



# Stepping Together Pre-School

Inspection report for early years provision

<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	EY317221
<b>Inspection date</b>	20 June 2006
<b>Inspector</b>	Jill Dawn Butler
<b>Setting Address</b>	St. Lukes Church, Baxter Road, Ilford, Essex, IG1 2HN
<b>Telephone number</b>	020 8553 0061
<b>E-mail</b>	
<b>Registered person</b>	Redbridge Pre-School Learning Alliance
<b>Type of inspection</b>	Integrated
<b>Type of care</b>	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](http://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 Together Pre-School is run by the Pre-School Learning Alliance. It is a satellite provision of the Loxford Children's Centre. It opened in 2005 and operates from one playroom which is an extension to St. Luke's church hall. It is situated within a residential area of Ilford, on the outskirts of the town centre.

A maximum of 26 children may attend the pre-school at any one time. It is open each weekday from 9.30 a.m. to 12 noon, term-time only. All children share access to a

secure enclosed outdoor play area.

There are currently 29 children aged from two years to under five years on roll. Of these 17 children receive funding for nursery education. Children come from a local catchment area. The pre-school currently supports 1 child with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, and also currently supports 12 children who speak English as an additional language.

The pre-school employs five staff. Four of the staff, including the acting joint managers, hold appropriate early years qualifications.

## **THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION**

### **Helping children to be healthy**

The provision is good.

Children are well protected from infection by practitioners consistently promoting good hygiene practices. For example, tables are wiped and disinfected before and after snack times and practitioners wear gloves when serving food and dealing with bodily fluids. Children are developing good understanding of how to follow their own personal hygiene routines, for example, they know to wash their hands before snack times, after using the toilet, and following creative play activities.

Children's good health, including their oral health and hygiene, is effectively promoted by the provision implementing appropriate policies and procedures. These are consistently reinforced, and children know, for example, to use a tissue to wipe their noses, which prevents cross infection. Additionally, they learnt the importance of regularly cleaning their teeth from a recent visit by a dental nurse. Children can expect to be treated appropriately in an emergency situation, with an adequately stocked first aid box easily accessible, and three practitioners having current first aid qualifications. All parental consents are in place, which enables practitioners to respond to any incidents without delay.

Children engage in a good range of physical activities. Excellent use is made of the outdoors area, which children can access at all times. They play on a climbing frame with a slide, tunnels and platforms. The latter part of each session further promotes children's physical development when various wheeled vehicles, hoops, balls, and sometimes a parachute are made available.

Snacks are presented to children for an extended period during the pre-school session. This enables them to choose when, as well as what, they want to eat and drink. The snack is nutritious and varied, normally consisting of fruit, salads and cheese, with a choice of milk and water to drink. Individual children's dietary requirements are known and effectively adhered to. Children sit together in small groups when eating their snack and happily chat. These times present opportunities for them to extend their social and emotional development. Children's independence is well promoted when they make their own sandwiches and pour their own drinks. Parents are encouraged to contribute to cooking activities, for example, at the recent international food day. This promotes children's enjoyment and understanding of a

range of differing food tastes.

### **Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe**

The provision is good.

The premises provide a bright and welcoming environment. The visual displays of children's arts and crafts activities and the layout of the various play and learning areas contribute to the premises presenting as child centred, attractive and inviting. Children move around safely and negotiate equipment and resources well. Entry doors are kept locked, which controls access for visitors and keeps children secure.

Safety checks on the premises, furniture and equipment are undertaken prior to sessions, and regular risk assessment audits are undertaken. Children can access resources safely, and are encouraged to take care of their own personal safety and that of others. When undertaking activities and eating their snack they sit on small chairs and tables, which are comfortable and safe. They also sit on mats on the floor and comfortable small settees for some activities and large group sessions.

Practitioners provide effective supervision, and demonstrate clear and consistent boundaries to help children learn about rules, for example, why it is necessary not to run, not to splash water or throw sand. Children are well protected in the event of a fire. Fire drills are regularly undertaken, which are recorded and evaluated, and there is appropriate fire fighting equipment and signage around the premises.

Practitioners have good understanding of their roles and responsibilities with regard to child protection, which effectively safeguards children's welfare. They are aware of how to implement relevant procedures, liaise appropriately with outside agencies and undertake required recordings. All practitioners are vetted and an appropriate collection of children procedure is implemented.

### **Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do**

The provision is good.

Children are confident and happy, enjoy their activities and are purposefully engaged in their play. They are able to choose from a varied and interesting range of resources and activities. The routine during the pre-school sessions is effective and includes time for active and quieter pursuits. There is a good mix of child initiated and adult led activities. Extension activities are presented to provide additional challenges for children, for example, plumbers' pipes are added to water play and children use paint brushes to "paint" the fences with water. Children communicate and participate well and show high levels of engagement during large group activities, for example, story and singing times. The curriculum is well planned, with appropriate themes running through. It is clear that the current theme is transport, with an interesting range of activities taking place around this, for example, making a transport video. Planning does not yet specifically take account of the outcomes for children under three, as it is not guided by the Birth to three matters framework.

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. Practitioners make good use of planned and routine activities to extend children's learning. They utilize effective questioning techniques to stimulate thought and challenge children. Planning takes place within the framework of the Foundation Stage curriculum. The managers, but not all practitioners, have detailed knowledge of the stepping stones and early learning goals. Good practice takes place in terms of ongoing observations and assessments of children, together with good use of photographs and scrap books of children's work. However, children's progress and development is inconsistently documented, and targets for next steps in learning for individual children are not sufficiently evaluated and incorporated into planning.

Children show good levels of concentration. They play an active role in their learning as they make their own choices about what they want to play with. Children learn to share and negotiate, as well as support each other in their activities, for example, when developing role play scenarios. They comply well with the rota systems for use of popular wheeled vehicles during physical play sessions. Children confidently ask for help and support, which is readily given by practitioners, for example, when designing and constructing houses with differing sized wooden blocks. Children are well behaved, and comply with ground rules, for example, wearing an apron when playing with water and painting, and washing their hands before eating their snack. They respond in a positive manner to instructions and patiently wait their turn when participating in the video project. Children develop their knowledge and awareness of a range of cultural traditions, through exploration during topic work, which enables them to learn about, and value, different beliefs and ways of life.

Children confidently contribute to discussions with practitioners and other children when pursuing activities. Children are asked open ended questions to extend their thinking, for example, what they will see at the forthcoming trip to the seaside and what creatures you see under water. Children enjoy looking at books throughout the session. They are encouraged to recognize familiar words, including their names, and link sounds and letters to reinforce literacy concepts. They are assisted in learning to write their own names on their artwork. Children enjoy mark marking with a range of media, including paint, pens, pencils, crayons and chinks, which are all easily accessible. They make marks in a range of contexts on large and small paper and card, at the easel and on the outdoor fences.

Opportunities are sometimes presented for children to practise counting in their play, for example, counting the number of grapes they are eating, and how to share fairly the number of play people with the number of children wanting to play with them. However, opportunities for counting, calculating and problem solving are not sufficiently routinely provided. Children learn about shapes in a variety of ways. They add squares and triangles to collages and enjoy a game involving matching patterns. They learn about volume and capacity as they use differing sized containers at the water tray and filling containers with differing pasta shapes and sizes. They compare sizes of fish and look for small and large ones.

Children get opportunities to play with a range of materials from the natural world, for example, wooden blocks of various shapes and sizes, rough and smooth stones and metal objects. They dig using real tools in tubs of peat. When outdoors they notice when aeroplanes fly by, and show interest in looking at a cat asleep in the

neighbouring grassed area. They are well supported as they create their own designs with a range of construction materials, some of which are magnetic. Children get routine access to a computer and show competence in using programmes independently, and using the mouse and keyboard. Children are consistently encouraged to talk about past, present and future events. Access to a good range of role play scenarios as well as invited visitors extends children's knowledge of features within their environment.

Children competently handle small objects such as glue spreaders, paintbrushes, tools for digging, and playdough tools such as rolling pins and cutters. They use a knife to butter bread when making their own sandwiches. They extend their knowledge of health and bodily awareness when talking about caring for babies, at snack time discussions and pointing to their body parts when singing "head, shoulders, knees and toes".

Children enjoy exploring the broad range of materials and textures when participating in arts and crafts activities. They use different types of paper, card, textiles and glitter to create their own individual art work. They enjoy using the paint programme on the computer. They are given routine opportunities to recognize colours as they play. They enjoy singing familiar songs and making music together, and participate enthusiastically in the associated movements.

### **Helping children make a positive contribution**

The provision is good.

An effective key worker system and good knowledge of children's home backgrounds ensures children's individual needs are well met. This knowledge and understanding is enhanced by the good practice of practitioners undertaking home visits prior to children starting at pre-school. Children become aware of the wider society as they explore a range of festivals and cultural traditions. For example, when it was the Chinese New Year children enjoyed sampling noodles, using chopsticks, experimenting with Chinese writing and produced good luck envelopes. There is a good range of resources and displays depicting positive images of cultural diversity. Both girls and boys are encouraged to participate in all activities to broaden their experiences. The provision demonstrates a very positive attitude towards promoting an inclusive environment and there are very good arrangements in place to support children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities.

Children's emotional well-being is well promoted. They feel valued and affirmed, develop self confidence and a sense of belonging. Children form positive relationships with each other. They sometimes hold hands when they are playing together. There are rarely disputes between children. They enjoy playing individually and are able to co-operate and participate well in both small and large group situations. Practitioners act as positive role models and children learn to understand right and wrong through consistent boundaries, praise and age appropriate management of behaviour. Clear explanations are given as to why certain behaviour may be inappropriate. This positive approach fosters children's social, moral, spiritual and cultural development.

Partnerships with parents who receive nursery education is good. Parents are warmly greeted by practitioners when they come to pre-school. Information is shared in a relaxed and friendly manner and parents feel confident to participate in pre-school activities. A range of methods promotes good communication with parents. For example, monthly informative newsletters are issued, a parents' notice board prominently displays useful information to read and a parents' forum is being established, which will consider the direction of the pre-school and parental involvement. One parents' session has so far taken place, when parents had the opportunity to talk to the key worker about their child's learning and achievements, and were issued with written reports on their child's progress.

## **Organisation**

The organisation is satisfactory.

The leadership and management of the nursery education is satisfactory. The acting joint managers have responsibility for day to day management, as well as curriculum planning. A permanent manager is to be appointed shortly. Both acting joint managers are suitably qualified and experienced. They work closely with the management team within the Pre-School Learning Alliance, who oversee operations. Regular practitioner meetings take place, but mostly in an informal ad hoc manner. Regulations are generally known and adhered to. There is good commitment to monitoring, reviewing and improving practice. For example, the managers are currently adding to written policies and procedures, and setting up a parent's forum. There are plans to participate in a quality assurance scheme in the near future.

Children are cared for in a well organised environment. Practitioners are deployed effectively, and have a clear understanding of their roles and responsibilities. Designated roles, for example, relating to child protection and health and safety are allocated between the joint managers. Due to practitioners having left or been promoted, there have been some changes over the past few months. However, these changes have been handled in such a way as to ensure the impact on the children is minimised, with parents kept fully informed. The number of practitioners working at the pre-school enables children to receive close attention.

Satisfactory record keeping takes place. Records are appropriate, with required information kept, and stored in a manner to protect confidentiality. The attendance record includes arrival and departure times of children and there is a comprehensive operational plan in place. The setting meets the needs of the range of children for whom it provides.

## **Improvements since the last inspection**

Not applicable.

## **Complaints since the last inspection**

There have been no complaints made to Ofsted since the last inspection.

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):

- improve curriculum planning for children under three by using an approach in line with the Birth to three matters framework

#### **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):

- consistently document children's progress, evaluate and target next steps in individual children's learning, and incorporate into planning
- provide additional opportunities for counting, calculating and using mathematical concepts for problem solving.

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the leaflet *Building better childcare: Compliments and concerns about inspectors' judgements* which is available from Ofsted's website: [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)