

Stepping Stones Playgroup (Fairwarp)

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	109522
Inspection date	14 May 2007
Inspector	Fran Fielder
Setting Address	Fairwarp Village Hall, Nursery Lane, Fairwarp, Uckfield, East Sussex, TN22 3BD
Telephone number	07712 851681
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Registered person	Stepping Stones Playgroup (Fairwarp)
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 Playgroup opened in 1968. It operates from one large room with toilet and kitchen facilities in a village hall in Fairwarp. The group serves the local village and surrounding areas.

There are currently 31 children from two to four years on roll. This includes 27 children who receive funding for nursery education. Children attend for a variety of sessions. The setting currently supports a number of children with learning difficulties and makes provision for children who speak English as an additional language.

The group opens on Mondays and Fridays from 09.30 until 12.30 and on Wednesdays from 09.30 until 15.00. The group is also registered to operate at a hall in Maresfield and this provision opens on Tuesday afternoons from 12.00 until 15.00.

There are five members of staff who work with the children. Of these, three have a recognised early years qualifications. The setting receives support from the local authority.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Children play in a clean environment where staff follow good hygiene procedures to prevent cross infection. Children learn how to wash their hands properly and know this prevents the spread of germs. Children see to their personal needs such as visiting the lavatory and wiping their noses. All information regarding dietary and medical needs is available to staff to ensure children's individual needs are met. All staff hold a current first aid certificate. This means they can quickly assess the seriousness of accidents and act accordingly.

Children and staff sit together at snack time making it a very social event. Children enjoy preparing snacks such as bananas, grapes, apples and rice cakes. The wide choice every day means all tastes are catered for and that children develop healthy eating habits. Children have a choice of milk or water with their snack and pour their own drink. This encourages independence. They plant and grow a wide range of vegetables including carrots, tomatoes, runner beans, peas and sweet corn.

Many physical activities keep children healthy while they have fun. Indoors they enjoy experimenting with movement by bending, stretching and dancing along to music. Outside children run around and negotiate space well. They balance on stilts, kick balls, throw and catch beanbags and manoeuvre wheeled toys.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

Staff greet parents and children as they arrive making them feel welcome. The hall is very well laid out with space for quiet and active play. There are tabletop and floor activities making the environment accessible to all. Well-chosen resources are stimulating and children are keen to explore as soon as they arrive.

The premises are safe and staff are extremely vigilant. They are very well deployed ensuring children's safety at all times. Gentle reminders ensure children learn how to keep themselves safe. They know, for example, that running on a wet surface may cause them to slip and hurt themselves. Staff carry out regular risk assessments to ensure children's safety indoors, outside and on outings.

Well-trained staff have an excellent understanding of child protection issues. All are fully aware of the signs and symptoms of abuse and their responsibility to report concerns. This safeguards children's welfare.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

Children play in a lively, well-organised environment and know the routines well. On arrival, they find their names, put away their books bags and quickly involve themselves in an activity. When the tambourine rattles, they know it is time to stop and listen. Spontaneous singing indicates how secure and happy children feel. They are confident and enthusiastic and readily approach staff for support. This demonstrates that good, trusting relationships make children feel secure and valued.

Staff plan well for children under three years. They use the Birth to three matters framework to provide stimulating activities that support all aspects of development. Children play with a wide range of toys and equipment that are stimulating and fun. They enjoy and learn through a range of interesting activities that are appealing. All children learn and benefit from regular visitors to the group such as a nurse, fire officers and farm animals.

Nursery Education

The quality of teaching and learning is good. Staff plan a wide range of activities that support children's learning in all areas. They observe the children and use the information gathered to assess children's level of achievement. This allows them to plan for individual learning needs the following week. Staff are very good role models and their enthusiasm ensures children have fun while learning. They ask open-ended questions, join in games, use good explanation and encourage independence. Their skill and knowledge of the Foundation Stage of learning ensures all children make very good progress towards the early learning goals.

Children's progress in their personal, social and emotional development is outstanding. They are independent, confident and curious. They concentrate extremely well and have a positive attitude towards learning. They work well as part of a group and take turns when speaking. They willingly share with others and are developing good relationships.

Staff value conversation and encourage children to relate events. As a result, children express themselves well using good vocabulary to describe what they are doing or making. The range of opportunities to write for a purpose is particularly impressive. Children love to write their name on their work, to write envelopes at the 'post office' and to make a list of words to describe friends. Children enjoy singing and listening to stories. The book corner is attractive but is continuously developing to allow children greater access to a range of well-known favourite stories. Children learn to link sounds and letters through the use of 'Jolly Phonics'.

Children count competently and use their fingers to represent numbers. They enjoy singing songs such as 'Five Little Monkeys'. This develops their understanding of calculation and staff make this especially enjoyable with the excellent use of visual aids. Children use mathematical language to describe size and talk about shapes when making models of houses and when playing with dough.

Children observe the weather and know that although it is raining they might see a rainbow because the sun is also shining. They explore and search for hidden treasure in a deep tub of rice. Planting fruit and vegetables such as pumpkins, strawberries and cucumber help children see what living things need to grow. Children derive a great deal of pleasure from feeding lambs with bottled milk. While working on a topic about homes the children enjoy making houses using a variety of materials and particularly enjoy practising their DIY skills.

A wide range of small tools help children develop good hand and eye coordination. They show very good control when using pens, pencils, rollers and cutters. Children act out a range of scenarios in the role-play area that allows them to build on their experience of the world. They love to dress up as monsters but are always careful to explain it is only pretend in case they frighten somebody.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

Children play in an inclusive environment where staff are respectful, supportive and encourage individuality. Children have access to a range of resources that ensure they develop a positive attitude towards diversity. They celebrate festivals and learn about different cultures through a range of activities and resources. The provision for children who have learning difficulties is very good. Staff's skill and knowledge ensure all children receive individual support where needed.

Behaviour management is excellent. Children are very polite and behave beautifully because staff give honest praise and help children make positive choices. Staff very skilfully manage any potentially challenging behaviour in a supportive and consistent way. This means children respond positively and develop a clear understanding of right and wrong. Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered.

The partnership with parents and carers is good. Staff are friendly and approachable making parents feel welcome and part of the group. They receive a prospectus that gives general information about the group. Newsletters inform parents of topics and events. They also offer suggestions as to how parents can support their children's learning and development. There are both formal and informal meetings to discuss children's progress and the regular use of questionnaires allows parents to contribute towards improving the service. Social events allow staff, committee and parents to meet regularly. This builds good relationships and benefits the children greatly.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

Children benefit from playing in a well-planned environment that allows them to gain fully from all activities. The key worker system and very effective staff deployment ensures children receive good support at all times. Recruitment is effective although there is no formal induction programme for new staff. Regular meetings keep staff up to date with any changes within the setting. Regular appraisals assess the ongoing suitability of staff and help identify training needs. Staff have opportunities to attend relevant courses and regularly update their knowledge in areas such as child protection and first aid.

Leadership and management are good. Staff work extremely well together under the guidance of a well-organised, knowledgeable and committed manager. All associated with the group are enthusiastic and committed to their work. Very good support and guidance allows staff to provide a stimulating well-balanced programme. Continuous evaluation of the education help staff identify the effectiveness of activities. This means they can, where needed, adapt activities to support children's development. The new manager is building close links with the local schools. This makes children's move from pre-school into formal education smooth and trouble free.

All required documentation is in place and the policies and procedures are regularly reviewed. Well-maintained records ensure the safe and effective management of the setting in order to promote children's welfare. The provision meets the needs of the range of children for whom it provides.

Improvements since the last inspection

At the last care inspection, the group were asked to review the policies and procedures and to ensure children have access to a range of resources and activities that reflect diversity.

All policies and procedures have been reviewed and updated to ensure they reflect practice and include all relevant detail. Staff follow the procedures to ensure children's welfare.

Positive images of all people in society are always available. This is an aspect of the group that continues to develop. The use of a mobile toy library means children have access to a good range of resources that encourage a positive attitude towards diversity.

Complaints since the last inspection

Since the last inspection 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.

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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):

- introduce a formal induction programme for new 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):

- continue to develop the book area

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