



Stepping Stones

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	EY297420
Inspection date	13 September 2005
Inspector	Clare Moore

Setting Address	Manor Infant School, Teachers Way, Holbury, Southampton, Hampshire, SO45 2QG
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Telephone number

E-mail

Registered person	Stepping Stones Pre-School
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Type of inspection	Integrated
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Type of care	Sessional care
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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 satisfactory.

WHAT SORT OF SETTING IS IT?

Stepping Stones Pre-School opened in 2005 and operates from three rooms in the Manor Infant School. The setting was previously known as Colors Pre-School. It is managed by a voluntary management committee made up of parents of children at the pre-school and members of the local community. It is situated in Holbury in the Waterside area of Southampton. A maximum of 24 children may attend the Pre-School at any one time. The Pre-School is open each weekday during term times

from 09.15 to 11.45 and on Mondays there is an afternoon session from 12:20 to 14:50. Children regularly use the enclosed outdoor play area.

There are currently 30 children aged from 2 to under 5 years on roll. Of these 17 children receive funding for nursery education. Children attend from the local area. The pre-school welcomes children with special educational needs and also children who speak English as an additional language.

The pre-school employs six staff. Three of the staff, including the manager hold appropriate early years qualifications. One member of staff is working towards a qualification.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Children's health is very effectively promoted. They are served with nutritious foods at snack times. Fruit is offered and a choice of water or milk to drink. Children are encouraged to develop skills and become independent at snack times through serving themselves and being supported and encouraged by staff. Specific needs of children such as allergies and sensitivities are carefully recorded and good systems are in place to ensure their needs are met. Children are able to select vigorous activities or to engage in something quieter according to their needs.

Children enjoy fresh air, exercise and physical play in the garden with a variety of activities which gives them opportunities to balance, run, throw and catch balls, use ride-on toys and play games. This helps children to develop physical skills and to keep fit and active. They are protected in the sun because sun protection creams are applied, hats are worn and they are encouraged to keep in the shade. Children make good progress in their physical development as they use their bodies in different position when taking part in action rhymes and dancing. They develop fine control when they use scissors, glue spreaders, crayons and tools for working with sand and play dough.

Children are cared for in a comfortable clean environment and they learn about the need for good personal hygiene. Children's toys and equipment are clean and well maintained. Children are helped to be independent by managing their toilet needs and washing their hands as soon as they are able to with sensitive support from staff. An effective sickness policy helps to prevent the spread of illness and cross infection.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

Risks to children are minimised effectively because the setting has a high level of security. Risk assessments are carried out regularly both indoors and outside and all medicines and cleaning materials are stored safely. Fire safety procedures are clear

and are practised regularly. First aid kits are available and most staff are qualified in first aid so that action can be taken to treat children in the event of an emergency. Children are carefully supervised during the time they spend in the care of the pre-school. Children learn to become aware of safety issues such as walking rather than running indoors and road safety which helps them to take responsibility and also prevent injury to themselves and others.

Staff have a good understanding of Child Protection Procedures which helps to ensure that children's needs are met.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is satisfactory.

Children are relaxed and happy at the pre-school due to carefully considered settling in procedures and attention to individual needs. Children are confident and demonstrate a sense of belonging as they arrive and exchange greetings with staff.

Children spend their time purposefully in a variety of ways which helps them to enjoy their time at the pre-school and maintain interest. They enjoy books, games, music and there is a wide variety of resources, for example colourful informative wall displays, friezes and a wide range of accessible toys and equipment. However these are not always used effectively. Children explore sound and texture using shakers, craft materials and artefacts connected with topics, for example the sea and sea-shore. All children are supported in developing language skills because staff talk and listen to them. They enjoy songs, rhymes books and stories. There are opportunities for children to become independent in some aspects of self-care but this is not often extended.

NURSERY EDUCATION

The quality of the teaching and learning is satisfactory. Sound progress is being made by 3 and 4 year olds towards the early years goals. Children enjoy their activities and can freely access activities from resources that are set out. There is a good range of resources in storage which is less accessible to children to self select. Children use their imagination when they explore paint, play with small worlds and move to music. They enjoy rhymes, puzzles, books, stories and games which help them to practise number and language skills. Staff meet together and share their ideas to contribute to topic and activity plans.

Children are motivated and interested in what they do, for example they look at musical instruments and try to predict the sound they make, and explore the sand. They enjoy imaginative play when they use the role play area as a hospital, vets surgery and home setting. They explore with painting, growing bulbs and a variety of construction.

Children are confident speakers and listeners. They practise and develop skills as they take part in conversations with staff and other children. Their vocabulary is extended through talking about holidays and other topics at circle time with questions and encouragement from staff. Questioning is sometimes limited because staff are

not confident about their knowledge of the early learning goals. Children learn about number through rhymes, games and practical activities such as counting up children present and counting on in rhymes. They explore space, shape and measure as they wriggle through tunnels, compare shapes and see how much they have grown on the height chart. They practise reading skills when they identify their names at snack time, however this is not always effective as challenges are sometimes not at the most appropriate level. They make marks, draw and share books and stories. Written observations and records are limited and do not yet clearly show children's achievements or how they will be used to help children to make progress. Plans are clearly linked to the areas and the next steps of learning to ensure coverage across the areas of learning.

The outdoor environment is used effectively to extend learning experiences through, for example a road safety setting.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

Children behave very well, they enjoy playing together and they develop a sense of responsibility by helping to tidy away before snack times. Younger children are supported with sharing and taking turns which helps them to work harmoniously with others. Children and staff use discussion at circle time to develop rules which helps children to understand the reasons and to take responsibility. Children develop a positive attitude to difference when they explore festivals, foods, and role play different families and homes. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered.

Children are valued as individuals. They are happy and settled. They play together well, enjoy each other's company and are at ease with the staff. Children with special needs are welcomed and can be effectively supported as staff are qualified in this area. They also have established links with other agencies for support and further expertise.

The partnership with parents and carers is good. Parents are warmly welcomed into the setting to help settle children and provide information about home routines, allergies and interests. This is used to help children develop confidence, feel at ease and develop a sense of belonging. Children enjoy attending and arrive confidently looking forward to the session. Parents are offered a book lending reading scheme which helps them to take an active role in their children's learning. They are given comprehensive information about how the setting runs, newsletters and information about activities. They are invited into the setting to discuss children's progress reports, and are welcomed if they can offer voluntary help or support.

Organisation

The organisation is satisfactory.

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

are supported because staff spend much of their time working directly with them, know them well and are warmly responsive to their needs. Space and resources are organised appropriately with different areas used for different activities, for example sand and water play, role play, comfortable quiet room with a book area and a computer. Storage is sometimes clearly labelled but is not yet often child accessible. This reduces opportunities available to children to self select.

Policies and procedures are clearly set out, regularly reviewed shared with all staff and made available to parents which contributes to children's well being in the nursery. Most of the required documentation is in place and there are set induction procedures and training for staff. Staff are encouraged to share their ideas and take an active role in their professional development. There are measures to cover contingencies if staff are away so that ratios are maintained. Children can be treated in the event of an emergency because permissions have been obtained from parents to cover medical treatment or advice.

The leadership and management are satisfactory. The staff team work together and are committed to continuing to develop, reflect upon and improve education and care. Representatives from the setting are invited to meetings with local nurseries, pre-schools and an advisory teacher to share good practice. This is not always used effectively as staff are not always able to attend and share their knowledge.

Improvements since the last inspection

Not applicable

Complaints since the last inspection

There are no complaints to report

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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):

- devise a procedure to be taken if an allegation of abuse is made against a member of staff

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):

- improve staff knowledge of the foundation stage of learning and the early learning goals
- develop systems and records to assess where children are in their learning and use this information to inform planning and move children on to the next stage in their learning
- provide further opportunities for children to be independent in selecting resources and self-care

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