



STEPS

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	956291
Inspection date	15 November 2006
Inspector	Vanessa Wood
Setting Address	37 Waterloo Road, Tonbridge, Kent, TN9 2SW
Telephone number	01732 363642
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Registered person	St Stephen's Pre School
Type of inspection	Integrated
Type of care	Sessional 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 Pre-School opened in 2005. It was previously known as St Stephens Pre-School which opened in 1979. It operates from a church hall in Tonbridge town centre. A maximum of 30 children may attend the pre-school at any one time. The pre-school is open each weekday from 09:00 until 11:45 and from 12:45 until 15:30 for 38 weeks of the year. Children have access to a secure enclosed outdoor play area.

There are currently 85 children aged from two years to under five years on roll. Of these, 52 receive funding for early years education. Children come from the local area. The pre-school currently supports three children with special needs, and two children who speak English as an additional language.

The pre-school employs eight members of staff. Of these all hold appropriate early years qualifications and one member of staff is working towards a degree in child care.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Children have a strong understanding of the importance of their own personal hygiene. They know when to wash their hands and why, such as before snack time and after using the toilet. Staff talk to children about germs and how they can make them ill. Children are provided with liquid soap and paper towels to ensure good hygiene practice is in place. Children benefit from a staff team who have an up-to-date knowledge in first aid procedures and are able to deal appropriately with any emergency. A snack bar has been introduced to enable children to choose when they stop playing to have a snack. This promotes children's independence. Children help to prepare the fruit and vegetables for snack as they cut up bananas, apples and cucumber. Staff provide two jugs of milk and water and children are able to help themselves to a drink. Children are developing a good understanding of healthy foods through topic work when they learn about foods that are good for them. Children enjoy daily outdoor activities when they ride on bikes and collect leaves using child sized rakes. Indoor they enjoy a variety of physical activity on a daily basis, for example, use of the climbing frame to help promote gross motor skills and activity sessions where they learn to jump, hop and stretch, sometimes in time to music, at the end of registration.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

Children play freely in a safe and well maintained environment. The hall is well organised and inviting to children. There is space to allow for all areas of play including indoor physical play and also an outdoor area which is open for most of the morning to allow children to choose whether they play outdoors or indoors. Children learn about their own safety as staff remind them to be careful as they cut up the fruit and vegetables for snack. Staff support children well and ensure they are well supervised when playing outdoors and on the indoor climbing frame. All furniture is child sized so children can sit and play and eat in comfort. Staff complete a risk assessment of the hall and the garden every morning and afternoon to ensure the premises are clean and suitable to promote children's safety. Children are kept safe because staff have a good understanding of what to do in the event of a fire and there are clear written instructions for all to see. Children are protected from harm because staff have a very good knowledge of child protection procedures and how to implement them should the need arise. Staff have attended training to ensure their knowledge is up-to-date and the group is supported by the church committee.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

Children are happy and secure at the nursery. They respond well to staff and are keen to share their news and achievements with them. Staff encourage children to become independent thinkers and learners and most play opportunities are child directed. For example, at registration time, children ask for toys they want to play with together with those activities set out by staff. Children under three years are supported well and staff are beginning to plan and assess children's development in line with the Birth to three matters framework. Children are learning important social skills and develop close relationships with staff and other children.

Nursery Education

The quality of teaching and learning is good. Staff have a good knowledge of the Foundation Stage and how to plan to meet children's needs. Recent changes to the organisation of resources ensure that staff provide a good balance of planned and free play activities to promote all areas of the curriculum. The layout of the pre-school is favourable for children to access their own play and learning opportunities. Clear and detailed plans are in place, although the system for assessing children's progress is undergoing change. Staff use their knowledge of children to plan for the next steps in their development. Staff are deployed effectively to offer children appropriate support and encourage their learning. Staff work with the children at all times and spend time explaining things to them when they make enquiries. Children are familiar with the routine and what is expected of them. They are given lots of opportunities to be independent and choose their play activities which helps to develop their confidence.

Children communicate successfully with staff and each other. They can express ideas and their feelings well. Some children can recognise their name and are beginning to identify letters, particularly those that are important to them. Children enjoy stories that are read to them. They are very interested and listen well. They also enjoy selecting books from the book corner and looking through these individually, with friends or with a member of staff. Opportunities for children to practise mark making are in place although some staff are too eager to write their name for them. Children's counting skills are developing well as they count to 25, the number of children present. They use the maths area to learn about measure and time and play games where they learn size and shape. Staff help children learn simple calculations as they talk about how many candles are needed for the birthday cake.

Through daily routines children learn about their environment as they talk about the weather and learn the days and months of the year. They take turns to feed the pet gold fish and learn to nurture living things. Children construct well using a wide range of resources. They enjoy using the very attractive home corner to act out imaginary situations. Staff vary the theme of the home corner, for example, as a bakers to reflect the learning theme about food. Children have access to some technology, such as an electronic game where they select items that are bigger or smaller. Children delight in being creative, they choose to get out the paints and concentrate well on painting pictures. They enjoy making musical shakers using different foods and paper cups. Staff help them learn how bread is made and children relish tasting the cooked bread and taking a roll home with them for lunch. They enjoy the feel of salt dough as they make different cakes for the home corner. Musical instruments are set out everyday and children

select different instruments and enjoy making music together learning the different sounds of each instrument.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

Children are provided with a range of resources that promote positive images of gender, ethnicity and culture. As a church owned pre-school all Christian festivals are acknowledged, but children also take part in festivals and celebrations that may be different from their own. Children from other faiths attend the pre-school. Staff recognise children as individuals and make them feel valued. They provide children with activities that support their learning and development. Children learn to show respect for others and to share and play well together. For example, staff intervene when there is a dispute over a toy and remind children of the importance of sharing. Any unacceptable behaviour is dealt with fairly, sensitively and according to the individual needs of the children. Staff give appropriate praise and encouragement for things well done. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered. Staff are sensitive to the needs of children with special needs and appropriate plans are in place to develop their learning.

Partnership with parents is good. The pre-school has sound procedures in place for informing all parents about the daily routines, topic work and curriculum plans through the parents' notice board. Close links with parents are developed through the parents' committee which sends out regular newsletters that incorporate news from the pre-school. Parents report they are very happy with the setting. Staff are always available to talk to parents in order to share information and any concerns. Parents of funded children are aware of the assessments staff keep on children, but there is no formal arrangement in place where parents can discuss their children's progress towards the early learning goals.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

Children's care is enhanced by generally effective organisation. Children are able to select their own play and learning experiences with confidence. The flexible routine allows children to pursue their interests without unnecessary interruption. Organisation of the environment is good allowing children to choose to play indoors or outdoors at times during the session. Children benefit from a staff team who understand and implement the nursery procedures. The majority of the required paperwork is in place, although some is not clear, such as the policy for lost and uncollected children. A good procedure for the recruitment of new staff is in place to ensure staff are suitable to work with children.

Leadership and Management are good. The management team is aware of the strengths and weaknesses of the pre-school and is committed to updating and improving any weak areas. Staff are supported and encouraged to attend training to update their knowledge and understanding of the curriculum. Staff meet regularly to discuss planning to meet the needs of individual children. However, formal staff appraisals are not in place to monitor the quality of teaching.

Improvements since the last inspection

At the last inspection the provider was required to ensure a manager is appointed for the pre-school. A manager is now in place with the required level of qualification and experience.

Complaints since the last inspection

Sine 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):

- continue to develop the Birth to three matters framework to enhance care and education for children under three years
- ensure the policy for lost and uncollected children is clear

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):

- consolidate children's assessment records to plan for the next steps in their learning
- improve the system for sharing children's assessment records with parent
- ensure staff appraisals are in place to evaluate training needs and the quality of teaching

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