



Stepping Stones Day Nursery

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	127965
Inspection date	13 January 2006
Inspector	Paula Durrant
Setting Address	38 Crib Street, Ware, Hertfordshire, SG12 9EZ
Telephone number	01920 469 698
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Registered person	Susan McCall
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 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 Day Nursery opened in 1992 and operates from ten rooms in a grade two listed building which has been converted. It is situated in a residential area in the centre of Ware. A maximum of 28 children may attend the nursery at any one time. The nursery is open each week day from 07:30 to 18:30 52 weeks of the year. All children share access to a secure enclosed outdoor play area.

There are currently 38 children aged from 3 months to under 5 years on roll. Of these

10 children receive funding for nursery education. Most children come from the local area, and others travel in from surrounding villages. The nursery has systems in place to support children with special educational needs and children for whom English is an additional language.

The nursery employs 9 staff, 8 of the staff including the manager hold an appropriate early years qualification.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Children enjoy good health and a healthy lifestyle because practitioners effectively adhere to clear, well structured health and safety procedures, which are consistently applied. For example, all staff wear protective clothing and gloves when changing nappies or supporting children with toileting needs. Staff frequently sterilise resources; cleanse changing mats and tables with bacterial spray after each use and clean toilets periodically throughout the day. This supports high levels of cleanliness within the nursery environment. Children have separate rest areas, with individual bedding; this prevents the spread of infection. Children learn the importance of good personal hygiene through well-planned daily routines. They know for example, that it is important to wash their hands prior to eating, after using the toilet and when returning from outside play. They understand the reason why they wash their hands as staff consistently introduce conversations about getting clean and germs. Children access tissues independently to wipe their noses and discard used tissues appropriately.

Children benefit from a nutritional healthy diet. The nursery provides them with a varied range of home cooked meals, cooked from raw ingredients. Children enjoy their meals emptying their plates quickly. Provision is available should children require further portions if they are still hungry. Younger children access drinks regularly while older children help themselves to water in accessible named water bottles throughout the day. Overall, they enjoy varied, well presented and nutritious meals and snacks. These comply with all special dietary requirements to ensure children remain healthy.

Children have daily access to the garden. Provision of warm clothes and additional footwear such as wellingtons means that children can go out to play regardless of the weather conditions. This means children receive regular access to fresh air, to exert their energy and to develop increased physical control as they climb, ride bicycles, dig in the sand and throw and catch balls. Although provision of equipment in the garden is suitable for younger children it does not enable sufficient challenge for children who are physically able and competent in their agility.

Staff use the 'Birth to three matters' guidance well to provide a good range of physical play experiences for babies and young children. All children are able to rest and be active according to their needs.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is satisfactory.

Children's safety and welfare are given due attention in this well-organised and vigilantly monitored setting. Practitioners help keep children safe in the nursery and on outings because they understand and comply with written health and safety procedures. All necessary precautionary safety measures are in place such as stairgates and socket covers. Risk assessment are undertaken frequently. Access to the premises is vigilantly monitored through the supervision and management of the entrance area. Visitors to the nursery are requested to provide identification and to record their presence on site in the visitors log book.

Children use a sufficient range of safe, good quality, developmentally appropriate resources which are well organised in child height furniture to encourage independent access. Staff skilfully explain safe practices, such as the need to pick up items dropped on the floor, so that other children do not fall or hurt themselves. Although children benefit in developing an awareness of fire safety through regular fire drills the nursery have yet to fully met all requirements made by the fire safety officer. Relocation of rooms, implementation of new smoke detectors and review of methods to raise the alarm are an active measure in working towards protecting children in the event of an emergency evacuation. Continued review of compliance to fire department regulations remain an ongoing area of development.

Staff protect children well. Strong recruitment and induction procedures ensure that adults are suitable to work with children. This includes experience, training and vetting checks. Children remain the primary focus of care in this well organised and managed setting. Staff are vigilant in their practice and are confident in their knowledge of child protection, reporting concerns appropriately to senior staff. Open relationships between home and nursery ensure that children's needs remain the single important factor. The child protection coordinator ensures that procedures are up to date and that staff understand their responsibilities.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

Children enjoy and make good progress in learning, leisure and personal development because practitioners are confident, enthusiastic and knowledgeable in their childcare practice. Staff effectively use the 'Birth to three matters' guidance to underpin the foundations of the educational programme for all children. Extended planning for older children, builds on the Foundation Stage Curriculum as a supplementary layer, which interlinks positively with children's progression and achievement. Children under 2-years-old are very articulate due to the positive interaction and staff engagement in conversations.

Nursery Education

The quality of teaching and learning is good. Children are engaged and motivated by a varied range of stimulating, practical activities related to their needs. They access

an extended range of good quality resources, which support their learning across the Foundation Stage. All children are keen to learn, self assured in their play and confident to try new experiences. They listen with considerable levels of concentration to stories and can recount favourites such as 'Dear Zoo and Peter Pan'. Many children use marks readily to represent their ideas and older children are becoming adept at writing their own names. Children are highly imaginative as they create their own role play, becoming customers in shops, at the post office and playing at parent and child. They are beginning to make sense of the world around them as they go on short trips around the town and celebrate cultural festivals throughout the year. Children create three dimensional models, collages and draw pictures many of which are displayed. They are inquisitive, fascinated by how things such as keyboards work and wonder at the changes they see in the leaves as they blow from the trees.

Children work very well together. For example, younger children learn about turn taking and sharing as they play with the older children who enjoy explaining the importance of being fair and kind. Children gain confidence in using numbers in their play and respond well to challenges to extend their mathematical vocabulary and skills in planned activities and some daily routines. Children gain some opportunities to develop their physical skills, such as through daily access to the garden and regular music and movement sessions. Opportunities for the more competent agile child are limited as planning does not currently focus sufficiently on providing physically challenges that stretch and progress children's large muscle movements.

Staff find out about children's skills, interests and needs and try to build on this information effectively to help children achieve their full potential. Planning has developed and includes time for both child and adult-led activities. A flexible approach to the day and a balance between energetic play and quiet spells allows children to learn at their own pace. Staff are perceptive to children's interests during self-initiated play and use questions successfully to encourage children's thinking and language skills. They use appropriate systems to observe, monitor and record children's achievements and to plan experiences that help children take the next step in their learning.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

Children from a variety of ethnic backgrounds and children with special needs are warmly welcomed in the nursery. Practitioners ensure that the resources positively represent the children who attend as well as individuals from the wider community. This helps children develop a positive attitude to others. Children are extremely well behaved, and very polite in response to the consistent expectations of caring practitioners. The manager ensures that a warm welcoming and homely environment is provided, prioritising the welfare of the children in attendance. Children take turns and show concern for others. This positive approach fosters children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

Practitioners are conscientious and welcoming to parental input. There is a wealth of

information which is easily accessible which includes general care and educational literature. Parents value the openness and honesty of staff. This supports the appropriate sharing of information in sensitive situations. Parents are highly complimentary about the level of service provided. Staff encourage parents to actively contribute towards individual assessment records. Therefore, children benefit from a two way sharing of information between parents and practitioners to enhance their learning. This underpins their progress in the nursery and consequently their ability to fully contribute to the provision. The nursery effectively communicates and fully shares literature and information about the educational provision and therefore the partnership with parents of children who receive nursery education is good.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

The leadership and management of the nursery education is good. A strong management team, sound and detailed documentation and a committed and dedicated staff team ensure that children benefit and enjoy their time at this provision. A majority of the staff are qualified and those that do not hold a childcare qualification actively access short courses to ensure their skills remain in line with current practices. All staff demonstrate a real affinity with children. They respect children feelings, value their comments and overall enjoy their company. Planning and assessment systems are superb, appropriately detailed and ensure a clear focus to secure and progress children's learning. Overall, the needs of all children are met.

Improvements since the last inspection

At the last Children Act inspection the nursery were required to develop an action plan outlining how staff training requirements will be met, ensuring staff records are kept up to date. Most staff now hold a childcare qualification and training development records are an addition to personnel files. They were also required to meet any recommendations made by the fire safety officer. Some improvements have been undertaken, such as the instalment of smoke detectors with emergency lighting. They were required to ensure good hygiene practice is in place regarding children's hand washing and that prior written consent is obtained before administering medication. Children's health is maintained as staff consistently implement their health and safety procedures supporting children to wash hands at appropriate times in line with the daily routine. All consents and records are in place for administration of medication and accidental injury in line with registration requirements. Lastly, they were required to review their written procedures for a lost child, Equal Opportunities, Behaviour Management and Child Protection. Policies have been revised.

At the last education inspection the nursery were required to review staff training needs to ensure all staff receive appropriate training in the Foundation Stage. Staff have a strong understanding of the educational curriculum and of how children learn. They were also required to improve the activities and experiences for older and more able child across the six areas of learning. Assessment systems have been reviewed and give a clear focus of how children are progressing this in turn is used to plan

future activities and events promoting a cohesive planning cycle. They were also required to organise activities so that children can make choices and operate independently. Children benefit from a balance of adult led and child initiated activities. They also have regular opportunities to promote their independence such as pouring drinks at meals times.

Complaints since the last inspection

There have been no complaints made to Ofsted since the last inspection.

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.

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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):

- meet any recommendations made by the fire officer

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):

- give greater emphasis towards the effective use of the garden as a stimulating and challenging learning environment.

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the leaflet *Building better childcare: Compliments and concerns about inspectors' judgements* which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk