



Office for Standards
in Education

COMBINED INSPECTION REPORT

URN 509754

DfES Number: 582622

INSPECTION DETAILS

Inspection Date	28/09/2004
Inspector Name	Susan Patricia Foulger

SETTING DETAILS

Day Care Type	Sessional Day Care
Setting Name	Stepping Stones Pre-School
Setting Address	Church Road Leverington Wisbech Cambridgeshire PE13 5DD

REGISTERED PROVIDER DETAILS

Name	The Committee of Stepping Stones Pre-School 279382
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ORGANISATION DETAILS

Name	Stepping Stones Pre-School
Address	LEVERINGTON PRIMARY SCHOOL CHURCH END, LEVERINGTON WISBECH CAMBRIDGESHIRE PE13 5DD

ABOUT THE INSPECTION

The purpose of this inspection is to assure government, parents and the public of the quality and standard of day care in accordance with the National Standards for Under Eights Day Care and Childminding; and that the nursery education for funded three and four year old children is of an acceptable quality. Inspection of nursery education also identifies strengths and weaknesses so that providers can improve the quality of educational provision and help children to achieve the early learning goals (elgs) by the end of the Foundation Stage. This inspection report must be made available to all parents.

If the setting has been inspected previously, an action plan will have been drawn up to tackle issues identified. This inspection, therefore, must also assess what progress has been made in the implementation of this plan.

Information about the setting

Stepping Stones Pre-school was previously called Levrington playgroup. It opened in its new building in September 2002 and is committee run. It operates from the grounds of the Levrington primary school, which is near to Wisbech, and serves the local community.

The pre-school is registered to care for 16 children between the ages of 2 - 5. There are currently 36 children on roll. This includes 23 funded three year olds and 5 funded four year olds. Children attended for a variety of sessions. Currently, there are two children with special needs attending, but none who speak English as an additional language.

The pre-school opens five days a week during term time and provides nine sessions, five in the morning and four in the afternoon.

Three full time staff work with the children, two of who have early years qualifications at NVQ levels 3. The third member will be starting NVQ level 2 next March. Other adults include a student and a volunteer helper. Parent helpers are asked to help on a voluntary basis.

The setting receives support from a teacher from the Early Years Development and Childcare Partnership and a Special Needs Co-ordinator.

How good is the Day Care?

Stepping Stones Pre-school provides a good standard of care overall for children aged 2 - 5 years.

The pre-school is warm and welcoming and the premises, both inside and out, are brightly decorated and clean and well maintained.

The overall organisation of the pre-school is very successful. Records and policies are in place, but some updates and inclusions are needed which are in hand.

Adults involved in the pre-school work as a happy team who support and encourage each other. Children are well supervised and staff are effectively deployed both inside and out thus ensuring that the children are kept safe.

Health and hygiene practices are clear, although the administration of medicines need to be recorded centrally. Snacks are healthy and nutritious and special dietary needs taken into account.

The quality of care and learning for children is excellent. Children arrive with enthusiasm and are eager to come in. Children are confident, happy and well cared for. Those with special needs are welcomed into the group and well integrated. Child protection procedures are in place.

The pre-school is very well equipped and children are able to select toys for themselves. Behaviour is excellent and the quality of the pre-school educational experience is especially effective.

Relationships with parents and carers is very good and parents are highly complimentary about the pre-school. They are kept informed and involved in the pre-school in a variety of ways.

What has improved since the last inspection?

At the last inspection, the pre-school was asked to ensure the safety of the children while exiting the new building. The steps to the outside garden and the fire exit have now been made non slip and are safe in all weathers. They were also asked to display their public liability insurance certificate; this is now sited on the outside notice board just inside the entrance gate.

What is being done well?

- The group have experienced and qualified staff who have a clear understanding of their roles and responsibilities, resources are well organised and the children's needs are met very effectively.
- The lay out of the room is well thought out and helps the children to feel secure and confident. Especially effective is the sensory area.
- The staff's relationship with the children is excellent. Children are happy and confident in their care and the staff are good role models. The staff and committee are a close, well matched team who value and support each other.
- The pre-school provides a stimulating range of toys and resources which meet each child's individual needs and promotes their self-esteem.
- The pre-school has a good understanding of equal opportunity practice and resources are good. Resources reflect positive images of culture, ethnicity, gender and disability.
- The children with special needs who attend the pre-school are valued and included and their families welcomed.

- Behaviour management is excellent. Children behave well and respond positively to the adults. Explanations are always given and praise and encouragement is used at all times. Children are encouraged to share and be kind to each other.
- Relationships with parents and carers are successful. Parent questionnaires are complimentary and these were backed up verbally when the inspector spoke to parents. Regular newsletters help to keep the parents informed. Most communication is verbal and takes place when the children arrive or are collected, but home diaries are used extensively.

An aspect of outstanding practice:

The sensory area, which can be cordoned off by a voile curtain, gives autistic children, especially, a calm retreat from the group if needed. The wall collage, which involves all the senses, is an exciting display for the children which they still interact with even though it was first introduced last term.

What needs to be improved?

- the recording of the administration of medicines
- policies

Outcome of the inspection

Good

CONDITIONS OF REGISTRATION

All registered persons must comply with all conditions of registration included on his/her certificate of registration.

As a result of this inspection conditions of registration have been imposed / varied / removed and a new certificate of registration will be issued.

WHAT NEEDS TO BE DONE NEXT?

The Registered Person should have regard to the following recommendations by the time of the next inspection

Std	Recommendation
7	keep a central written record, signed by parents, of medicines given to children

INSPECTION OF THE NURSERY EDUCATION PROVISION FOR FUNDED THREE AND FOUR YEAR OLDS.

How effective is the nursery education?

The provision for nursery education at Stepping Stones Pre-school is of high quality. Children are making very good progress towards the early learning goals.

The quality of teaching is very good. The generally ethos of the pre-school is reflected in the level of the children's confidence and their relaxed and happy manner. The staff's style of teaching encourages children to think and to demonstrate what they know and understand. The staff are keen and enthusiastic and have worked together for some years so work effectively to their individual strengths. Behaviour is especially good and is valued highly. Children respond well to direction.

There is a good understanding of the early learning goals. Themes and activities are well planned. The pre-school have settled on the planning system they think suits their group but there is no written provision for the differentiation in the planning for three and four year olds. Staff make regular assessments that identify children's progress. The pre-school value spontaneous child led activities and will abandon routine to follow and foster the child's interest. The pre-school offers strong support for children with special needs.

Leadership and management is good. The committee and staff compliment and support each other well although roles are sometimes blurred. The operational plan works well and is reflected in the day to day running.

Partnership with parents is very good. They are provided with good quality information. Parents are encouraged to help in the pre-school although they do not always respond and offer to get involved. Parents are complimentary about the setting. They are kept well informed of the pre-school's current themes and are encouraged to continue some play and learning activities at home. They receive written reports on their child's progress three times a year and are invited to consultation meetings to discuss them.

What is being done well?

- The six areas are very well covered through a broad and balanced curriculum. Spontaneous play is valued and encouraged.
- The style of teaching is helping the children to become confident and independent and is helping them to develop a sense of self worth.
- The staff are a keen and enthusiastic team who work very well together.

What needs to be improved?

- planning so that it shows differentiation between three and four year olds
- staff time in the book corner

What has improved since the last inspection?

At the last nursery education inspection four years ago there were two key issues identified both of which the pre-school have addressed well. They were asked to identify clearly the specific aims for learning so that staff could monitor more easily their coverage of the learning outcomes and therefore give full support to the children's achievement of these. Plans are now clear, the six areas of learning are now well defined, key activities are well planned and targeted at specific children when necessary. Written evaluations monitor the effectiveness of the learning for each child through regular observations and any gaps in the child's progress in working towards the early learning goals are identified.

They were also asked to provide parents with more information about the six areas of learning and the educational programme to fully inform the parents of what their children could be achieving. The prospectus now offers an overview of the six areas of learning, a labelled photographic display identifies how the early learning goals are being met and parents are given a termly topic sheet which covers the topics to be covered and how they will help the children in the six areas of learning.

SUMMARY OF JUDGEMENTS

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Judgement: Very Good

Children are motivated to learn and to try new experiences. They are confident, happy and secure. They form good relationships with staff and peers, and are encouraged to negotiate, take turns and support each other. Adults show them they are valued and frequently praise and encourage them. Independence is fostered. Children develop good concentration skills and adults help and support their play appropriately. Children are very well behaved responding to the positive messages given to them.

COMMUNICATION, LANGUAGE AND LITERACY

Judgement: Very Good

Children respond with enjoyment to stories and songs. They use language to negotiate with peers and adults and are encouraged to link sounds to letters. Although they have the opportunity to take home a book from the pre-school library, the children do not often use the book corner spontaneously and adults do not often station themselves there to read and offer encouragement. However, they are well supported in writing for a purpose and are given many opportunities for mark making.

MATHEMATICAL DEVELOPMENT

Judgement: Very Good

Children are offered a balanced programme covering all aspects of mathematical development. They encounter a range of mathematical experiences in day to day play and activities which are helping them to develop appropriate concepts E.g. puzzles and counting children at registration time. They are beginning to compare numbers and are capable of simple addition and subtraction. They learn about patterns and shapes through many planned and day to day activities.

KNOWLEDGE AND UNDERSTANDING OF THE WORLD

Judgement: Very Good

Children are offered a stimulating selection of topics which help them to explore and investigate their own world and other cultures. They celebrate many festivals. Themes covered have included unusual pets, looking at space and planting seeds. They are given many opportunities to build and construct using a wide range of materials. They are improving their information and communication skills through the many pieces of equipment available. E.g. the computer and story tapes.

PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT	
Judgement:	Very Good
Children have opportunities for movement, climbing and balancing both inside, in their outside play area and in the use of school apparatus. The outside play area is limited so children go out in two groups. The children have a good awareness of personal space and are beginning to demonstrate control and co-ordination. Music and movement is a favourite activity. There is evidence of planned physical activities and they enjoy using a wide range of resources, tools and equipment.	

CREATIVE DEVELOPMENT	
Judgement:	Very Good
Children are given opportunities to explore texture, colour and shape and to develop their imaginations and creativity. There is a good balance between adult led and child led activities. Musical instruments are used frequently and children can sing simple songs from memory. Displays are imaginative and last term's senses display is still being used spontaneously by the children. Dressing up is popular and the children are given opportunities to role play.	

Children's spiritual, moral, social, and cultural development is fostered appropriately.

OUTCOME OF THE INSPECTION

The provision is acceptable and is of high quality. Children are making very good progress towards the early learning goals. The next inspection will take place in three to four years time.

WHAT THE SETTING NEEDS TO DO NEXT

There are no significant weaknesses to report, but considerations should be given to improving the following:

- There are no significant weaknesses to report, but consideration should be given to improving the following:
- Where applicable, structure the planning of activities to increase the account taken of the needs of both the younger and the more able children
- Build into the session adult time in the book corner to encourage and increase children's enjoyment of books

The provider must draw up an action plan within 40 working days of receipt of this report showing how the key issues detailed above will be addressed. The action plan must be made available to all parents and to the Local Authority if required. An evaluation of the action taken will form part of the next inspection of funded nursery education.

SUMMARY OF NATIONAL STANDARDS

STANDARD 1 - SUITABLE PERSON

Adults providing day care, looking after children or having unsupervised access to them are suitable to do so.

STANDARD 2 - ORGANISATION

The registered person meets required adult: child ratios, ensures that training and qualifications requirements are met and organises space and resources to meet the children's needs effectively.

STANDARD 3 - CARE, LEARNING AND PLAY

The registered person meets children's individual needs and promotes their welfare. They plan and provide activities and play opportunities to develop children's emotional, physical, social and intellectual capabilities.

STANDARD 4 - PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

The premises are safe, secure and suitable for their purpose. They provide adequate space in an appropriate location, are welcoming to children and offer access to the necessary facilities for a range of activities which promote their development.

STANDARD 5 - EQUIPMENT

Furniture, equipment and toys are provided which are appropriate for their purpose and help to create an accessible and stimulating environment. They are of suitable design and condition, well maintained and conform to safety standards.

STANDARD 6 - SAFETY

The registered person takes positive steps to promote safety within the setting and on outings and ensures proper precautions are taken to prevent accidents.

STANDARD 7 - HEALTH

The registered person promotes the good health of children and takes positive steps to prevent the spread of infection and appropriate measures when they are ill.

STANDARD 8 - FOOD AND DRINK

Children are provided with regular drinks and food in adequate quantities for their needs. Food and drink is properly prepared, nutritious and complies with dietary and religious requirements.

STANDARD 9 - EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES

The registered person and staff actively promote equality of opportunity and anti-discriminatory practice for all children.

STANDARD 10 - SPECIAL NEEDS (INCLUDING SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS AND DISABILITIES)

The registered person is aware that some children may have special needs and is

proactive in ensuring that appropriate action can be taken when such a child is identified or admitted to the provision. Steps are taken to promote the welfare and development of the child within the setting in partnership with the parents and other relevant parties.

STANDARD 11 - BEHAVIOUR

Adults caring for children in the provision are able to manage a wide range of children's behaviour in a way which promotes their welfare and development.

STANDARD 12 - WORKING IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS AND CARERS

The registered person and staff work in partnership with parents and to meet the needs of the children, both individually and as a group. Information is shared.

STANDARD 13 - CHILD PROTECTION

The registered person complies with local child protection procedures approved by the Area Child Protection Committee and ensures that all adults working and looking after children in the provision are able to put the procedures into practice.

STANDARD 14 - DOCUMENTATION

Records, policies and procedures which are required for the efficient and safe management of the provision, or to promote the welfare, care and learning of children are maintained. Records about individual children are shared with the child's parent.