

# Stepping Stones Pre-School

Inspection report for early years provision

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	127645
<b>Inspection date</b>	27 February 2008
<b>Inspector</b>	Jane Wakelen
<b>Setting Address</b>	Kendall Hall, Nunnery Fields, Canterbury, Kent, CT1 3JN
<b>Telephone number</b>	07980 492204
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<b>Registered person</b>	Stepping Stones Pre-School
<b>Type of inspection</b>	Integrated
<b>Type of care</b>	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](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 Stones Pre-School opened in 1967. It operates from Kendall Hall in Canterbury, Kent. It is situated adjacent to the church who own the property and is run by a committee. A maximum of 30 children may attend the pre-school at any one time. The pre-school is open each weekday morning from 09:00 to 12:00, term time only. All children share access to a secure enclosed outdoor play area.

There are currently 34 children aged from two and half to under five years on roll. Of these, 27 children receive funding for early education. The pre-school supports children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and children with English as an additional language.

The pre-school employs seven members of staff. Of these, five hold appropriate early years qualifications. They receive support from a teacher from the Early Years Development and Childcare Partnership.

## THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

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

The provision is good.

Children's health and well-being are fully supported by staff who promote regular exercise and efficient hygiene routines to support children's understanding about personal care. Tables are cleaned with antibacterial spray before children eat their snack and good hygiene routines when changing nappies, ensures cross infection is minimised. Children learn the importance of washing their hands before they eat and after playing in the garden, to wash away the germs, and dispose of tissues in the bin having wiped their noses. A sick child policy is available to inform parents about procedures that need to be followed, helping to support children's well-being. Three staff hold first aid certificates and a first aid box is accessible in the event of an accident. However, permission for emergency medical treatment is not obtained from parents, thus not fully protecting children's welfare.

Children enjoy snack time as a social occasion, sitting with their friends and chatting about their likes and dislikes. They have a variety of snacks offered throughout the term, but are not always given a choice of snacks on a daily basis. Staff understand about healthy eating and promote fresh fruit and vegetables for snack time, with the occasional biscuits. Children pour their drinks of milk or water, with support from the staff, but are not always encouraged to be fully independent. Staff encourage children on occasions to count how many children at the table and then decide how many cups they will need, supporting children's numeracy skills.

Children have good opportunities to develop their large physical skills. They have regular use of the outside play area, enjoying space to move around freely. Children put on wellingtons and climb over the small stile into their own garden area, where they are able to dig, search for bugs or use the child sized rakes. They use a range of equipment, such as buggies and sit and ride toys developing their spatial awareness, both inside and outside. The parachute encourages team games and children enjoy watching the effect of wind on ribbons as they twirl and run around. Children gain good co-ordination and control of their bodies, balancing on the climbing frame and enjoying the assault course moving their bodies in different ways.

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

The provision is good.

Children play in a safe, welcoming environment where they are able to be independent moving around the room, accessing activities both inside and outside or taking themselves to the toilet. Staff are observant and carry out daily risk assessments to promote children's safety. Children are able to access toys and resources planned by the staff or can make choices of additional equipment from small storage trolleys. The equipment is in good condition and suitable for the ages attending the pre-school. Staff ensure all equipment meets the safety standards and are quick to remove broken equipment, such as the book trolley.

Measures have been put in place, such as stairgates across the steps to the stage, a peep hole in the door and door bell fitted, to provide a safe environment for children to play. Locks on the outside gate prevent unwanted visitors and all visitors are asked to sign in when they arrive. Fire prevention measures and signs are in place to ensure the safety of children in the pre-school. Regular fire drills are carried out and recorded to ensure all children understand the procedures for evacuation in an emergency. Children enjoy regular outings whilst attending the pre-school and are kept safe because staff follow good procedures to ensure children's safety. They obtain

written consent from parents for every trip and ensure that all emergency phone numbers and first aid kits are taken on outings.

Children are well protected and safeguarded as a written policy and procedures are fully implemented. All staff are aware of their role and responsibilities regarding protecting children and make written records of any concerns they have regarding children in their care. Full information is available for outside agencies, and regular training for staff, further promotes children's welfare.

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

The provision is good.

Children are confident, settled and happy as they arrive at pre-school. They are greeted warmly and move around the organised environment trying out different activities that interest them. Staff ensure a good variety of equipment is planned and available for the children in different areas, such as art and craft, role play and the book corner. Staff have a very clear understanding of child development and recognise how children learn most effectively. Children benefit from the stimulating learning environment, where staff understand the importance of children being able to make their own decisions. Staff are deployed effectively around the pre-school, supporting children in their learning and joining in their play, enabling children to feel secure and to gain a sense of belonging. Children thoroughly enjoy the role play area, using the different resources such as real vegetables, kitchen appliances such as the whisk and toy toaster to act out familiar roles from home. They put on aprons and eagerly join in the art and craft, experimenting with paint, whilst developing their senses of touch and sight. Children are able to play in small groups or on their own, developing their learning at their own pace. They access equipment outside, such as water play with various sea creatures or the peat with plastic bugs and flower pots. All children fully engage in activities which absorb their attention and support their learning in all areas, with support of the caring staff.

### **Nursery Education**

The quality of teaching and learning is good. Children make good individual progress in their learning because staff have a secure knowledge of the Foundation Stage curriculum. They plan exciting and stimulating activities and experiences linked to all aspects, identifying learning outcomes. Children's progress is observed, through many different observations and recorded under the six areas of learning in their assessment records. Keyworkers then summarise children's learning and identify two or three targets for the next term. However, there is no current system for ensuring that all areas are given equal attention. Keyworkers have a good knowledge of their key children and use this knowledge to share with colleagues and to inform future planning. Adult-led activity plans show differentiation to ensure staff extend the more able children. At present the observation and assessment records do not clearly indicate where children are in their learning towards the stepping stones and early learning goals.

Children are encouraged to see and recognise numbers in their environment on number lines, numbers painted on the floor outside or numbers tied to their sit and ride toys. They have a good variety of resources to support their numeracy skills such as counting, sorting by colour, shape and size and labelling both 2D and 3D shapes. Children use jigsaws to help sequence number and look at patterns, learning to follow repeating patterns. They sing number songs, using fingers to reinforce their concept of number and begin to do simple addition when counting the numbers of children needing cups for snack time. They enjoy wonderful opportunities to explore their environment using the stile to climb into their own part of the

garden. They make observations about changes, such as the growth of flowers and observe the wildlife, looking in the ladybird houses or bird boxes. Children enjoy using the many tools such as the child-sized rakes to collect the leaves, or use the fork and spades to dig with. They search for bugs, using their magnifying glasses to observe small detail, watch birds using the nesting boxes and wait for spiders to use their spider frame. Children work well together constructing different models, using a variety of resources, learning how to join and balance. They observe the life cycle of the caterpillar and talk about the effect of wind on objects such as kites, balloons and bubbles.

Children have daily opportunities to experiment with paint and art and craft materials. They are able to experiment and adapt the activities exploring colour mixing and texture without the need for an end product. Children enjoy using the role play area, which is changed on a regular basis supporting children's knowledge of their community, people who help them and familiar experiences such as the home or hospital. They dress up in various outfits and use different items to support their play. Children enjoy singing songs from memory and use the prop bag to identify an object and choose the song to which it relates, such as the farmer for 'The farmer's in his den'. Opportunities to use musical instruments are available occasionally to learn about rhythm and beat. Children have opportunities to understand print carries meaning with pictures and labels on storage drawers and photographs around the room. At each activity children have opportunities to make marks with the clipboard and pencil. However, children have few opportunities to link sounds and letters or recognize familiar words in the daily routines. Some children are beginning to write a few letters within their name, although they are not asked to routinely label their pictures. Access to a good range of books is promoted and adults share different stories with the children, helping them to handle books correctly.

Children have good opportunities to develop their fine physical skills using a variety of tools, such as scissors, pens, pencils and hole punches. They enjoy moulding the dough and clay with their fingers and enjoy cutting it with the scissors. Children use many resources in the paint, such as rollers, brushes and combs showing good hand/eye co-ordination. Children complete jigsaws, thread beads and build with different construction materials showing skill and precision in their fine motor skills.

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

The provision is good.

Children settle well at pre-school and the implementation of a secure key worker system enhances relationships and helps children to develop a sense of belonging to the group. All children are valued as individuals and an inclusive and welcoming environment is promoted with effective systems in place to support those with additional needs. Children learn to listen and value each other's differences and similarities and have opportunities to celebrate different cultures and festivals such as Divali. They see positive images of diversity around their environment in books, photographs and posters and use equipment to support their understanding, such as small world toys and dolls to reflect the diverse community they live in.

Children behave well within the pre-school. They have a good understanding of acceptable behaviour with some children spontaneously using manners, such as sorry, please and thank you. Staff present excellent role models for the children, remaining calm and fair when children are involved in conflict. Staff help children learn to negotiate turns and share the resources and equipment to help children learn to work alongside each other. Children constantly receive praise and encouragement to try new experiences and receive reward stickers helping support

good behaviour, thus promoting children's self esteem. Children's achievements are celebrated within the group and with parents and their work is displayed on boards around the room supporting children's pride and self confidence. Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered.

Partnership with parents is good. Parents are well informed about the curriculum and are provided with their child's assessment records on a regular basis and invited to write any comments or achievements their child has made at home. Staff know each child and their parents well which supports children's feeling of belonging and promotes their well-being, whilst promoting continuity of care. Children's learning is significantly enhanced because parents are invited to play an active role within the setting, either helping during the sessions, offering ideas and suggestions or sitting on the committee. Parents have access to the policies and noticeboard for the pre-school but are not requested to give permission for observations, application of suncream, emergency medical treatment or photographs, thus not fully supporting children's welfare.

## **Organisation**

The organisation is good.

Children benefit from a team of staff who are motivated, caring and interested in each child as an individual. All staff work well as a team, supporting each other and meet regularly to discuss operational issues and have a clear knowledge of the strengths within the provision and the areas where improvements can be made. All practitioners are aware of the policies and procedures within the pre-school and implement these effectively, with the support of the dedicated supervisor, to promote good outcomes for children. All documentation is in place, with policies being updated on a regular basis to ensure the information is up-to-date, such as the contact information for Ofsted in the complaints policy.

The leadership and management is good. Children receive good quality care and education from the well qualified and enthusiastic staff team, who know their roles and responsibilities well and provide a good range of stimulating activities to meet the children's individual needs. The committee meet regularly to ensure the smooth running of the group and support the supervisor and the staff to ensure the pre-school operates effectively whilst promoting positive learning experiences for the children. The regular appraisal system ensures staff strengths are identified and training needs established. The management recognise the benefits of working together with the parents and outside agencies and make very good links within the community to promote children's learning. The setting meets the needs of the range of children for whom it provides.

## **Improvements since the last inspection**

There was one recommendation from the previous care inspection. This was to ensure registration arrangements show when children, staff and visitors are present. There is a daily register in use that records all children and staff and details times of arrival and departure if different from the normal opening times. Visitors are recorded in the visitors book.

There were two key issues from the previous education inspection. These were to increase opportunities for children to count and identify numbers throughout the session. Staff ensure number lines and printed numbers are used both indoors and outdoors to help children familiarise themselves with number. For example, numbers are attached to the sit and ride cars outside, markings on the hard surface outside, number lines inside and display boards. Children are

encouraged to count in everyday routines and songs. The second key issue was to improve the management and organisation of 'tidy-up' and snack time. Children all help tidy up and then go to sit down at tables ready for their snack. Children are taken table by table to wash their hands before eating snack. All children are familiar with the routine and staff ensure they are not waiting for long periods of time when finished. Children are now given warning of tidy up time to prepare them to finish their pictures or activity.

### **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.

## **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):

- further develop snack time to promote children's choice and independence
- obtain written consent from parents for aspects of care such as, emergency medical treatment, photographs, application of suncream and observations

#### **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):

- extend opportunities for children to link sounds and letters and recognize familiar words in everyday practical routines and activities
- ensure observations and assessment records clearly indicate children's progress towards the stepping stones and early learning goals

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](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)