them as they sit in groups and discuss foods and family events. Staff provide knives and bowls for snacks to encourage children to cut food up. This reinforces children's healthy habits and promotes their independence successfully. Staff ensure all food and drink complies with parental instructions and children's preferences, enabling them to have confidence in the choices offered.

Children benefit from free access to daily opportunities for fresh air and vigorous play to maintain their health. Older children show their awareness of space as they skilfully manoeuvre around objects and one another. They develop greater control over their movements as they practise running and standing on one leg during the session in the school hall. Outside children energetically pedal bikes and show good co-ordination when steering or pushing the play vehicles.

Children play in a clean and tidy environment where there are frequent routines to ensure toys, resources and equipment are clean and hygienic. Children benefit from clear instructions and activities that enable them to learn the importance of good hygiene and healthy living. For example, staff enable children attending the nursery are able to wash their cups and plates after their snack. As a result children's understanding of hygiene is good. The children are protected from infection by the clear record keeping and documentation procedures, which record all injuries and incidents. Parents are informed of all accidents and sign to acknowledge these in the record book. Several staff hold current first aid certificates and are able to administer first aid in the event of an accident. This ensures children's welfare in the event of an accident when parents or emergency contacts are not available.

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

The provision is good.

Children arrive happily as they are greeted at the door by welcoming, friendly staff and they settle very well. They enjoy their play in a warm and welcoming environment with varied and attractive displays of their work showing that staff value children's contributions. Children are unable to leave the premises without a suitable adult as security of the premises is good. However, the users of the service are not made aware that there is a camera showing the entrance for security purposes.

Children benefit from playing in a stimulating, well organised environment. This allows them to move around and play safely. They safely access a good range of resources and equipment which are carefully selected to ensure they are suitable for the ages and interests of the children. They enjoy using the resources and equipment and are well occupied because staff organise the activities effectively. For instance, there are designated areas for quiet craft activities as well as other areas where children can play vigorously, such as the secure outside area. There are sufficient numbers of child sized chairs and tables to allow all children to play in flexible groups.

Children access their play in a safe secure environment. Regular risk assessments, indoors and outdoors, ensure their safety. Staff are effectively deployed to ensure the safety of the children and are vigilant at all times, they supervise the children effectively both indoors and outside as well as when they use other areas of the school. Staff promote children's awareness of how to move around safely, encouraging them not to run and to tidy away toys. Children and staff are aware of the procedures to follow in the event of a fire because these are regularly practised.

Staff have a very good understanding of the signs and symptoms of abuse and know what action to take if they have concerns about a child in their care as they work closely with various professional agencies. They have excellent support from the nominated person who has considerable expertise in this area of work.

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

The provision is good.

All children enjoy a good range of activities that are stimulating and well balanced for all ages and include quiet and active experiences. Both the children attending the holiday club and the nursery learn from a varied range of planned activities and good quality, stimulating resources provide balance and challenge. The children attending the nursery develop their independence exceptionally well, particularly since they are able to help themselves to well organised resources and equipment.

Children enjoy their experiences at the holiday club. They can participate in a variety of activities and are able to choose their preferred activities and their level of involvement in group games. This encourages their confidence to try new activities. Younger children concentrate well when making craft items such as the Saint George flags. They particularly enjoy playing games in small and larger groups, for example, when they use the school hall for physical activities like the traffic light game. They are able to relax and chat to friends whilst eating and experience a strong sense of community when they enjoy eating their breakfast cereal in a small group.

Children under three years benefit from a child centred approach to their learning and development; staff

record their ongoing progress using a clear system designed for children covered by the Birth to three framework. There are good play plans in place that staff construct using their observations of children which allow them to address any concerns.

### **Nursery Education.**

The quality of teaching and learning is good. Children are encouraged to progress as they are supported by experienced staff who are clearly focussed on their individual abilities, interests and needs. Staff have a secure knowledge of the Foundation Stage and use clear written plans which are sufficiently detailed to cover all areas of learning. These effectively build children's individual skills within the programme of activities; however, there is not a methodical system to note and share all children's next steps. This occasionally results in learning opportunities that are not recognised during child initiated play as staff are not always fully aware of these. Most staff are experienced practitioners so that children receive good stimulation and are fully engaged in the activities offered. For example, when they are read a story by staff who ask good questions and encourage thoughtful responses. Staff measure the progress that children make reaching their next steps which are identified on observations and assessments. These are used to provide a termly report which summarises their experience and development.

Children are actively involved in play and activities throughout the sessions. They have a high level of independence, freely selecting equipment for themselves and they enjoy the responsibility of washing their own plates and cups at meal times. Children enjoy stories and are encouraged to write their names on work which many do skilfully, although there are some inconsistent approaches to encouraging their writing. They readily select books to share with each other or with staff and enjoy the opportunity to acquire information from these and respond to well known stories with enthusiasm. They confidently participate in pretend play and extend their communication skills by discussing ideas and roles. For instance, they pretend to be using a train and the station when outside. Children regularly use colour and texture in craft activities, making flags for Saint Georges day.

Children are developing a secure understanding of number and staff promote good mathematical language using terms such as tall and many. Many of children can count and select a given number of items as well as showing a clear awareness of size, colour and shape during the practical activities. Opportunities to develop skills in calculating and comparing numbers are not consistently reinforced, such as the routines when the number of children in the group is counted. Children are able to freely explore everyday items and learn through practical play with items such as sand, rice, pasta and water. They acquire knowledge of their environment through interesting activities such as using convex and concave mirrors.

Children concentrate on activities that require dexterity such as using computers, pencils and cutlery without fear of failure. The staff encourage and praise children so that they are confident to try things for themselves and continue to develop their skills. For example, children practise their dressing skills when preparing for physical play sessions in the hall.

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

The provision is good.

All children are fully included in the activities and staff provide excellent levels of support. Staff familiarise themselves with children's individual needs and acknowledge varied cultures, providing recognition for individual children. Staff ensure they are able to understand children's basic requests if they find communication in English difficult and this effectively encourages children to feel secure and confident, knowing that their needs will be understood. Children learn to respect others and staff provide sensitive support to ensure all understand the importance of accepting differences.

Children who have disabilities or learning difficulties are welcomed in the setting and staff have developed supportive links with a variety of organisations to ensure they can provide appropriate support. There is access to the building for those with disabilities and a variety of training and equipment has been obtained to support individual children. Children are very well behaved. They have good, trusting relationships with staff who skilfully use positive behaviour management strategies. For example, children help tidy up and are praised for sharing during activities which reinforces their understanding of desirable behaviour. The secure and relaxed atmosphere enables children to develop positive ideas about themselves and others and to build their skills. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered.

Partnership with parents is good. Children benefit from a very positive partnership as staff frequently share a variety of information verbally and parents all have access to contact books; they also receive a written report each term detailing their child's progress in all areas of the curriculum. Parents have access to clear written information about the provision and good support from staff who frequently liaise with them. Very good initial information is carefully

used by staff to enable them to accommodate each child's needs. Confidentiality is respected and the staff ensure they use consent forms when using information. However, parents are not always made aware of the use of the security cameras which monitor the entrance of people into the nursery for security purposes.

## **Organisation**

The organisation is good.

Children benefit from good organisation of the provision. Induction training, policies and procedures are well thought through and effective in safeguarding children's welfare and effectively promoting their health and safety. The documentation is clear, helpful to staff and users of the service, and well organised. Children's welfare and individual needs are well met by the group who have good records in place to support their understanding of each child. All information is kept confidentially respecting the child's privacy. The setting meets the needs of the range of children for whom it provides.

Leadership and management are good. The nominated person, committee, supervisor and staff are fully aware of their roles and responsibilities providing good support for all the children. A good range of training is attended by all staff and a system of appraisals is used to meet professional development needs. Effective measures are in place to support the provision in identifying potential improvements. For example, questionnaires are used to evaluate customer satisfaction and the supervisor monitors the provision.

## **Improvements since the last inspection**

At the previous care inspection the setting had two recommendations which they have addressed. Children now benefit from the updated policy for lost children which is shared with parents and staff. They also have access to varied images of diversity which promote equality of opportunity; for example, there are dressing up clothes reflecting various cultures.

At the previous nursery education inspection the setting had four key issues to address. Since then, the group have made good progress in improving systems to develop the new staff's knowledge of the stepping stones and the early learning goals. All staff record children's progress and use the information to plan for what children need to learn next.

The supervisor monitors the activity plans which are also discussed at weekly staff meetings to ensure that the learning intention of each activity can be clearly understood by all the staff. However, this process is the subject of a new recommendation which aims to clarify this process so that staff can swiftly identify individual learning opportunities and support swift progress. Staff do give priority to the teaching of letter sounds, particularly during the risers sessions and sometimes when supporting activities and routines involving individual children.

## **Complaints since the last inspection**

There have been no complaints made to Ofsted since the last inspection that required the provider 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 can be seen 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):

- inform parents and users of the use of cameras for security

#### 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):

- devise a system for sharing all children's next steps with staff so that they can experience prompt opportunities to progress in their development and consolidate 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](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)