



Little Steps Pre School

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	EY219553
Inspection date	07 February 2006
Inspector	Deborah Jane Starr

Setting Address	The Village Hall, Church Road, North Newton, Somerset, TA7 0BF
Telephone number	07754 301286
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Registered person	Little Steps PreSchool
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 satisfactory. 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?

Little Steps Pre School is run by a parents committee. It opened in 1978. It operates from two adjoining halls, two separate cloakrooms and a kitchen. There is an enclosed outdoor area. It is situated in the rural village of North Newton, Somerset. The pre-school serves the local area.

A maximum of 24 children may attend the pre-school at any one time. The pre-school is open Mondays and Tuesdays 09.15 -15.00, and Wednesday and Thursday

09.15-12.00, term time only.

There are currently 15 children on roll, of these 9 receive funding for nursery education. The pre-school supports children with special needs.

There are three members of staff. Two hold early years qualifications.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is satisfactory.

Established good hygiene routines and clear expectations of staff increase children's awareness of the importance of maintaining good health. Children wash their hands after using the toilet, spontaneously wash their hands after messy play and know not to re-use cutlery that has fallen on the floor. Children understand how germs are spread. Interesting activities involving local paramedics and dental hygiene develop children's understanding further. Staff follow effective procedures and practices that protect children from the spread of illness and risk of infection. This includes the exclusion of children when sick, appropriate procedures when changing nappies and regular cleaning of surfaces. However, children's welfare is not fully protected as procedures for the administering of medication and the recording of accidents are not consistently followed.

Children enjoy frequent physical play activities that contribute to their good health and help them develop control and co-ordination of their bodies. They enjoy the freedom of space both inside and outside the pre-school. They run safely, confidently climb over, under and through obstacles such as tunnels, climbing frames and obstacle courses. Children follow instructions to stop and start and move parts of their bodies in different ways, for instance when singing the 'Okey Cokey'. Children enthusiastically join in action songs such as 'Hop Little Bunny' and express themselves through dance to an American Indian chant. Children develop a growing awareness of the space around them. They consider others by making space for them to join the group and move chairs safely to enable themselves to participate in table top activities. Children use a varied range of equipment safely and effectively. They practice throwing, batting and catching skills using bats, balls and bean bags and manipulate objects such as clay through prodding, rolling and effectively turn handles on a toy cement mixer. They use tools such as wooden knives, cutters, rolling pins and large and small paint brushes to create pictures and attempt to use chop sticks to eat rice and noodles. Children effectively manoeuvre a computer mouse to complete simple sorting and matching games. They join and assemble junk and card to make three dimensional models, for instance they make Chinese dragons using sellotape, glue and staples. Children enjoy frequent opportunities for fresh air through walks around the local village and visits to the woods.

Children benefit from a healthy diet. Well balanced snacks of fruit, vegetables and sweet and savoury biscuits promote children's awareness of healthy foods. Parents provide their own child's lunch. Children's dietary needs are discussed with parents and taken account of. Children have access to drinks during the session. Visits to

local fruit farms and activities that provide opportunities for them to try other foods from different cultures such as noodles, rice cakes and prawn crackers develop children's understanding further. Children are able to rest when required.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is satisfactory.

Staff assure children's safety on a daily basis as they check areas prior to use for hazards. Written risk assessments adequately identify hazards and procedures for the collection of children and security of the premises protect children. There is a sufficient range of safe furniture and age appropriate resources to meet the needs of the children who attend. Children's awareness of their own personal safety is promoted through songs such as 'Piggy on the Railway', regular fire drills, practising road safety when walking around the village and awareness of the dangers of water when walking near the canal. Thoughtfully planned activities to promote their awareness within their own homes develops children's understanding further. For example, children identify objects from a catalogue such as stair gates, smoke detectors and sharp objects. Children benefit from the clear guidance given by staff. They move safely around the pre-school, carry chairs appropriately and learn to use scissors correctly.

Most staff have an adequate understanding of their responsibilities to protect children through their awareness of the signs and issues that would raise their concerns. However, they have insufficient knowledge of local child protection procedures and are unclear as to procedures to be followed in the event of an allegation being made against a member of staff.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

All children arrive happily at the pre-school and explore with interest the range of activities and resources on offer. Children develop positive relationships with the staff, consequently this increases their sense of well-being. Children enjoy large group times, all children are encouraged to contribute. They observe the weather and more able children accurately remember the month. Children enjoy listening to stories and participate enthusiastically in action songs. Children of all ages enjoy dressing up and spontaneously self-select resources such as books, puzzles and props to extend their play. Children are inquisitive, younger children copy older children and staff for instance when moulding clay and cutting, gluing and sticking cards. These positive experiences foster children's confidence to try new experiences. Children understand the routines of the day and know what is expected of them, they help tidy up before snack time and hang their own paintings to dry.

Nursery Education

The quality of teaching and learning is good. Staff have a good understanding of the Foundation Stage curriculum and children make good progress towards the early

learning goals. Staff are clear as to the learning intention of each activity and take account of the individual needs of each child. Staff skilfully give guidance to children that helps them progress and use well-considered open-ended questions to help children develop their own thoughts and ideas. Staff effectively plan an interesting range of activities that promote the next stage in learning for each child. This is identified through their regular use of observations, assessment and evaluation of each child's achievements that is linked to the stepping stones and six areas of learning.

Children have a positive attitude to learning, they confidently contribute to group activities, share experiences about their families, count numbers of children present and offer their own ideas at large group times. Children confidently re-create their ideas and express their imaginations through role play and the effective use of props to extend their ideas. They play elaborate games using a fantasy cube as a plane, fire engine and ambulance. Children extend their play using additional props to re-enact experiences previously gained through the group when visiting the local fire station, church and paramedics. They learn that numbers serve a purpose, for example, 999 to telephone for help. Children create pictures and models in both small and large scale using a variety of materials such as paint, seeds, pulses, vegetables, tissue, cards, building blocks, clay and junk. A visit to The Forest School gives children the experience to build and construct their own shelter, by making their own mud bricks and using wood and branches.

Children are inquisitive and are eager to explore their world. They observe growth in living things such as bulbs and sun flowers and change through visits to the local woods at different times of year. They explore their local stream by using fishing nets and start to develop an understanding of how to protect their environment through the re-cycling of Christmas cards. Children enjoy investigating how things work. They explore how magnets work by testing everyday objects in the play room and are intrigued by their own images when looking at mirrors.

Children communicate their ideas and needs clearly. They develop good listening skills and are interested in stories and books. Children develop early writing skills and give meaning to their marks. More able children identify their first name, sounding out each letter and also write their name with correctly formed letters. Children spontaneously attempt writing for a purpose when writing shopping lists and writing inside cards. Children develop an understanding that books and other materials such as maps and globes give information. Children self select books on transport when playing with the cars and trucks and link a map of the world with their holidays.

Children confidently use mathematical language in their play. They use number correctly when referring to the number of legs on an animal and when identifying and clapping the correct number for the date. Everyday activities such as snack time and circle time are used effectively to promote children's understanding of number and shape. For example, children count the number of slices of fruit and develop their understanding of quantity through the cutting of an apple into halves and quarters. Children identify the shapes circle, oval and rectangle in an orange, kiwi and door. Activities such as the memory game and thoughtful questioning by staff help children develop early problem solving skills. Children develop an understanding of sequence and pattern through butterfly paintings, puzzles and re-creating 3 dimensional

constructions.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

Display's of children's work, labels for coats and activities such as the 'good morning song' and 'show and tell' at circle time assist in developing children's sense of belonging and children feel valued. Children's behaviour is good. They benefit from clear guidance, positive role models and consistent boundaries provided by the staff and know what is expected of them. They develop high self-esteem through the frequent praise and encouragement given by staff. They have a strong sense of belonging to the group and local community and positively beam with delight at their own achievements. For example, children proudly look at themselves in the mirror when dressed in costumes and show staff their pictures and talk about taking their pictures home for their parents to see. Children share card, glue and play doh and work co-operatively together. They take turns to hand out fruit and biscuits at snack time and when using the slide and climbing frame in the outside play area. Children develop independence skills through the self selection of resources, dressing themselves when putting on coats and Wellington boots and pour their own drinks. More able children persevere at activities for prolonged periods of time, for instance to complete a complex puzzle. Well planned activities and the thoughtful introduction of specific words extend children's language and helps them develop different ways to express their own thoughts and feelings. Children move their bodies to show different emotions such as happy sad and shy, create faces on paper plates and express their sense of touch when working with glue and clay.

Children's individual needs are clearly identified and taken account of. Staff work effectively with parents and other professionals to provide an appropriate environment and monitor each child's progress to help them move forward in their development. Staff are committed to the inclusion of all children and use skills gained through training such as 'Somerset Total Communication'. Children benefit from the relaxed and friendly relationship between parents and staff. Parents are well informed through clear notices about the daily care of their child, regular discussions with staff and newsletters. Parents are very positive about the pre-school, they find staff approachable and value their openness. Children gain a strong sense of their local community and an understanding of the wider world through regular well planned activities. This includes regular visits to the local church, inclusion in local school assemblies, visits to the local fire station and bakery and visitors to the group such as local paramedics and the police. Meaningful experiences through food, dress, holidays, creative activities and the use of authentic resources such as china bowls, clothing and books and stories reflect positive images and help promote positive attitudes to others and different cultures. Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered.

The partnership with parents is satisfactory. Parents have limited access to information about the Foundation Stage curriculum and have little understanding of the relevance of this to the activities offered to their children. They have access to their own child's progress records and discuss their own child's overall progress

informally with staff. Parents receive specific feedback on their child's progress in relation to the six areas of learning at the end of the summer term in a written report. Children benefit from parents involvement in activities such as trips and contributions to the colour table. However, parents do not contribute to their own child's on-going developmental assessment and are not actively involved in their on-going learning.

Organisation

The organisation is satisfactory.

Most staff hold appropriate qualifications. Current systems do not fully ensure that staff are suitable to work with children and remain so, therefore children's safety is potentially compromised. Most of the settings policies and procedures are appropriate and reflected in practice. However, the system of induction is limited and does not ensure that new staff are fully informed of all their responsibilities.

The layout and organisation of the play areas gives children adequate access to a variety of play resources within adequately maintained premises. Staff display children's own work wherever possible. The deployment of staff effectively supports children in their play and they know the children well. Staff are committed to developing their knowledge and skills through training.

The setting meets the needs of the range of children for whom it provides.

Leadership and management is good. Staff work well together and plan activities based on their observations of children on a weekly basis. The staff's good understanding of the Foundation Stage curriculum and effective system of monitoring ensures that children are offered an interesting and balanced range of activities that promotes their development and moves children forward across all six areas of learning.

Improvements since the last inspection

At the last care inspection the pre-school was requested to devise and implement a sick child policy and ensure that parents are informed. Include within the complaints procedures the details of the regulator and ensure that the lost and uncollected child policy are relevant to the setting. The pre-school has addressed all aspects fully and children's welfare is promoted.

At the last nursery education inspection two key issues were raised. First to encourage children to use books individually and develop an awareness of using books to locate information. Second to develop an understanding that writing is a form of communication and used for a variety of purposes. All aspects have been fully addressed through the organisation of the play environment and are reflected in the good progress that children make across the areas of learning.

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

On the basis of the evidence collected on this inspection:

The quality and standards of the care are satisfactory. 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 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 that written records of medication administered to children and accidents are signed by the parent
- develop staff's understanding of local children protection procedures and include within the child protection policy, procedures to be followed in the event of an allegation of abuse made against a member of staff
- develop further the system in place for the recruiting and reviewing the suitability of staff
- develop further the system of induction training for new staff to include child protection policies and procedures in their first week of employment.

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):

- increase opportunities for parents to gain an understanding of the Foundation Stage curriculum, how this is reflected in activities offered to their children and to be actively involved with their own child's learning.

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