



Office for Standards
in Education

COMBINED INSPECTION REPORT

URN EY277182

DfES Number:

INSPECTION DETAILS

Inspection Date 21/10/2004
Inspector Name Victoria Vasiliadis

SETTING DETAILS

Day Care Type Sessional Day Care
Setting Name Stepping Stones Pre-School
Setting Address 17 Harrow Scout Group Roxborough Park
Headquarters Rear of Catholic Church
Roxborough Park, Harrow-on-Hill
Middlesex
HA1 3BA

REGISTERED PROVIDER DETAILS

Name The Committee of Stepping Stones Pre-School 1029770

ORGANISATION DETAILS

Name Stepping Stones Pre-School
Address 67 Winton Drive
Croxley Green
Rickmansworth
Hertfordshire
WD3 3RB

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 opened ten months ago. Sandra Thatcher is the registered person on behalf of the committee. It operates from within the scout headquarters in Roxborough Park in the borough of Harrow. The group have the use of three rooms within the premises. The setting is close to local amenities and is well served by public transport links.

The setting is open to children and families from the local community. There are currently twenty two children from two years nine months to five years on roll. This includes ten funded three year olds, there are no funded four year olds present. The group currently support a number of children with special educational needs.

The group opens five days a week during term time only. Sessions are from 09:15 to 11:45.

Over half the staff have early years qualifications. The setting receives support from the Pre School Learning Alliance and Early Years Development and Childcare Partnership.

The group are accredited with the Pre School Learning Alliance.

How good is the Day Care?

Stepping Stones Pre-School provides satisfactory care for children.

Staff are generally well deployed and meet the required adult child ratios. However there are times when children are left unoccupied, in particular at tidy up time and snack time. Over half the staff working with children hold appropriate childcare qualifications.

Appropriate systems are in place to ensure the premises are kept secure. The provision has clear procedures in place for the safe evacuation of children in the event of a fire. Staff are aware of safety issues and have minimised hazards to the children.

The group provides children with a sufficient selection of resources that meet their developmental needs. However there are times when children are not engaged in activities, in particular at large group times. Children have limited opportunities to make choices or decisions regarding their play.

Partnership with parents and carers is good, parents are kept informed verbally at the end of each day, notice boards are in place and an informative prospectus is available to new parents which includes some information about policies. Parents are encouraged to attend yearly Annual General Meeting's.

The group maintain most of the records required under the National Standards. However, there are no clear written procedures to follow if allegations of abuse are made against staff and Ofsted has not been informed of staff or committee changes.

What has improved since the last inspection?

Not applicable, this is the first inspection since registration.

What is being done well?

- Staff are generally well deployed and adult child ratios are maintained. Over half the staff working directly with children hold relevant childcare qualifications.
- The group have clear written policies and procedures in place, these are accessible to parents.
- Appropriate systems are in place to ensure the premises are kept secure. The provision has clear procedures in place for the safe evacuation of children in the event of a fire. Staff are aware of safety issues and have minimised hazards to the children.
- Partnership with parents and carers is good, parents are kept informed verbally at the end of each day, notice boards are in place and an informative prospectus is available to new parents. Parents are encouraged to attend yearly Annual General Meeting's.
- Clear written policies and procedures are in place, these are displayed on the parent notice board and some are recorded in the settings prospectus.

What needs to be improved?

- the procedures for notifying Ofsted of changes to staff and committee members within the required timeframes
- the child protection procedures relating to allegations against staff
- the activities offered to children, ensuring children are engaged, interested and are able to make choices and decisions
- the procedures for ensuring staff are engaged with children at tidy up time and snack time.

PREVIOUS COMPLAINTS (This section applies only to inspections carried out from September 2004. The complaint record relates to complaints from the last inspection or 1st April 2004 whichever is later.)

None.

Outcome of the inspection

Satisfactory

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 must take the following actions by the date shown

Std	Action	Date
1	Ensure Ofsted is notified of changes to staff and committee members within the required timeframe.	21/10/2004

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

Std	Recommendation
2	Ensure sufficient staff are engaged with children at tidy up time and snack time.
3	Ensure activities offered meet the individual needs and interests of all the children, allowing children opportunities to make choices and decisions.
13	Ensure the child protection policy includes clear procedures to follow if an allegation is made against a member of staff.

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

How effective is the nursery education?

The education programme offered at Stepping Stones Playgroup is generally good.

Children are confident and usually persist at a broad range of planned activities. Funded children make steady progress toward the early learning goals in most of the six learning areas, there are weaknesses in the programme for knowledge and understanding of the world.

The quality of teaching is generally good. All adults understand how children learn and have a sound overview of the foundation stage, although staff lack confidence in their knowledge of the underpinning stepping stones. The range of activities is sufficiently broad to meet the needs of most children. Children are able to choose from a selection of activities each day but there is little independent access to equipment to enable children to make decisions and explore freely. Key workers make good observations of what children can do, they set individual goals for children and create attractive developmental records which are shared with parents. These are not systematically used to inform short term planning.

The leadership and management of the group is generally good. There is a clear commitment to provide good quality education, however, there are limited systems to monitor and evaluate how effective the setting is in achieving this. Planning works in practice but short term planning lacks sufficient detail. Clear communication systems, established roles and responsibilities result in a balanced staff team that work well together. The organisation of sessions is generally good but children can find it difficult to be attentive and participate in large group teaching sessions as they have varying concentration spans.

Partnership with parents is good and parents speak highly of the setting, the approachability of staff and the level of communication.

What is being done well?

- The setting is led and managed efficiently. There is a commitment to provide good quality care and education for children. The setting continually changes and develops through a programme of informal assessment, staff training and using advisory workers. Adults are generally well deployed to pay children sufficient attention and support them in their play and learning to meet their individual needs.
- The staff team work and communicate well together. Each member has a clear understanding of their role and responsibilities. Adult's skills are used to complement each other and create a balanced team. staff develop good relationships with children which creates a caring and positive learning environment.

- Key workers maintain attractive and detailed children's progress records which are shared with parents and presented to them when children leave the setting. Adults record pertinent developmental observations, chart children's progress and set individual goals for their development in consultation with parents.
- There is a strong commitment to working partnership with parents. Parents speak very highly of the setting, the friendliness of staff and how well informed they feel. Parents comments include: "the staff are friendly and caring to new children and parents", I would recommend " the space, varied play activities and the friendly, calm and relaxed atmosphere", " the teachers always find time to talk to you, you always feel welcome and can stay if you wish", my opinion of the group is "excellent".

What needs to be improved?

- The programme for Knowledge and Understanding of the World; planning reveals insufficient attention to different strands of learning, particularly science, design and information technology. Children have limited materials and objects to explore, investigate and find out how things work. This limits children's opportunities to question, predict, compare, experiment, test theories, plan, design and construct.
- Planning; short term planning does not clearly demonstrate the purpose of activities, the learning intentions, appropriate grouping of children, the resources and how they are to be used or differentiation for children who learn at different rates.
- Resources, routine and questioning techniques do not always sufficiently challenge more able children. The organisation of resources does not enable children to make decisions and choices or select their own materials spontaneously. Children find it difficult to be attentive and participate in large group teaching sessions due to their differing needs.
- The self-assessment systems used to monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of the provision of nursery education and the impact of action when weaknesses are addressed.

What has improved since the last inspection?

N/a

SUMMARY OF JUDGEMENTS

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Judgement: Generally Good

Children are confident, they enjoy and persist at planned activities. Opportunities for children to choose activities spontaneously, set their own challenges and operate independently are limited. Children are keen to participate in group discussions but the organisation of large group teaching sessions does not always enable them to. Staff and children have good relationships, children are beginning to understand the needs of others and develop cooperative relationships with their peers.

COMMUNICATION, LANGUAGE AND LITERACY

Judgement: Generally Good

Children speak confidently, negotiate, plan, share ideas, make accurate descriptions and talk about their experiences. Staff develop linguistic skills well, making good use of impromptu situations to extend vocabulary. A wide range of books are available, although children rarely choose to look at these independently. Regular writing opportunities are provided but not all children choose to engage in these.

MATHEMATICAL DEVELOPMENT

Judgement: Generally Good

There are many opportunities to explore a range of mathematical concepts, which interest children and build on their knowledge of colours, size, shape, quantity and position. Children count confidently to ten and beyond and are able to use mathematical language competently. Mathematical challenges for more able children are limited as they spend little time calculating or comparing through practical activities and have limited opportunities to record mathematical findings.

KNOWLEDGE AND UNDERSTANDING OF THE WORLD

Judgement: Significant Weaknesses

Children experience a small range of materials for sensory exploration but spend little time finding out how things change, work, or exploring everyday objects and technology. There are daily chances to use construction kits but these do not sufficiently extend planning and design skills. Topic work provides chances to learn about the natural world and living things. Children are beginning to find out about their own and other cultures through nursery resources, topic work and festivals.

PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT

Judgement: Generally Good

Good use of indoor space allows children regular opportunities to explore and develop physical skills using small equipment, there is little large equipment to promote physical challenge. Children generally have good spatial awareness, move creatively and are able to negotiate obstacles using control and co-ordination. They develop good dexterity and manipulative skills by using a range of tools and small equipment.

CREATIVE DEVELOPMENT

Judgement:	Generally Good
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There are many chances to explore colour, shape and texture through adult led activities, these are usually sufficiently extended to allow children to explore their own ideas. Children's work is displayed. There are good opportunities for children to be independently creative when using the craft chest. Children have good imagination, share and act out ideas with peers in the imaginative area which could be a home corner, shop or post office and extend this play into all areas of play.

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

OUTCOME OF THE INSPECTION

The provision is acceptable and is of good quality overall. Children are making generally 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: THE KEY ISSUES

- Develop the programme for knowledge and understanding of the world to pay sufficient attention to all strands of learning, particularly science, design and technology. Provide materials and opportunities which enable children to explore, experiment and find out how things work, plan, design and construct.
- Ensure planning is sufficiently detailed to demonstrate the purpose of activities, clear learning intentions and how activities are to be used to meet the requirements of children who learn at different rates to ensure children are sufficiently engaged and challenged.
- Organise resources to enable children to make more choices and decisions about what they play with, select resources independently, explore and investigate spontaneously and set their own challenges.

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.