

Steps

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	EY269942
Inspection date	30 January 2008
Inspector	Kate Bryan
Setting Address	The Old School, 40 Loughborough Road, Shepshed, Loughborough, LE12 9DN
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Registered person	The Trustees of Steps - Leicstershire Conductive Education Centre
Type of inspection	Integrated
Type of care	Full day care, Out of School 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?

Steps Nursery was established in 2003 and is run by a voluntary committee. It operates from two rooms with attendant facilities in a converted school premises in Shepshed. It serves Leicestershire and the surrounding areas.

There are currently three children from three years to eight years on roll of which all are funded for nursery education. Children attend for a variety of sessions. The setting provides specialist care for children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The setting does not support any children who speak English as an additional language at present.

The group opens five days a week term times only, sessions are from 09:30 until 15:30. A summer play scheme also operates.

There are five staff working with the children and all have early years qualifications to Level three and above. The setting receives support from the local education authority.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Children are cared for in clean and well-maintained premises. Their good health is promoted through a policy that requests that infectious children are not brought to the nursery until they are symptom free for 48 hours. Children also use liquid soap and a hand dryer so that the risks of cross-infection are minimised. Children are in well-established routines, such as washing their hands after toileting and before food and understand why they do this because staff have discussed being healthy with them. Nappy changing is hygienic as this is undertaken in specified areas and anti-bacterial spray is used to reduce cross-contamination. All relevant records and consents are in place to ensure children's health is well promoted.

Children have some opportunities to use the outside area which has a range of equipment to promote their whole body skills such as ride on toys and a slide. Children enjoy a very good range of indoor exercise daily as they have an individual plan with a range of exercises in the morning, these are then extended and built on to increase challenges. Their small hand skills are promoted effectively as they use glue sticks, dig soil with a range of spades and use watering cans to water seeds.

Children bring their own packed lunches and meal times are used effectively to promote children's awareness of their faces and how they eat as they look at themselves in mirrors. They are aware of healthy eating as staff talk to them about this and they have enjoyed activities such as making and decorating gingerbread men. This means they have good practical activities to support their learning. Children have their health and dietary needs met because staff work well with parents and they liaise regularly with them to ensure that all children's individual dietary requirements are followed.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

Children are cared for in a welcoming, safe and secure indoor and outdoor environment where they are in groups which reflect their needs and age. For example, a group for children with Down's Syndrome is in operation. Their art work is also displayed which makes the environment attractive and gives children a good sense of belonging. Staff have also made the environment special for children with resources and displays within sight and sound of children who spend time on their tummies and backs. Children have easy access to a very good range of quality materials and resources to support their individual needs. For example, rods with noise and light which encourage children to exercise. All resources comply with current standards to ensure children's safety is well promoted.

Children are kept safe within the group. Staff maintain good supervision and identify and minimise hazards by carrying out daily risk assessments on equipment and areas used by the children. Effective procedures are in place to ensure the premises are secure and to monitor children's arrival and collection times. For example, a receptionist is on duty and admittance is via an intercom system. Children learn to take responsibility for keeping themselves safe through daily routines and staff clearly explain safe practices. For example, children practise falling and use resources such as steps so they learn to negotiate obstacles in the real world.

A useful child protection procedure is in place and children are well protected because staff have a good understanding and knowledge of this. Several staff have attended training in this area and are secure in reporting concerns appropriately.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

The quality of teaching and learning is good. Children are making good progress towards the early learning goals. They are fully engaged in a wide range of interesting and exciting activities which are appropriate to their age and ability. They also persevere at these activities, for example pulling themselves on the plinth or sitting up. Children begin their day with assembly where they are encouraged to greet each other and staff and talk about their news. They show a strong sense of belonging as they talk about what is important to them, they listen to each other and learn to take turns as they confidently speak before the group. Children enjoy lots of warm interaction with staff who are interested in them and their achievements. Children enjoy learning and staff provide a relaxed and fun atmosphere in which children make good progress. Children understand what is expected of them because staff give instructions to them, for example 'We are standing' and they receive lots of praise for their accomplishments. Children are interested in the range of activities provided and the day is structured to promote their needs. However, this means they do not have a lot of child-led activities to promote their learning. They are learning to be independent as they take off their socks and feed themselves.

Children can select from a wide range of books and enjoy looking through these, staff also read to them and show them how print has meaning. Children use a wide range of materials to make marks and enjoy practising their writing skills as they form letters and their names. Children confidently use numbers during practical activities and daily routines such as counting how many are present at the group. They enjoy singing a variety of number rhymes and they are learning about basic addition and subtraction as they use figures to promote this. Children can use a range of mathematical language to describe size and position and have a growing awareness of shapes. For example, they can pick a medium size ball from a range of three.

Children's knowledge and understanding of the world is developing well. They are used to technology as they speak into a 'Big Mack' switch and also use the computer. Staff engage them in conversations about their families and children know their place in these. Children can construct using building blocks and play dough and learn to manipulate these well. Their awareness of the wider world is well promoted as they acknowledge a range of festivals and learn about the needs of others. Children also learn about the natural world as they discuss the seasons and plant seeds. Children can join in with a good repertoire of songs and can match actions to these, they also use musical instruments to broaden their experience of sound and shape. A sensory garden is in place at the group which helps children to explore their senses well and they have access to a range of textures such as felt and stipples. Children's small hand skills are developed effectively in activities such as manipulating the computer mouse and rolling out play dough.

Long, medium and short term planning is in place and daily plans detail specific goals for children, however, these are not linked to the stepping stones and sessions are not always evaluated in the planning. At present there are also no formal assessments for children which makes it difficult to see what children have learnt and need to learn next. The group are working towards an assessment which combines conductive education with the Foundation Stage so children's individual progress in all areas is clear. Staff have a good awareness of the Foundation Stage and use a good range of questions to extend children's learning. For example, a story

was used effectively to promote children's counting and to encourage them to remember the story.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

Children's needs are well met because staff work very closely with parents to ensure they know the children as individuals. All children are treated with equal concern and respect and are encouraged to participate in daily routines such as assembly. A useful equal opportunities policy is in place which underpins staff practice, for example as they provide a balanced curriculum. This ensures children have a good awareness of the wider world and resources are also used to provide them with positive images. Staff ensure that children benefit from differences and diversity as they factor a range of festivals into planning which extends their experiences.

Children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities receive an excellent service at the group and staff ensure that children receive one-to-one support if this is required. The group works very closely with parents and other professionals to meet children's differing and sometimes complex needs. Each child has an individual care regimen which focuses on their spiritual, emotional, physical, social and cognitive needs in an holistic programme. This ensures all areas of their development are promoted effectively and they develop as a person. Children are encouraged to do as much as possible for themselves and are really pleased when staff praise them for their achievements, such as walking using their frames. Staff and children use Makaton so all children feel welcome at the group and symbols and Board Maker symbols are used to promote inclusion.

Children behave well and sensible boundaries are set which take into account their age and stage of development. All staff are aware of this so children receive consistent treatment and know what is expected of them. A behaviour management policy is in place which states that simple rules, such as sharing, will be made known to children and parents so that a happy atmosphere is maintained.

Children settle well because staff ensure parents can stay with them for as long as is needed to help them feel secure. Staff work closely with parents to share information about their child's progress and are available to be spoken with daily. A daily diary is also kept so parents can share in their child's achievements and this also lets staff know about their adventures at home. Parents receive a good range of information about the setting which includes a prospectus, information on a parents' notice board and newsletters.

The partnership with parents and carers is good. Parents are kept well informed about their child's learning as progress is reviewed regularly with all the people involved in their child's care. However, limited information about the Foundation Stage and areas of learning are shared with parents. A baseline assessment is completed when children enter the group which means staff can build on their strengths and interests. Parents have good opportunities to be involved in their child's learning as they help to set targets with staff and staff send home ideas to help via the daily diary. Children's social, moral, spiritual and cultural development is fostered. Staff introduce children to their own and other cultures appropriately, they support children in behaving well and are beginning to promote children's personal, social and emotional skills effectively.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

The children's varying needs are met due to the good organisation of space, time and daily routines which enables them to feel secure. Efficient induction procedures ensure that policies and procedures are well known by all staff and contribute to the welfare, care and learning of the children who attend. A comprehensive operational plan is in place which is available to parents so they have a clear understanding of how the group looks after children. Staff have yearly appraisals in which their training needs are discussed and training is given a high priority at the nursery. Staff have attended a range of courses which include inclusion, positioning children, early communication skills, gross and fine motor development and the Foundation Stage. However, training records have not been up dated which means that a clear overview of staff qualifications is not available for parents. All staff have a childcare qualification and have worked together for some time, this means children benefit from people who know them well. Levels of staff support are also good which means children have their individual needs met.

Leadership and management of the nursery education is good. The management team have a shared vision of providing a quality service to enable all children to reach their full potential. The manager also understands the nursery's strengths and the areas for development which will help children to progress. Staff performance is monitored closely as the manager works alongside staff and can talk to them about issues as they arise. The manager also ensures that nursery education is delivered effectively to children as she oversees planning at the group. Overall the provision meets the needs of the range of children for whom it provides.

Improvements since the last inspection

At the last inspection the provider agreed to ensure that fire drills are carried out periodically and ensure that parents sign the record of accidents. All records and practices are now in place which enhances safety measures for children.

No recommendations were made at the last inspection of nursery education.

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):

- ensure that an up to date record is kept of staff training.

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):

- provide more opportunities for children to lead their own activities
- make sure planning is linked to the stepping stones
- ensure that assessments are in place which clearly show what children have learnt and need to learn next
- provide more information for parents about the Foundation Stage and the areas of 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