



Office for Standards  
in Education

## NURSERY INSPECTION REPORT

URN 123558

DfES Number: 546168

### INSPECTION DETAILS

Inspection Date 28/06/2004  
Inspector Name Karen Molloy

### SETTING DETAILS

Day Care Type Full Day Care  
Setting Name Little Steps Day Nursery  
Setting Address 1 Lancaster Road  
St. Albans  
Hertfordshire  
AL1 4EP

### REGISTERED PROVIDER DETAILS

Name Little Steps Day Nursery 3723601

### ORGANISATION DETAILS

Name Little Steps Day Nursery  
Address 1 Lancaster Road  
St. Albans  
Hertfordshire  
AL1 4EP

## ABOUT THE INSPECTION

The purpose of this inspection is to assure government, parents and the public that the nursery education for funded three and four year old children is of an acceptable quality. Inspection of nursery education also identifies strengths and weaknesses so that providers can improve the quality of educational provision and help children to achieve the early learning goals (elgs) by the end of the Foundation Stage. This inspection report must be made available to all parents.

If the setting has been inspected previously, an action plan will have been drawn up to tackle issues identified. This inspection, therefore, must also assess what progress has been made in the implementation of this plan.

### Information about the setting

Little Steps Nursery is a small, privately owned nursery that was established in 1999. It operates from a house and is situated in a residential area of St Albans. The setting utilises all the downstairs rooms and staff now have facilities upstairs. Children also have use of a spacious garden. There are currently 52 children from 0 to under 5 years on roll. This includes 14 funded 3 year olds and 1 funded 4 year old. Children attend for a variety of sessions. The setting is able to support children with special needs and those who speak English as an additional language.

The group opens Monday to Friday, 51 weeks of the year. It operates from 07:45 to 18:15. A staff team of 11 work with the children, of which 7 are suitably qualified. Staff working with the funded children have attended Foundation Stage training. The team are currently looking at organising regular, qualified teacher involvement.

The nursery successfully achieved the Hertfordshire Quality Standards (HQS) award in 2001.

## INSPECTION OF THE NURSERY EDUCATION PROVISION FOR FUNDED THREE AND FOUR YEAR OLDS.

### How effective is the nursery education?

Little Steps Day Nursery provides high quality education overall. Children are making very good progress towards the early learning goals.

The quality of teaching is very good. Staff working with the funded children have attended training related to the Foundation Stage. They have a very good knowledge and understanding of the stepping stones and early learning goals, which they share with other key staff. Staff plan and evaluate the curriculum to incorporate all areas of learning and ensure these areas are re-visited to reinforce previous learning. Staff plan a curriculum/routine that is a balance of free play, child led activities and adult initiated activities. They are aware of the need to allow children to work at their own pace and to show differentiation between the more and less able children. Staff assess and monitor children's progress. They make observations/comments on the back of a child's piece of work, which is kept. Staff use their assessment system to see where the children are at and look at how to move them on.

Staff are able to integrate and support children with special educational needs and/or children that have English as an additional language. They attend local, cluster meetings and are familiar with planning for a child with specific needs.

The leadership and management of the nursery is very good. The manager is actively involved with the children and staff and hence, leads by example. She oversees day to day practice and has high expectations of staff. Staff have non contact time, which is used to plan and evaluate the curriculum and monitor children's progress. Staff are knowledgeable in the Foundation Stage and they aim to deliver a varied curriculum that is fun, interesting and enjoyable.

Partnership with parents is very good. Parents are well informed and encouraged to share what they know about their child. They have a forum to offer suggestions, feedback and discuss any changes within the nursery.

### What is being done well?

- Children are actively involved in their learning. They are confident, work well as a group, take initiative and show personal independence. They are able, during more free times, to select resources and make independent choices.
- Children gain an increasing understanding of where they live and the wider environment, for example, they have explored bugs, grown sunflowers and been on walks to look at different gardens people have.
- Children benefit from effective teaching to help them make progress. Staff's clear understanding of the early learning goals leads to well planned activities which engage and sustain the children's interests and allows them to work at

their own pace.

- The setting works in partnership with parents. Parents are provided with good quality information about the provision. They are kept informed about their child's progress with information sessions and consultations. Photo charts have been developed for all areas of learning to show parents how children learn. The notice board is informative with curriculum plans displayed and newsletters are sent out regularly. A parents forum enables users to discuss issues and be part of a decision making process.
- Parents are encouraged to share what they know about their child with home information gathered and questionnaires sent out to parents regarding the Foundation Stage. Feedback from parents is positive.
- The nursery is led and managed very well. There are high expectations and staff are very clear about their roles and responsibilities. The manager oversees and continually monitors practice but is also very involved and 'hands on' with the children. Staff responsible for the funded children have a very good knowledge and understanding of the Foundation Stage.

#### **What needs to be improved?**

- the use of further resources to develop children's knowledge and understanding of different cultures and beliefs
- the use of information and technology

#### **What has improved since the last inspection?**

This is the nursery's first inspection.

## SUMMARY OF JUDGEMENTS

### PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Judgement: Very Good

Children are happy and settled within their environment and participate enthusiastically in activities. They are confident to try new activities and speak out in a familiar group, such as, during the 'Jolly Phonic' session. They are able to concentrate and sit quietly when appropriate, listening to instructions about the activity/game. Children form good relationships with adults and peers; they work as part of a group, take turns and can share fairly. They also support and praise their friends.

### COMMUNICATION, LANGUAGE AND LITERACY

Judgement: Very Good

Children are keen to communicate with staff and other children. They frequently recall events from home and initiate conversations. They interact, talk and laugh, sharing their experiences with each other. Some children are able to write recognisable letters to form their name and most children are very able to link sounds to letters, naming and sounding letters of the alphabet. Children are attempting to write for a variety of purposes such as their name and letters, whilst in the 'office'.

### MATHEMATICAL DEVELOPMENT

Judgement: Very Good

Children are competent in sorting and classifying, for example, with crockery and cutlery. Challenges are set for both the 3 and 4 years olds to sort by colour or by function. Children can count up to 9 and 4 yr olds beyond this number. During a number game, some children are able to add their three cards together, count the ladybirds on each card and make a correct total. Children can talk about, recognise simple patterns and make their own patterns with construction bricks.

### KNOWLEDGE AND UNDERSTANDING OF THE WORLD

Judgement: Very Good

Children are able to explore and investigate. During a bug hunt, they are able to look closely at living things and represent this through their own drawings. A topic on fast and slow enables them to talk about road safety and the meaning of traffic lights. Children find out about their environment, they look at different gardens, splash in puddles, test waterproof materials and talk about what is needed to stay dry. Plans show children have participated in different celebrations.

### **PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT**

Judgement: Very Good

Staff provide opportunities for children to use a range of small and large equipment, increasing their gross motor skills and fine manipulative skills. Children move with control and coordination in the garden, climbing confidently and catching accurately. They show an awareness of space, manoeuvring buggies and bikes around obstacles along a pathway. Children hold pens correctly and colour in with increasing control and accuracy. They are able to use scissors carefully to follow a line.

### **CREATIVE DEVELOPMENT**

Judgement: Very Good

Children are able to use their imagination in different ways. An 'office' enables them to express and communicate their ideas, which they do enthusiastically. Children paint freely and explain, in detail, their pictures to staff and other children. They are able to mix colours and when a child says 'oh grey, how did you make that?' another responds confidently 'black and white'. Plans show children using musical instruments and dance to depict a 'fast and slow' theme.

**Children's spiritual, moral, social, and cultural development is fostered appropriately.**

## **OUTCOME OF THE INSPECTION**

The provision is acceptable and is of high quality. Children are making very good progress towards the early learning goals. The next inspection will take place in three to four years time.

## **WHAT THE SETTING NEEDS TO DO NEXT**

*There are no significant weaknesses to report, but considerations should be given to improving the following:*

- There are no significant weaknesses to report, but consideration should be given to improving the following;
- resources, to develop the children's knowledge and understanding of different cultures and beliefs
- the development of information and communication technology within the nursery

*The provider must draw up an action plan within 40 working days of receipt of this report showing how the key issues detailed above will be addressed. The action plan must be made available to all parents and to the Local Authority if required. An evaluation of the action taken will form part of the next inspection of funded nursery education.*