



Little Steps at St Georges School

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number EY297718

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Inspector Margaret Coyne

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Type of inspection Childcare

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

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.

WHAT SORT OF SETTING IS IT?

Little Steps Nursery opened in 2005 and operates from a converted building shared with St Georges School. The nursery have access to 3 rooms and share access to a secure, enclosed outside area. The nursery is situated in Dunstable, Bedfordshire. A maximum of 30 children may attend the nursery at any one time. The nursery is open each weekday from 08:00 to 18:30 for 51 weeks of the year.

There are currently 42 children aged from 2 years to under 5 years on roll. Children come from a wide catchment area. The nursery supports children with special educational needs and those who speak English as an additional language.

The nursery employs 6 staff. All of the staff, including the manager hold appropriate early years qualifications. The nursery receive support from an early years teacher and the local authority.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Children learn the importance of good personal hygiene through well-planned daily routines. Children of all ages have developed a good awareness of how and why we wash our hands and when it is important to do so. For example, before meals and snacks and after messy activities. Positive role modelling and discussions by staff help children learn these skills. The children are protected from infection through well managed hygiene routines which are practised by the nursery. For example, the nappy changing routines and disposal, the sick child policy and the good hygiene rules when children handle the pets. Overall the high standard of cleanliness throughout the nursery contributes to the children's good health. Staff are well informed about children's health issues and all relevant records and documents are in place. However, parents signatures are not obtained on medication records. A high percentage of the staff hold first aid certificates and are confident they can administer first aid to the children. Younger children are able to rest or sleep in line with their individual needs and parents wishes. Comfy rest areas are available for any child who wishes to relax or sleep. This benefits all children as individual sleep patterns are observed.

Children enjoy an extensive and stimulating range of equipment to promote a healthy life and their physical development. The garden has been very well planned to incorporate different activities which encourage the children to use their bodies to keep fit and healthy. Children move with confidence and skill as they ride scooters, cars and bikes. They negotiate space both indoors and outdoors using their bodies to create desired movements. They thoroughly enjoy the imaginative play houses as they become Bob the builder and build walls and towers with large blocks. Children are able to dig and pour in the sand tray exploring how sand feels and can be manipulated. Children's dexterity and hand and eye coordination is developed as they enjoy playing with small world figures, push small cars, building traffic jams and roads. They cut, glue and paint using a variety of tools. Staff use The 'Birth to three matters' guidance well to provide a good range of physical play experiences for younger children. They enjoy the physical play activities which helps build their confidence and physical development. Staff are on hand to support the children during their play.

Children benefit from a healthy diet. The nursery takes part in the 'five a day' healthy eating campaign. Children are provided with varied, nutritious meals in accordance to their needs and any allergies or dietary requirements are complied with. The food provided is ample for the children and there is seconds for those who want it. The meals are well presented and children sit together learning table manners and social skills. Meals are a happy, chatty time for children and staff. Parents have the choice of providing meals for their child if they wish. Children are introduced to new tastes

and experiences through meals and cooking activities. They try exotic fruits and foods from different cultures. At snack time children pass around a bowl of mixed fruit and discuss the different tastes and textures. Independence is encouraged at all times and children confidently help themselves to food and pour their own drinks. Staff involve children in discussions about why milk is good for you and children join in with suggestions that it is good for your teeth, skin, bones and arms!

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

Children's safety is of prime concern to the organisation of the nursery. Staff recognise hazards and take positive steps to minimise these. Thorough risk assessments are carried out and staff share in the responsibility for keeping the children safe and encouraging them to take some responsibility for their own safety. The setting is well planned for children to move freely and safely around activities and areas. Well implemented safety and security precautions are in place to promote and safeguard the children's welfare. Staff help children gain an awareness of keeping themselves safe in the nursery as they explain and practise simple procedures such as emergency evacuation and the boundaries necessary for children to keep themselves safe such as not running inside, throwing sand or accessing the fire escape. Staff effectively explain safety to the children in a simple but positive manner aimed at their level of understanding. Children are able to take risks within a safe environment and enjoy being able to play both indoors and outdoors. Children are given an insight into keeping safe on the roads as they join in with activities using the road safety play set and when out on visits in the local area.

Children use a wide range of safe, good quality and developmentally appropriate toys, furniture and equipment. These are well organised throughout the nursery in child height stages to encourage children to become independent and gain safe access to their resources. Children play an active role in their own safety by helping to tidy toys away and notifying an adult if something is broken. Toys and activities are well presented to the children to encourage them to participate and develop their respect for the equipment and resources.

Children's welfare is safeguarded and promoted through current policies and procedures for the protection of children. Practitioners are knowledgeable about child protection and all procedures are in place. Staff are encouraged to extend and update their understanding by attending additional training. Their good practice ensures any concerns are dealt with in a sensitive manner. Through the current policies, parents are aware of the nursery's responsibility to protect the children in their care.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

Children are happy, contented and secure throughout the nursery. They confidently access the stimulating and challenging range of activities and are forming secure

relationships with the staff and other children. Staff have a sound awareness of the 'Birth to three matters' framework and this has a positive effect on the younger children's achievements. Staff plan activities in line with this framework and have gained an effective knowledge about what children can learn. The foundation stage is used in conjunction with the adjoining reception class where the groups of children get together for assemblies.

Children of all ages and abilities use a range of creative materials such as paint, sticking, collages, playdough, and other messy activities. Children learn through their play experiences and are directly involved and interested in their play. Older children learn about responsibilities and are allowed to make errors, decisions and choices as they select activities and share their play with others. Children exhibit high levels of confidence as they play at their chosen activity and this has been achieved by the consistent support and direction of the staff. Staff help children resolve their differences when any conflicts arise. They are encouraged to talk about it and find their own solutions. This provides children with tools to become aware of others and negotiate differences.

Children are receptive to the constant praise and encouragement that is provided by staff. This has a clear impact on their self-esteem and encourages them to try new tasks and participate in activities. Children show great interest in simple science as they discover how water freezes and ice cubes melt. Older children confidently describe the process and discover how things change. Children are learning to communicate their needs, take part in imaginative play and retell personal events. All areas of children's learning is incorporated through play and some structured activities. They use numbers to count objects and language to express themselves. Staff have created two outdoor imaginative areas one as a builders work shop and one as a monsters house. Children have access to paper and pencils to extend their mark making as they take orders for materials and draw plans for buildings.

Children develop a concept of counting, sorting, shape, colour and problem solving through the well planned and managed activities on offer. They are beginning to recognise the days of the week and numbers on the daily weather chart and enjoy singing number songs and rhymes. At present they are practising for their Christmas show as they learn lines to spell out the word Father Christmas. For example A is for his apple cheeks, E is for his eyes that twinkle. Children respond well to new experiences as they join in the Christmas festivals and other themed work such as learning about opposites. For example, day and night, big and small.

Adults are adept at finding a positive action a child has done and use praise and encouragement with rewards such as house points which children relate to and are very proud of. An excellent balance has been created between adult-directed and child-initiated play. Children are given opportunity to learn through experimentation and self-exploration. During these times children learn the tools to cope when things go wrong and do not become frustrated or despondent. Children show kindness and caring for others. Older children tiptoe past sleeping children and become concerned when a child's favourite toy is lost behind a shed.

Attractive displays all around the nursery gives children added pride in their work and they happily recognise and point out their contribution to the group displays.

Staff throughout the nursery make the experiences enjoyable and meaningful for the children which in turn aids their concentration and confidence to participate. However large group times are often disrupted by children leaving to go home and they are unable to concentrate on the story being told. Staff know the children very well and can plan for each child's individual abilities using their starting profiles and taking into account what they will gain from an activity.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

Children have access to a meaningful range of resources and activities to promote a positive view of the wider world and increase their awareness of diversity. Children take part in a range of activities of both familiar and unfamiliar festivals and celebrations. For example, Christmas and Diwali. Staff have very positive attitudes and present themselves as sensitive role models which in turn helps children relate to others and gain a positive understanding of the needs of others. All children are valued and respected as individuals and all their needs are well documented and implemented. Children thrive in their environment where they are engaged and nurtured free from any type of stereotyping. Children are provided with sensitive learning opportunities so their understanding of diversity and the world is fostered.

Staff recognise that at some time all children will exhibit a 'special need'. This could be a developmental need or personal need. Not all needs are educational and staff are clearly committed to supporting each and every child in order to meet their needs. All suitable systems are in place to support a child with a special need.

Children have an excellent understanding of the boundaries within the nursery and respond to direction from adults in a positive fashion. They eagerly respond to the consistent approach followed by all adults. This impacts clearly on their security and confidence as they develop their understanding and know what is expected of them. Children develop high levels of self-esteem as they are able to resolve differences and gain a strong understanding between right and wrong. This also has the effect of building their managing skills and self reliance. Highly effective behaviour management defuses situations and distracts and engages children in worthwhile activities. Children share in the responsibility for their own behaviour as they learn to listen to others, share and wait turns. For example, children say 'excuse me' when waiting for a turn to speak. Children are awarded house points when they have behaved well or achieved something positive. Staff are excellent role models for the children, creating a calm, positive, fun and interesting environment in which they thrive. Children help at tidy up time and work cooperatively together tidying up areas they have played in. Staff have high expectations for all the children and are consistent in their behaviour management.

An positive partnership with parents contributes significantly to the children's sense of belonging, security and well-being. Parents play an active role in their child's care and a two way sharing of information is encouraged with the use of home link books. Parents are invited to regular open evenings and events. Staff are extremely approachable and friendly, making parents feel secure and at ease, confident with

the care provided for their child. Informative newsletters contain details of events and topics to aid parents when they extend activities at home. Parents are fully informed about their child's progress and achievements and their involvement impacts greatly on the children's good health, safety, care and learning.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

Children's care is greatly enhanced by the effective organisation and the positive leadership and management of the nursery. Close links to the adjoining school are very strong and an asset to the Nursery. This benefits the children when they are ready to move up to reception class as they have already become familiar with the school, children and staff through their linked activities.

The management team are responsible for all aspects of the nursery including staff supervision and employment, ratio's and deployment, operational plan, staff training and qualifications. Staff have a considerable knowledge of the National Standards which they are committed to applying throughout the nursery. High regard for the care of the children, their group sizes, adult support and well planned activities, contribute to children's well-being, enjoyment and achievements. The management team, including the deputy, work extremely well together and have built a positive, motivated, and dedicated staff team. The organisation of staff in the nursery includes a sensitive mix between young and mature staff and enables them to share experiences and enrich and promote the well being and experiences provided for the children.

The premises are very well organised. Indoor and outdoor space is effectively arranged to maximize the play opportunities for children. The outdoor area is shared with the main school with dedicated times and areas for the nursery. This is managed effectively with the school and contributes to the extensive, imaginative and safe environment the children enjoy.

The effective organisation of records and documents ensures children's welfare and enables parents to play an active role in their child's care. However, the nursery does not yet have a complaints log in place to record any complaints that may arise. All staff are committed to the continuous evaluation and improvement of their practice. They regularly monitor and improve the quality of their care and are working towards gaining their Quality Counts accreditation. Overall the needs of the children attending are met.

Improvements since the last inspection

Not applicable

Complaints since the last inspection

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

THE QUALITY AND STANDARDS OF THE CARE

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The quality and standards of the care are good. The registered person meets the National Standards for under 8s day care and childminding.

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 parents signatures are obtained for each entry on the medication record.
- enable children to develop their concentration skills during large group sessions
- introduce a system to record any complaints made against the group and the action taken by the registered person

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