



## Stepping Stones Playgroup

Inspection report for early years provision

<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	400332
<b>Inspection date</b>	15 February 2006
<b>Inspector</b>	Christine Tipple
<b>Setting Address</b>	Stokesley Primary School, 5 Springfield, Stokesley, Middlesbrough, Cleveland, TS9 5LW
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<b>Registered person</b>	Stepping Stones Playgroup
<b>Type of inspection</b>	Integrated
<b>Type of care</b>	Sessional 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](http://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 Playgroup opened in 1991. It operates from a stand alone classroom building in the grounds of Stokesley Primary School in Stokesley. The children have access to the main playroom and there are toilets and a kitchenette. There is an own enclosed outside play area. The playgroup is run by a management committee. The playgroup serves the local area.

The playgroup is registered to care for a maximum of 21 children aged from 2 years

to under 5 years old. There are currently 26 children on roll. Of these 5 are in receipt of nursery education funding. The group is open from 09.00 to 11.30 Monday to Friday during term time.

There are four staff members working with the children, two have relevant childcare qualifications, and one is attending training to achieve a childcare qualification. The setting receives support from the local authority and is a member of the Pre-School Network.

## **THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION**

### **Helping children to be healthy**

The provision is good.

Children have good opportunities to use their physical skills both inside and outside. There is a varied selection of tools and equipment that promotes children's large and small motor skills well. Children have regular opportunities to play outside, where they use wheeled toys, climb, balance, and use bats and balls. In the warmer weather the children use the outdoors throughout the sessions as an extended classroom. Children use small tools, such as scissors, peg boards, shapers and various sized crayons and brushes. They use malleable materials and cut and shape during their creative activities.

The routines and facilities offer the children a positive approach to managing their personal care and hygiene effectively. They have activities that promote good health, through the foods they eat and doing exercise. The children access the facilities to be independent in washing their hands at various times during the session, for example, after messy play and before having their snack. The children understand the reason for ensuring their hands are clean to keep "the germs off".

Children have a group snack time where they have opportunities to try different foods. These offer the children healthy options, such as fruit, raisins, dips and bread sticks. There is a positive approach with the children to taste different foods and to link this with their topics of being healthy. Drinks are provided in addition to their snack as requested. Children's dietary needs are recorded and updated as required.

### **Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe**

The provision is satisfactory.

The children are supported with appropriate systems that promote safety and security overall. This is linked to the policy and procedures. However, the appropriate use of risk assessments are not fully implemented. The staff manage the security of the premises effectively and share this with the parents in ensuring that the outside gates are bolted. The range of the resources and equipment for the children offer appropriate provision for them to develop their play and learning. These are of good quality and children have sufficient access for most of the session.

Children have opportunities in their activities to learn about safety through topics. For

example, when on outings they take the safest route, which have appropriate crossing areas and this is discussed with the children. Staff ensure children are aware of their safety when using the toys and equipment. Children know not to wave scissors about, to be careful when doing music and movement of where they put their feet, and to assist in tidy up time.

Children are protected by staff through the relevant information and procedures on child protection, which promote children's welfare and safety. However, staff have not updated their skills and knowledge on child protection issues.

### **Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do**

The provision is good.

The children come into the playgroup with happy faces. They are settled and interested in their surroundings and in what is provided for them. Positive relationships are established with both the children and their families. The children are comforted with reassuring cuddles from a caring and supportive staff. The children under three years old have appropriate access to all the activities and resources provided and are gaining confidence in their use. The staff are developing their knowledge and skills in the Birth to three matters framework. The younger children have positive opportunities to begin to have a sense of their environment through exploring and access to a range of tactile materials.

#### Nursery Education

The teaching and learning is good. The staff's knowledge and use of the foundation stage and stepping stones offer the children realistic challenges. They plan a broad and varied selection of topics and activities, which enable the children to make good progress. Children are managed very effectively and staff support and understand their individual needs appropriately. Children overall have sufficient access to resources during the sessions to enable them to make choices and maintain their interest.

The children communicate well with each other and with the staff, which supports the children's confidence and growing independence. The children have used makaton as a form of communicating with each other to ensure all children are included. The children play well together and on their own, they enjoy group time when they have story time and music. Staff question the children effectively to support their thinking skills and enable them to express themselves, such as where they want to sit and what they like and dislike. There are opportunities for the children to use books and this is extended through story time and with the aid of props to engage the children more creatively. There are tools in place that promote and encourage the children to mark make with various mediums, they have good opportunities to recognise letters through the displays around them and through using their names to self register. Children use numbers in their play and are confident in counting to ten. They use measuring through their height chart and seed planting. Children are using simple mathematical language in weight and volume through their baking, role play and construction activities. Recognition of shapes and working in two and three dimensions are evident in the children's displays of mini beasts and the three little

pigs story. Children visit the local area and invite visitors to the setting, for example, the local dentist and the post person. They are actively involved with the development of their garden, which offers the children a good insight into the natural world and their environment in nurturing the garden, and to watch and investigate how things grow. There are ongoing opportunities both inside and out for the children to practise their physical skills effectively and to use a variety of tools and equipment to support this.

The assessment of the children's progress is recorded by staff who share the observations of the children. This provides evidence of the children's progress in all areas. However, the recording and collecting of evidence for children's assessments is not sufficient to ensure this links effectively to future planning for the children. Staff know the children well and the support and challenges are appropriate. Overall the children make good progress in their learning given the timescale for which the children attend the setting.

### **Helping children make a positive contribution**

The provision is good.

The children have sufficient access in their every day activities to resources and images that promote the wider society. There are opportunities for the children to visit the local area and for visitors to come into the playgroup. There are topics about people who help us, this extends the children's experiences that men and women carry out the same jobs. Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered satisfactorily.

Children's behaviour is managed very well by the staff. There are age appropriate boundaries in place and staff support the children effectively. Staff work together to promote a caring environment where the children feel comfortable and happy and respond to the routines in place. There are cuddles and praise to encourage the children to take part and settle in. The children are developing their skills in sharing and taking turns and their awareness of their environment.

Partnership with parents is good. They are provided with information about the setting and they receive all the playgroup's policies and procedures. The relationships established with the staff are positive, there is daily contact with the parents, which offers both staff and parents the opportunity to discuss what their child has done and how they are progressing. There is a good link developed with home to involve parents through the management committee and as helpers on the rota; the newsletter ensures all parents are kept informed of what the playgroup and children will be doing. There is a notice board where the activity plans are displayed, this enables parents to share with their children what they have done in the session. Parents and children can be part of the garden club at the playgroup, where there is a sharing of skills, such as erecting the fence, gardening and planting. There is a parents' comment book, which offers very good feedback on how much their children have benefited from the care provided by the staff and the positive activities and experiences provided.

## **Organisation**

The organisation is satisfactory.

Children's care and learning is managed effectively by the staff who work well as a team. They work in a positive way to ensure the children have fun and enjoy their time at playgroup, and the sessions run smoothly. The children's welfare and safety is supported appropriately by staff and the management committee. The organisation of space enables children sufficient access to the resources and facilities in place. Relevant documentation and consent details are recorded. However, the recruitment and selection procedures are not detailed sufficiently to ensure a robust approach.

Leadership and Management is satisfactory. The committee are offering sufficient support to the overall management of the playgroup. However, the organisation of the records and the linking of the playgroup practices with the policies and procedures are not always clear. Staff are supported to attend training and information is available, but staff have not attended additional training in the last year. The playgroup staff are members of the local cluster support group and have sought additional information through this approach. Staff are willing to attend training and are assessing the options open to them in the next year. Staff have an informal approach to the ongoing monitoring of the care and education and are motivated and interested in the children and how they can develop and extend the quality of the playgroup. This process is not sufficient in detail and requires the input of the management committee to ensure this is supported effectively. Overall the provider meets the needs of the children who attend.

## **Improvements since the last inspection**

The last care report recommended that the playgroup: extend some aspects of their safety in the use of a risk assessment; maintain a record of visitors to the playgroup; ensure relevant documentation is on site in relation to staff files; and update the complaints record to include information and contact details for Ofsted.

The management committee and staff have a system of risk assessment in place, which links with the school. However, this is still not detailed sufficiently for the every day practice carried out in the playgroup. The visitors book is in place and used appropriately. There are details of each staff member available, but these need to be reviewed along with other aspects of the organisation of playgroup records. The contact details for Ofsted are displayed for parents.

The last funded education report recommended that the staff: gave more emphasis on children's writing and early reading skills and the children's recognition of letters; develop children's number and counting skills and early calculation; ensure the planning in the short term and children's assessments link with the stepping stones and early learning goals; and finally, to develop the partnership with parents in providing information about what the playgroup offers and how this supports their children's learning and progress.

There are detailed plans and assessments for individual children that cover all areas

of the early learning goals and stepping stones. However, the assessment process does not show sufficient ongoing evidence on the children's progress. The planning includes activities that promote the early recognition of letters and access to reading materials through books and story telling. There are displays around the playgroup of letters and labelling to assist children in their early recognition and to support their mark making skills. The use of numbers and counting activities and games enable the children to be confident to use them in their everyday play. They use calculation through charts and other activities planned to support their mathematical development. Information for parents and ongoing daily contact by staff provide a positive partnership with parents in informing them of the activities and learning opportunities their children receive.

### **Complaints since the last inspection**

Since the last inspection a concern was made in relation to National Standard 1, Suitable Person. Social Services informed Ofsted that no action would be taken as the complaint was due to a misunderstanding. Ofsted investigations into the complaint confirmed that the provider remained qualified for 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 AND NURSERY EDUCATION**

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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):

- develop staff's knowledge and skills in relation to child protection issues
- provide a more detailed risk assessment that covers all areas of the setting more effectively
- implement a more detailed system for the recruitment of staff, and review and evaluate all aspects of both the management and organisation of the setting
- provide a more organised approach to the keeping of records and to ensure

the policies and procedures are linked to all aspects of playgroup practice.

### **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):

- develop the recording and collecting of evidence for children's assessments to ensure this is effective in informing future planning

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