



Stepping Stones Pre-School

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	EY282708
Inspection date	30 November 2005
Inspector	Jan Leo
Setting Address	North Hinksey C of E School, North Hinksey Lane, Oxford, Oxfordshire, OX2 0LZ
Telephone number	01865 794287
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Registered person	Stepping Stones Pre-School
Type of inspection	Integrated
Type of care	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.

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 Pre-School originally opened in 1972 and it registered at its present setting in 2004. It is a committee run group which operates from a modular building in the grounds of North Hinksey Church of England School, Oxford. The children join with the school's reception class at certain times of the day.

The Pre-School sessions are from 09.00 until 11.30, and 12.30 until 15.00, with optional extended sessions covering the lunch time period. Some children attend full

time. From January 2006, an after school session will operate from 15.00 until 17.00, Monday to Friday, term time only. A play scheme operates during some school holidays from 07.30 until 18.00.

There are currently 33 children on the pre-school roll of whom 13 are in receipt of early education funding. The provision supports 4 children who have English as a second language, and they offer support to children with special needs.

Six staff work with the children on a full or part-time basis. Four have a relevant early years qualification to level two or above, and one is working towards a nationally recognised qualification. The group receives support from the local authority.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is satisfactory.

Children have a fair understanding of good practice regarding health and hygiene because they play within a clean environment and sometimes learn to avoid the spread of germs. Staff keep eating areas hygienically clean, and supervise to ensure children wash their hands after using the toilet. Staff can be inconsistent in their expectations, for example, all children clean their hands before lunch, but not when breaking for a snack during the middle of a session. In addition, children do not routinely get a reason why they should not put resources in their mouths, in order to develop their understanding of good practice. Children have free access to drinking water and choose between milk or water for snack. They eat a variety of foods at break time, which may include fruit and biscuits to give children choices. Those who stay to lunch bring their own food and staff refrigerate this appropriately to keep it fresh. Staff build strong relationships with all children to help them feel emotionally secure within the setting. Children have access to outside play when weather allows, and some enjoy running up and down the slope, balancing on stilts and narrow beams, or rocking on a seesaw while they benefit from fresh air.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

Children are safe because the staff assess and address hazards effectively and supervise diligently to safeguard children from harm. For example, they have a comprehensive health and safety policy covering all aspects of the provision, and review risk assessments regularly to ensure safety precautions remain effective. Children learn to avoid falls by keeping the floor relatively clutter free and sweeping up sand, but the floor around the water tray can occasionally be left wet. Staff organise the room well to provide a good overview of activities, resulting in close supervision of children using scissors and woodworking tools. Children move around the room safely, avoiding collisions, because there is ample space between the activities and staff encourage them not to run indoors. Children learn to evacuate the premises in emergencies because they practice fire drills regularly, both with and

without the main school. Staff monitor the practices carefully to ensure they include all staff and children who attend across the week. Staff have a good understanding of the child protection procedure, and reference material is close at hand to help them respond promptly if they have concerns about a child.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

Children have access to a broad and interesting range of activities to help them learn and develop. The children learn mostly through play, selecting for themselves what to do. Staff provide an assortment of resources to encourage small group activities and spark ideas for child-initiated play. This enables children to work together, learning from each other and sharing ideas. Staff join in to extend ideas and provide children with the attention and help they need in order to enjoy their day and participate fully. All children occupy themselves well showing great interest in everything around them. Some form strong bonds with particular friends, but all get on well as a group. For example, one late comer hid behind a cupboard before jumping out and waving at the rest of the group during register. The other children giggled and cheered in appreciation of his little game, showing their pleasure at seeing him. Some children choose to stay indoors when the weather is cold, which results in them still being lively at quiet time, and they find it difficult to sit still.

Nursery Education.

The quality of teaching and learning is good. Staff have a good understanding of how children learn and they join in effectively to help children become confident, sociable and eager to participate. They keep to a routine to provide children with security, and they involve children in routine tasks to develop their independence and a sense of responsibility. The children are adept at thinking for themselves; they freely give their opinions, and have a clear understanding of their own needs and preferences. They willingly join in practical, meaningful activities to reinforce their knowledge, which enables them to learn easily. The staff monitor what children do and evaluate the activities. They do not use the paperwork to full advantage. For example, by keeping profiles up to date to show clearly, children's rate of progress, and evaluating activities in detail to help plan for children's next steps and increased challenges.

Children are becoming aware of injustice and they know how they should behave. They competently organise their own games with friends and share ideas freely. All contribute equally in discussions and they listen well to what others say, responding appropriately and confidently. Some take over the staff role, imitating adults to ask 'who wants milk' and leading the singing when staff are distracted. Children draw and paint with enthusiasm but staff occasionally miss opportunities to develop early writing skills in free play. Staff link number work and mathematical language very well throughout the curriculum to develop children's understanding of the concept of numbers, shape, and position. Some children correctly recognise numbers to nine, and make a fair attempt at dividing fruit at snack time.

Staff develop children's knowledge and understanding of different cultures through topic work, visits and well-chosen interaction. Children freely talk about their home

life and incorporate past experiences into their role-play. For example, one drives a bus to Farmer Gows while he tells passengers what they will see there. Children have regular use of the computer, but the range of technological resources is limited, which restricts children's knowledge of modern equipment.

Some children enjoy outdoor play and make full use of the outside area. All children move around well displaying control in their movement. Children are increasingly aware of their personal needs and readily inform others when they are hungry and thirsty. They work well with friends to develop imaginary games, concentrate for lengthy periods until they achieve their aim, and join in without inhibitions.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered. All children receive the support they need to include them fully within the group. Those with little English benefit from the use of gestures and a pictorial routine to help them understand what to expect. Staff encourage parents and carers to stay until children are settled, and they work closely together to devise consistent strategies to help children make progress. The staff monitor closely, any children who have special needs in order to plan for their individual development and ensure the programme suits their needs. Children learn good manners and need little prompting to be polite. They learn the impact of their behaviour on others and play fairly for most of the time. Staff encourage a high standard of behaviour by acting as good role models, setting clear expectations and rewarding children with praise. As a result, children follow instructions carefully, share and take turns fairly and behave well.

The partnership with parents and carers is good. Staff welcome adults and children alike to build strong relationships and encourage involvement. Staff provide written policies and procedures for parents and carers to see, and they display information regarding the provision and the curriculum, on the notice board. Some parents and carers share aspects of their culture with the group to become involved in their children's learning and enhance the curriculum, and staff value their contribution highly. Staff offer open evenings to keep families up to date with their children's development and provide opportunities for parents and carers to learn how activities and outcomes link together.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

The setting meets the needs of the range of children for whom it provides. Children benefit from a varied programme, which offers the same opportunities regardless of when they attend. Staff organise the environment to allow child initiated play to spread and develop safely and they deploy themselves effectively to support all those present. Staff undergo thorough recruitment and induction procedures and they work well together as a team, building a friendly, supportive environment where children flourish through their dedication and commitment. Staff have clear and

comprehensive policies and procedures to maintain children's wellbeing. They have addressed the new regulatory requirements in addition to having all other necessary paperwork in place.

The leadership and management of the provision is good. Management and senior staff provide support to ensure all adults enjoy their work and give children positive experiences. All staff are involved in planning to ensure they have a sound understanding of the aims and objectives of the programme, and they oversee the provision well to make sure learning is consistent. The management encourages personal development and staff undertake training to improve their skills and raise standards for children. Robust monitoring and evaluation systems are in place to identify and address areas for improvement, but the activity evaluation sheets lack useful details to aid future planning.

Improvements since the last inspection

At the last inspection there were no significant weaknesses found, but the provision was asked to consider the consistency of the planning, to ensure all children have equal access to activities in all areas of the curriculum.

Staff have introduced an activity monitoring sheet to track the use of resources and activities. They look back over old plans before drawing up new ones, to ensure that all children have access to the same opportunities across the month. This ensures children get a balanced curriculum, and none miss out because of the days they attend.

This is the first care inspection for the provision since registering at this site.

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.

THE QUALITY AND STANDARDS OF THE CARE AND NURSERY EDUCATION

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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):

- improve hygiene by ensuring children always wash hands before eating, and learn why resources should not be put in their mouths

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):

- make better use of profiles and activity evaluations, to provide a clear record of children's rate of progress and details of how activities can be changed and developed when planning for children's next steps
- provide more opportunities for children to use a range of modern technological equipment.

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