



Stepping Stones Private Day Nursery

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	311272
Inspection date	15 January 2007
Inspector	Jill Lee
Setting Address	16 Waingate, Linthwaite, Huddersfield, West Yorkshire, HD7 5NR
Telephone number	01484 843035
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Registered person	Stepping Stones Private Day Nursery
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 Private Day Nursery was registered in 1993. The nursery is situated in the village of Linthwaite, near Huddersfield.

Children are cared for in four play rooms, in which children are grouped according to age. Older children occupy two rooms on the first floor. Children have access to a secure, enclosed paved area for outdoor play, plus a larger, grassed garden area. A separate outdoor area has been created for babies, immediately adjacent to their play room.

A maximum of 40 children may attend the nursery at any one time. There are currently 64 children on roll, of whom 19 receive funding for nursery education. The nursery opens each weekday throughout the year, from 08.00 to 18.00.

There are 12 staff who work directly with the children, 10 of whom hold a relevant early years qualification. Four staff are working towards additional qualifications. The nursery employs a cook for preparation of all meals and has been awarded the Kirklees Healthy Choice Gold Award for healthy eating. The nursery receives support from the local authority and is a member of the National Day Nurseries Association.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Children use the outdoor environment daily and they enjoy a good variety of outdoor play experiences. However, their opportunity for active physical play, including use of large equipment, is not given sufficiently high priority in planning throughout the whole year, as they enjoy only a very limited time outdoors in winter months. Children use the outdoor space well, as they ride around on the bikes, run fast and play chasing games. In fine weather, they enjoy games of basketball and using the stepping stone balancing beam. They enjoy scrambling through the willow arch and hiding in the shade of the willow tree. Children have regular planned opportunities to develop coordination and control, as they enjoy music and movement sessions and ring games. They move in different ways as they stretch their bodies and play 'pretend to be' games. They swirl with ribbons, making patterns in the wind. Babies and toddlers love clambering on the soft play resources in their play room and scrambling through the little tunnel. Toddlers have sturdy toys to push along to support their developing mobility.

The nursery environment is bright and well maintained. Staff place a high priority on good health and hygiene practice and implement guidelines systematically. Parents are clearly informed that sick children cannot be cared for and information about infectious diseases is shared so that children are protected from infection. Arrangements for first aid and administering medication fully meet requirements and effectively protect children. Children clearly understand why they need to wash their hands before they have their snack and they have their own individual towels. Staff consistently promote and encourage clear health and hygiene routines within everyday practice, so that children learn how to keep themselves healthy. They are developing good levels of independence in attending to their own personal care, as they manage the toilet independently and practise putting on their own coats.

Parents are fully consulted about their child's health and dietary needs. Children are very well nourished and enjoy a varied menu of freshly cooked, healthy food. Menus are clearly displayed for parents and foods containing additives and preservatives are avoided. Children are encouraged to try a wide variety of different foods, including lots of vegetables and fruits. They are encouraged to express their likes and dislikes and to make choices. They are involved in some food preparation, for example, they have made pizza and vegetable soup and are planning to grow their own vegetables in the garden. Snack and lunch times are enjoyable, relaxed occasions where staff and children sit together, sociably sharing conversation. They have flowers on the tables and play quiet music, 'like in a restaurant'. Babies are encouraged to use spoons and feed themselves independently, as soon as they are able. Staff encourage conversations about why healthy eating is important and talk about the need to limit sweet

foods to keep teeth healthy. Children are offered milk and water to drink and older children can access drinks independently from the water jug.

Children enjoy warm interactions with well known staff. Key staff liaise closely with parents, to ensure rest and sleep routines flow with each child's individual needs. Sensitive consideration is given to planning of the transitions between rooms, enhancing children's feelings of security in the nursery.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

Staff encourage children to develop very good levels of independence within a safe environment. Their understanding of safety is strongly promoted because staff discuss limits and boundaries with them within everyday activities. Consistent reminders about rules help children begin to take responsibility for keeping themselves safe. Staff routinely explain and reinforce safe practice, like holding onto the handrail as they go down the stairs to play outside. They learn to take care on the paved area after wet weather, as it can be quite slippery. Children learn to behave in responsible ways and look after their environment as they help to tidy away the toys before snack time. Well planned activities begin to promote children's awareness of wider safety issues. For example, although outings are rarely planned because of the dangers of local narrow roads, the road safety officer visits the nursery to help children think about safe practices in the local community. In some instances, management of safety issues impacts on the levels of challenge in activities. For example, children do not have access to tape dispensers and staplers to support their 'design and make' activities.

Children use the play environment purposefully, as staff enable them to access all areas of the environment with safety and independence. A well considered range of good quality resources is stored at child height so that children can select them freely. Appropriate risk assessments are conducted and practice is consistently evaluated, increasing all children's safe participation in everyday activities. Accidents are routinely monitored. The nursery has a very clearly defined security policy; there is a video intercom, all doors are kept locked and windows monitored. Staff enhance security by not admitting unknown visitors and consistent use of the visitors' register increases children's safety. There is clear planning for safe evacuation in an emergency.

Children are cared for by staff who give high priority to protecting children and keeping them safe. They help children to feel confident to make their needs known and sensitively establish supportive relationships with parents. Staff understand their responsibilities within child protection procedures so that children's welfare is safeguarded, although they have not attended any recent training. Appropriate procedures for recording any concerns are in place, although there is less clarity regarding recording of existing injuries. Staff are aware of the procedures of the Local Safeguarding Children Board but the child protection policy has not yet been updated to reflect current guidance.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

Children are happy in the nursery and love spending time in the welcoming and child friendly environment. Staff are very interested in what they are doing, listen closely to them and sensitively support their play. The planned environment is very child focussed, so that children develop high levels of independence as they develop their own play ideas. Children can select resources freely and the continuous provision is well-planned to promote experiences in all areas of development. Children use their imagination well in role play activities. They cook meals and feed the babies in the home corner. They experiment with lots of different media, as they explore with sand, water, paint and dough. They make swirls in the 'gloop', fascinated by the feel of it on their fingers. They become totally absorbed as they pour and sift sand into different sized containers and fill and empty pots with bubbly water.

Babies and toddlers play very contentedly, learning to enjoy being with others. The baby room is very relaxed and calm. Babies snuggle up closely with staff for their bottle or to read stories. They have opportunity to explore treasure baskets, which stimulate their senses and curiosity. Staff respond intuitively and sensitively to non-verbal communications, so that babies' needs are met effectively. Staff talk frequently with parents and confidently use the 'Birth to three matters' framework to plan experiences reflecting children's current interests.

Staff plan an interesting variety of activities for babies, including creative, exploratory and heuristic play, although these are not freely accessible for them to select independently. Different toys and books are put out each day and routinely changed to provide variety, but this does not allow children to make their own choices or extend their own interests. Use of space and storage of resources in the baby room is not planned well to promote children's independent play.

Nursery Education

The quality of teaching and children's learning is good. Staff have a very secure knowledge of the Foundation Stage curriculum and comprehensive planning helps children to make good progress towards all the early learning goals. Children are motivated and their interest is fully sustained, as they enjoy a broad range of well planned activities and experiences. Planning of the continuous provision does not consistently include the outdoor environment or access to resources to promote large physical play. Children learn to listen well, concentrate and persevere with activities they enjoy. Well considered daily routines allow children to freely access interesting activities, which promote experiences in all areas of their learning each day.

Children are very confident communicators and use language well to share their own ideas and experiences. Staff introduce new language into activities and nurture children's opportunities to use language in different ways. Children love reading books and enjoy a wide range of factual books, which promote their awareness of the world around them. They listen with pleasure to stories. Children have many opportunities to write for real purposes in their role play, they draw plans for their models and write to describe their own work. They write their name on their work and enjoy activities which promote their interest in letter sounds. Children count and become familiar with number concepts within their everyday routines. They work out how many

cups and plates are needed for snack time and act out number rhymes at group time. They investigate mathematical ideas as they roll and shape dough, fill and empty containers in the water and build with the large bricks. They use mathematical language with comprehension, as they sort and order different sized three dimensional shapes and begin to comprehend fractions, understanding that when they cut the half apple again it becomes a quarter. Staff interactions helpfully promote opportunities for them to solve problems and extend their learning in their play.

Children's interest in the natural world, growth and change is stimulated well. They observe creatures in the garden and on the nature table, using magnifying glasses. They have planted bulbs and grow their own plants. Their interest in the natural and wider world is promoted as they learn about space, light and dark, snow and frost, and the habitats of animals in cold countries. They have explored melting and freezing, experimenting with hot and cold 'baking' activities, using the oven and the fridge. They enjoy designing and making large models, like pirate ships, and create their own extended story scenes, using blocks and small world resources. They develop an interest in technology as they create different kinds of pictures using the computer. Their imagination and creativity is nurtured as they enjoy extended role play activities, sing along to the guitar and design their own pictures and models.

Staff interact very effectively with children to stimulate their curiosity and consolidate learning. They model skills and consistently reinforce expected behaviour, so that children learn to work cooperatively and use all activity areas productively. Staff have developed clear and varied systems to observe children's interests and monitor their individual progress. They are developing links to planning, based on observation of children's current interests. Assessments of progress are clearly linked to the areas of learning but do not consistently track progress relating to the stepping stones or help to identify any gaps in children's experience. Staff do not fully utilise their observations of children directly to plan next steps in their learning.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

Children develop a strong sense of belonging to the nursery. They are familiar with and contribute actively to daily routines in the relaxed nursery environment. They help to set the tables for meals and sometimes help with food preparation. They are able to access the whole environment freely, making choices and decisions about their play. Children enjoy warm and trusting relationships with staff and with each other. Each child's individuality is nurtured, promoting their confidence and self-esteem.

Children behave very well and good behaviour is sensitively encouraged and rewarded. They learn to be kind and polite as staff gently and very consistently reinforce rules and boundaries. They learn to listen carefully to instructions and to be respectful of others when they are speaking at group time. They understand why it is important to keep the play environment tidy, to share toys and to take turns. Staff very clearly explain why certain behaviour is unacceptable, so that children feel safe. They know that staff will help them to resolve any difficulties, and quickly say sorry when reminded that it is upsetting if you hit someone. They learn to be helpful and consider the feelings of others.

Children engage in activities, which help to promote their awareness of the wider world. Well displayed posters, for example, of children around the world, show many images of other cultures and disabilities. Few outings are planned in the local community for safety reasons, but staff recognise the importance of planned opportunities to raise children's awareness of their local environment. This includes inviting visitors into the nursery, such as the police, fire service, dentist and road safety officer. This helps to raise children's awareness of different roles in the community. Children have been involved in fund raising activities to obtain a guide dog for a blind person and to help the local hospice. Staff create a participative environment in which children make lots of choices and decisions. They learn to express their own needs and preferences and very actively contribute to their own experiences. Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered.

Parents enjoy warm and friendly relationships with staff, so that children feel very secure. Staff talk through policies and procedures and share information about the 'Birth to three matters' framework when children start at the nursery. Policies are available to parents by request, as they are kept in the office. High priority is given to ensuring parents are well informed about their child's daily activities and experiences. Staff share information about younger children's routines and activities using a daily care sheet. Parents know how to raise any concerns and feel very confident to do so. The Ofsted poster is clearly displayed. The provider is aware of current guidance relating to dealing with complaints but has not clearly updated the complaints policy to reflect this. A clear system for recording of complaints has not yet been established, although no complaints have been received.

The partnership with parents and carers is good. Parents receive clear information about the Foundation Stage curriculum. Photographic displays of nursery activities give parents insight into the varied activities which support their child's progress. Parents are readily able to access and contribute to their child's development record. Regular newsletters keep parents updated about nursery issues and current topics. They include ideas to help parents to become actively involved in their child's learning. A comments box is always available in the foyer to encourage parents to share their views. For example, parents have recently raised concerns about how children's awareness of letters is introduced and staff have worked with the teacher to support planning for appropriate home link activities. Staff share information about children's progress routinely and formal parents' evenings are regularly planned. A book library has been developed to encourage parents to share books with their child.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

The nursery environment is very well organised to promote children's welfare, learning and safety. Staff are deployed very effectively to ensure appropriate levels of care and supervision. Daily routines are clearly planned to support children's varying needs and interests. Staff sensitively support and follow children's interests. Space and resources are mostly organised well to promote children's independent participation.

Leadership and management is good. Staff work together effectively as a cohesive team. Ongoing self-evaluation procedures help them to monitor progress and identify areas for improvement. Systematic observations of children help staff to identify children's interests and

plan for their progress. There are systems in place to monitor the quality of teaching and its impact on children's learning.

Comprehensive policies and procedures are effectively implemented, so that children's welfare is safeguarded. Recruitment and vetting procedures are fully robust, ensuring that staff are suitably skilled and experienced to work with children. Clear procedures are in place to ensure that no person who is not vetted may have sole charge of children. Well planned induction procedures, together with ongoing staff monitoring and appraisal, ensure staff are able to support children's individual needs. Most required documentation which contributes to children's health, safety and well-being is in place. The registration certificate is displayed but is not readily visible to parents. Parents' wishes regarding their child's care clearly influence day-to-day practice and clear written agreements are recorded.

Overall, the provision meets the needs of the range of the children for whom it provides.

Improvements since the last inspection

At the last inspection the nursery was asked to enhance the system for conducting risk assessments to minimise identified hazards and to review the policy regarding administration of non-prescribed medication. They were also asked to develop planning to enable more creative play for toddlers and to increase resources which promote children's awareness of diversity. With regard to nursery education they were asked to extend opportunities for children to find out about their local environment and extend resources which develop children's understanding of joining techniques.

The nursery now has clearly identified risk assessment procedures in place, which are implemented and monitored systematically so that children are kept safe. The policy regarding administration of non-prescribed medicines is clearly defined and implemented. Parents are clearly consulted about administration of all medication and are asked to give prior written consent. This ensures that children's well-being is safeguarded.

Staff have introduced planning for continuous provision for toddlers, so that they are able to access play activities to support all areas of their development freely throughout the day. This enables them to make independent choices, as they plan their play according to their own interests. This has enhanced their opportunities for creativity. Staff have given increased consideration to ways in which children's awareness of different cultures and abilities can be raised. Children access a good range of factual books and are able to dress up in clothes from other cultures. There are many images around the nursery to stimulate their interest in difference and diversity. Staff acknowledge that further review of the planning process could help them more systematically find ways to introduce cultural and diversity issues into children's everyday experiences.

Outings in the local community are not routinely planned, as the provider is not sufficiently satisfied that children's safety could be assured. Children have well planned opportunity to learn about their local environment through the planned contribution of regular visitors to the nursery. Limited use of the outdoor play areas at certain times of year means that staff do not always fully maximise opportunities offered by the immediate outdoor environment. Children

are independently able to access tools and resources, which enable them to design and build, within the continuous provision. However, the range of resources available, which prompt exploration of different joining techniques, is still quite limited, although staff do continuously review the quality of children's play and their access to resources.

Complaints since the last inspection

Since 1 April 2004 there have been no complaints made to Ofsted that required the provider or Ofsted to take any action in order to meet the National Standards.

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 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 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):

- review and update the child protection policy to reflect current guidance and ensure staff clearly understand recording procedures, specifically with regard to recording of existing injuries
- review planning of activities and use of space in the baby room to enhance babies' independent opportunities to access resources and enjoy exploratory experiences
- update the complaints policy to reflect current guidance and develop a clear system for recording of complaints.

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):

- further develop planning to promote learning using the outdoor environment and extend children's opportunities to enjoy large physical activities
- further develop systems for monitoring of children's progress and planning next steps in all areas of their learning.

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the leaflet *Complaints about Ofsted Early Years: concerns or complaints about Ofsted's role in regulating and inspecting childcare and early education (HMI ref no 2599)* which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk