

Small Steps Day Care

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique reference number	EY367692
Inspection date	09/09/2008
Inspector	Patricia Mary Champion

Setting address	Little Wycke Farm, Blind Lane, Mundon, MALDON, Essex, CM9 6PS
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Type of setting	Childcare on non-domestic premises

Introduction

This inspection was carried out by Ofsted under Sections 49 and 50 of the Childcare Act 2006 on the quality and standards of the registered early years provision. 'Early years provision' refers to provision regulated by Ofsted for children from birth to 31 August following their fifth birthday (the early years age group). The registered person must ensure that this provision complies with the statutory framework for children's learning, development and welfare, known as the *Early Years Foundation Stage*.

The report includes information on any complaints about the childcare provision which Ofsted has received since the last inspection or registration whichever is the later, which require Ofsted or the provider to take action in Annex C.

The provider must provide a copy of this report to all parents with children at the setting where reasonably practicable. The provider must provide a copy of the report to any other person who asks for one, but may charge a fee for this service (The Childcare (Inspection) Regulations 2008 regulations 9 and 10).

The setting also makes provision for children older than the early years age group which is registered on the voluntary and/or compulsory part(s) of the Childcare Register. This report does not include an evaluation of that provision, but a comment about compliance with the requirements of the Childcare Register is included in Annex B.

Description of the setting

Small Steps Day Care is run by Small Steps Day Care Limited. It opened in 2007 and operates from a self-contained building in a rural location in Mundon, Essex. All children share access to a secure, enclosed, outdoor play area. A ramp fitted to the door at the rear of the premises means that the premises are easily accessible. A maximum of 12 children may attend the nursery at any one time. The day care opens five days a week during school term times. Operating times are from 08:00 until 16:00.

There are currently 16 children aged from two to five years on roll. Of these, six children receive funding for early education. Children attend for a variety of sessions or full day care. The setting serves the local community and surrounding villages. The day care supports a small number of children who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities or who have English as an additional language.

The day care also offers care to children aged five to eight years. This provision is registered by Ofsted on the compulsory and voluntary childcare register.

The setting employs three staff, of whom two of the staff, including the manager, hold appropriate early years qualifications. There is one member of staff currently working towards a recognised early years qualification. The setting receives support from the local authority.

Overall effectiveness of the early years provision

Children are provided with good quality care and make very positive progress in their learning in an interesting, safe and stimulating play environment. The staff team are skilled in their observations and assessment and recognise the uniqueness of each child. They effectively gather information from parents and other professionals from the outset so that they are totally aware of needs and interests and every child can participate fully, thrive and achieve well. The manager and staff constantly strive to improve the experiences of the children. Written policies and procedures have recently been reviewed and the systems to monitor staff performance and evaluate the provision are currently being developed.

What steps need to be taken to improve provision further?

To further improve the early years provision the registered person should:

- encourage further a culture of reflective practice, self-evaluation and informed discussion to identify the setting's strengths and priorities for development that will improve the quality of provision for all children
- develop the sickness policy so that it clearly shows the procedures if a child becomes ill whilst in the provider's care.

To fully meet the specific requirements of the EYFS, the registered person must:

- update the written complaints policy so that it includes the requirement that complainants are notified of the outcome of an investigation within 28 days.

08/10/2008

The leadership and management of the early years provision

The manager is committed to the promotion of high quality childcare and implements action plans to constantly build upon the work of the day care for the benefit of the children and their parents. Since registration regular reviews of the provision have resulted in improvements to the outdoor area, more training courses are accessed and the routines adapted to meet children's varying concentration levels. Staff meetings, evaluation of activities and questionnaires ensure that all staff and parents can comment on the provision. The staff team are enthusiastic and very receptive to suggestions made by specialist teachers and development workers from the local authority. A staff appraisal system has just started. Although the manager is aware of the strengths of the day care and areas for further improvement, the current system does not yet reflect rigorous monitoring and a searching analysis of what the day care does well.

Parents are provided with good quality information through newsletters, display boards and reports detailing their children's progress and achievements. Successful fundraising takes place and parents are invited to become involved in their child's learning through the library book sharing scheme. Every opportunity is taken to encourage parents to share information about their child's learning at home. Without exception, the parents are thrilled and delighted with how well their children have settled into the day care and are eager to read the daily diaries to find out what their children have been doing. Parents compliment the staff team on the great care and attention they provide and how the children are treated as individuals.

Children are safeguarded effectively because they are cared for by adults who have been checked through robust recruitment procedures. There is a clear induction process and an impressive commitment shown by staff towards their ongoing professional development through further training. Children are protected because records are accurately maintained and risk assessment is thorough. The day care has a comprehensive range of written policies to ensure that staff efficiently deal with their day-to-day responsibilities. Staff have attended courses relating to child protection and have clear procedures in place for liaising with the appropriate agencies when they have concerns about a child's wellbeing. The good health of children is promoted and information about common childhood illnesses and exclusion periods is displayed. However, the complaints and sickness policies do not include all of the required details.

The quality and standards of the early years provision

Children are making good progress towards the early learning goals in relation to their starting points. Assessment is comprehensive and key persons monitor

children's forward steps in detail. The staff use a variety of methods to observe children and review the planning each week to match individual children's views and needs. Observations, photographic evidence and children's development files are used well to share information with parents and continually monitor children's progress. A strong system is in place to support children with learning difficulties and disabilities or those who speak English as an additional language. Working in partnership with other professionals staff ensure that children have access to suitable equipment to assist their mobility and developmental needs. Staff value linguistic diversity and provide labels and books in a child's home language. Links have been formed with local schools so that there is a smooth transition when children enter the next stage in their education.

The staff have a good understanding of the Early Years Foundation Stage and how young children learn. They make sure that learning experiences are challenging and interesting. For much of the session children flow freely between indoor and outdoor play and take decisions about their learning. There is a strong focus on activities that promote investigation, exploration and experimentation. Children offer their own ideas and staff imaginatively respond with further suggestions. For example, children carry tools from the workbench into other activities and staff extend children's learning when they become involved in the role play regarding the emergency services or going on a journey. The staff's interaction with the children is warm, caring and always positive. As many of the children are not yet confident communicators, staff spend their time directly playing with the children and provide relaxed opportunities for spoken language by chatting about activities, asking questions, waiting for responses and allowing children time to initiate conversations.

Children benefit from an extremely bright, welcoming and well-organised play environment. It affords them ample space to explore the play materials in hygienic and safe conditions, as well as promoting a sense of security and wellbeing. Children develop an understanding of dangers and how to stay safe, for example, when they practise fire drills. They are encouraged to make healthy choices and adopt good hygiene practices without being reminded. There are positive strategies that encourage children to observe social skills, behave well and respect each other's similarities and differences. Children are very proud of their achievements and are excited about the awards they receive after entering artwork into the village flower show. Staff ensure that children develop effective problem solving, numeracy, literacy and technology skills to enhance their future economic wellbeing.

Annex A: record of inspection judgements

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

Overall effectiveness

How effective is the provision in meeting the needs of children in the Early Years Foundation Stage?	Good
How well does the provision promote inclusive practice?	Good
The capacity of the provision to maintain continuous improvement.	Good

Leadership and management

How effectively is provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage led and managed?	Good
How effective is the setting's self-evaluation, including the steps taken to promote improvement?	Satisfactory
How well does the setting work in partnership with parents and others?	Good
How well are children safeguarded?	Good

Quality and standards

How effectively are children in the Early Years Foundation Stage helped to learn and develop?	Good
How effectively is the welfare of children in the Early Years Foundation Stage promoted?	Good
How well are children helped to stay safe?	Good
How well are children helped to be healthy?	Good
How well are children helped to enjoy and achieve?	Good
How well are children helped to make a positive contribution?	Good
How well are children helped develop skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being?	Good

Any complaints about the inspection or report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk

Annex B: the Childcare Register

The provider confirms that the requirements of the compulsory part of the Childcare Register are:	Met
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The provider confirms that the requirements of the voluntary part of the Childcare Register are:	Met
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Annex C: complaint/s made to Ofsted

This section of the report includes details of any complaint/s made to Ofsted when:

- we took action for the provider to meet the requirements of the Early Years Register; or
- we asked the provider to take action in order to meet the requirements of the Early Years Register; or
- the provider had already taken any necessary action to meet the requirements of the Early Years Register.

We will not report on any complaint where the provider met the requirements of the Early Years Register or did not require any action by Ofsted or the registered provider.

Detail of the complaint/s

There have been no complaints made to Ofsted since registration.

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.