



Office for Standards
in Education

COMBINED INSPECTION REPORT

URN 511221

DfES Number: 556656

INSPECTION DETAILS

Inspection Date 14/01/2004
Inspector Name Wendy Sears

SETTING DETAILS

Day Care Type Sessional Day Care
Setting Name Stepping Stones Playgroup
Setting Address 10 Station Road
Bexhill-on-Sea
East Sussex
TN40 1RE

REGISTERED PROVIDER DETAILS

Name The Committee of The Youth and Community Centre

ORGANISATION DETAILS

Name The Youth and Community Centre
Address Stepping Stones Playgroup
10 Station Road
Bexhill-on-Sea
East Sussex
TN40 1RE

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 Playgroup opened in 1987. It is a pre-school playgroup that operates for five morning sessions each week from 9:15am until 1pm during term-time in Bexhill Youth and Community Centre, which is close to the town centre and Bexhill railway station.

It is registered to care for up to 24 children aged from two to under five years at each session but does not normally accept children until they are at least two and a half years old. There are presently 14 children on roll. The playgroup has been registered for nursery education funding since September 2002 and has six three and four year olds on roll who are in receipt of funding. All of the children attending are from the local community. The playgroup cares for children with special needs.

The group is managed by the management committee of the Youth and Community Centre and is led on a daily basis by a supervisor plus three other members of staff. Two members of staff are employed full time and two on a part-time basis. Two have qualifications in child care.

The group receives support from the EYDCP, Bexhill and Battle Under Fives Association, The Early Years Service and The College for British Teachers.

How good is the Day Care?

The playgroup provides satisfactory care for children.

The staff are proactive in obtaining further training. However, the group needs to update their documentation to ensure both recruitment and staff induction procedures are implemented and clear. The group use one hall, a television room and a large sports hall. The facilities are warm and clean for children to use, but some areas would be improved with redecoration and the arrangement of small homely play areas to make the environment more welcoming. Children have daily physical play with more active play and games taking place in the adjacent sports hall.

The staff have clear regard for safety and escort children to other areas of the building at all times. Staff are qualified in First Aid and complete daily safety checks. Fire regulations are closely adhered to, with hygiene routines promoted and practiced in the group. The water used by children in the hand basins does become hot and action must be taken to ensure the water temperature is controlled.

The staff are caring and have formed warm relationships with the children and are attentive to their needs. The daily routine is well structured to provide appropriate opportunities for children to play, rest and have regular planned refreshments. The activities are devised to provide an interesting range of activities for children who were involved in a number of table top and floor activities. The group is experienced in providing care to children who have special needs, and each child's individual needs and preferences are fully considered by staff when planning for each day.

The group do keep parents informed of future events using newsletters and a notice board. But should ensure significant information and agreements between parents and staff are recorded.

What has improved since the last inspection?

The special needs policy is now in place and the recommendations made the Environmental health department have been complied with.

What is being done well?

- the children seen consistently engaged in activities. With adults working closely with children in small groups working and on an individual basis
- the staff are caring, vigilant and supervise children well.
- the group has worked hard to make all children feel welcome, devising strategies for working with children with English as a second language
- the staff are thorough in working with parents and other professionals when caring for children with special needs

What needs to be improved?

- there is no written documentation available on staff recruitment. The health clearance process for the appointment of new staff is not clear
- the premises are clean and well maintained but some areas specifically the large hall and toilets need redecorating. The play area is not divided and there are no small cosy areas for children to play in
- the temperature of the water used by children for hand washing needs to be monitored and controlled as it becomes hot
- significant conversations and agreements between staff and parents are not always made in writing or recorded after discussion

Outcome of the inspection
Satisfactory

CONDITIONS OF REGISTRATION
<i>All registered persons must comply with all conditions of registration included on his/her certificate of registration.</i>
<i>As a result of this inspection conditions of registration have been imposed / varied / removed and a new certificate of registration will be issued.</i>

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
1	Devise and implement an effective recruitment procedure for staff
6	monitor and control the water temperature used for hand washing
14	Ensure records of significant conversations and agreements between staff and parents are maintained.

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

How effective is the nursery education?

Stepping Stones Playgroup offers provision that is acceptable but has some significant areas for improvement. Children's progress towards the Early Learning Goals is limited by some significant weaknesses, apart from the areas of personal, social and emotional development and physical development where generally good progress is being made.

The overall quality of teaching has significant weaknesses. The staff group are very committed and keen to develop their knowledge of the stepping stones. They all contribute to the planning though this is not always clear as to how activities are adapted to provide challenges for the more able children. There are missed opportunities by some staff members in extending children's learning in areas such as free play, with limited questioning and challenging of ideas. Observations are made and recorded, but assessments are not used effectively in planning for individual children's future learning. Staff develop good relationships with children and children behave well.

Leadership and management of the setting is generally good. The centre manager and supervisor of the group work well together and have identified some areas for improvement including how assessment is used to meet children's learning needs. The staff group meet regularly and work together as a team. Training is encouraged. The use of the Foundation Stage consultant is seen as positive.

The partnership with parents and carers has significant weaknesses. Parents are welcomed into the group and receive details about how the group runs, including some information about the Foundation Stage curriculum. They are not currently asked to share formally what they know about their child's abilities nor encouraged to be involved in their child's learning. They receive verbal information about their child's progress but there is a lack of regular formal feedback.

What is being done well?

- Relationships between staff and children are good. These help children develop confidence and a sense of belonging at the group.
- Children's physical skills are promoted effectively through a range of stimulating and fun activities such as using large soft shapes and with music and movement.
- Children generally communicate well together and with adults. They speak with confidence during free play and structured activities.
- The commitment of management and the staff team to improve the group by encouraging training and developing effective communication with parents.
- The activity of painting with music allows children great opportunities for free

expression. Their ability to respond to rhythm is extended in a fun way.

What needs to be improved?

- the use of assessment in order to identify what children need to learn next and to guide planning
- the involvement of parents and carers in children's learning
- staff's knowledge and understanding of the stepping stones
- allowing greater opportunities for children to develop in mathematics, writing skills and in use their imagination
- use of space and resources to create a positive learning environment with clear intended learning outcomes for activities.

What has improved since the last inspection?

Not applicable.

SUMMARY OF JUDGEMENTS

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Judgement:	Generally Good
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Children are confident and keen to be involved in the activities. They relate well with each other and with the adults at the group. Individual children are beginning to develop friendships. They behave generally well and respond positively to staff. Children are able to make choices from the available activities, though there are limited opportunities for developing independence skills.

COMMUNICATION, LANGUAGE AND LITERACY

Judgement:	Significant Weaknesses
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Most children are confident speakers and all are good communicators. They are supported by the staff in learning new words and their meanings. They enjoy books. Staff members read with the children, both individually and in a group, throughout the session. There are however not enough opportunities for children to practise pre writing skills and for the linking of sounds and letters. Children are not able to explore and communicate their own ideas and feelings during activities

MATHEMATICAL DEVELOPMENT

Judgement:	Significant Weaknesses
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Children are able to look at and explore shape, space and measure using varied construction activities and play materials. Some children have a knowledge of numbers and understand the concept of counting. However there is little use of numbers and counting particularly during general play. The introduction to calculating is very limited. There is some evidence in plans to show that mathematical language is introduced.

KNOWLEDGE AND UNDERSTANDING OF THE WORLD

Judgement:	Significant Weaknesses
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Children are keen to explore and investigate. They are confident in asking questions and listen well to answers. However the learning environment does not actively promote children's curiosity. There are few times when children and adults are seen together exploring how things work. Use of technology equipment such as computers is very limited. Children do learn about the lives of other people and their cultures.

PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT

Judgement:	Generally Good
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There are good opportunities daily for physical play and development. The staff are very aware of the children's limitations and needs. Children are encouraged to try new skills such as skipping and hopping. They use the large equipment with enjoyment and confidence. There is limited exploration of health awareness. The use of small tools/equipment such as pencils is restricted.

CREATIVE DEVELOPMENT	
Judgement:	Significant Weaknesses
	Children enjoy activities that make good use of their creative expression such as painting to music. Children are keen to be involved in and develop story plays particularly those based on familiar tales. Some craft activities appeared pre formed and staff led which restricts imagination and free expression. The limited use of music instruments and role play equipment leads to missed opportunities for children to develop ideas and use their imagination.

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

OUTCOME OF THE INSPECTION

The provision is acceptable but has some significant areas for improvement. Children progress towards the early learning goals is limited by some significant weaknesses. The next inspection will take place in one to two years time.

WHAT THE SETTING NEEDS TO DO NEXT: THE KEY ISSUES

- improve the use of assessment in order to i) identify children's next steps in learning and ii) use the information to inform planning
- develop the effectiveness with which staff question, challenge and extend children's learning during the daily routine
- create greater opportunities for children to develop their i) mathematical development, ii) writing skills, iii) use imagination
- make better use of space and resources to create a positive learning environment, with clear intended learning outcomes for activities other than the focus activity.

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.