



**Office for Standards
in Education**

COMBINED INSPECTION REPORT

URN 301673

DfES Number: 562998

INSPECTION DETAILS

Inspection Date	04/01/2005
Inspector Name	Christine Fraser Turner

SETTING DETAILS

Day Care Type	Full Day Care
Setting Name	Stepping Stones
Setting Address	Mondeor, Hoddlesden Road Hoddlesden Darwen Lancashire BB3 3LR

REGISTERED PROVIDER DETAILS

Name	Mrs Julie Mercer
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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 nursery is located in the village of Hoddlesden, close to Darwen. It opened in 1994 and operates from a single storey building. A maximum of 26 children may attend the nursery at any one time. The nursery is open each weekday from 08:00 to 17:30 all year round. Children have access to a secure outdoor play area.

There are currently 46 children from 0 to under 5 years on roll. Of these, 22 children receive funding for nursery education. Children come from a wide catchment area.

The nursery employs 7 staff and the proprietor also works in the nursery as a manager. Seven staff including the manager hold appropriate early years qualifications. One member of staff is working towards a qualification.

The nursery receives support from a teacher from the Early Years Development and Childcare Partnership (EYDCP).

How good is the Day Care?

Stepping Stones Nursery provides satisfactory day care for children.

Effective procedures are in place to ensure that all staff are suitable to work with children. Staff are encouraged to develop through training. An operational plan is in place, but the use of key workers needs improvement. The nursery offers a bright welcoming environment to parents and children. Children of all ages are able to access their toys easily. There is a wide variety of equipment that is checked regularly for safety. Most required documents are in place to support the care of children but some need improvement.

Risk assessments are in place. Most aspects of safety are addressed. Children are encouraged to follow good hygiene routines. Staff respect parents dietary requests for their child and staff are well informed about allergies. Children receive regular drinks. Staff use information provided by parents to offer individual care for children.

Staff have a positive attitude towards special needs. They understand their role in protecting children, but need to improve awareness of who to contact to report matters of concern.

Children play well together and are encouraged to choose their own activities. Staff praise children for their achievements. They observe and record what children do but do not yet use the information to inform the next steps for play and learning. There are no plans in place for children under three years of age. Staff manage children's behaviour well.

Parents spoken to at the time of inspection were happy with the care provided for their child. Staff share children's achievements verbally with parents.

What has improved since the last inspection?

At the last inspection the provider agreed to improve documentation, introduce risk assessments and ensure that fire exits were clearly identifiable.

The provider has introduced a record which is readily available to record incidents relating to behaviour and share with parents. The complaints procedure now includes the address and telephone number for Ofsted, so parents know who to complain to if they are not happy with the providers response to any concerns. A policy for sick children has been introduced and is available in the parents policy file. Risk assessments are now in place and children's safety has improved as a result of action taken.

Action has not been take to identify fire exits or to include details for who to contact with child protection concerns. These actions are carried forward in this inspection.

What is being done well?

- Children behave well.
- Staff take positive action to promote good health of children and take appropriate action if a child is ill whilst in their care.
- Staff are committed to ongoing development through training.
- Daily diaries are in place for babies and are used as a means of communication to ensure that parents have detailed information on their child's daily routine.

What needs to be improved?

- the identification of fire exits
- the details for who to contact with child protection concerns
- the medication records

- the contact with a consistent adult for children under two years of age
- the safety of the low cupboard in the utility room and the babies chairs for feeding
- the registration system to show when visitors are present and when staff are not on the premises.

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.)

There are no complaints to report on.

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
6	Ensure all fire exits are clearly identified, after seeking advice from the fire officer.	31/01/2005
13	Ensure that details of who to contact and report child protection concerns to is readily available.	31/01/2005

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

Std	Recommendation
2	Ensure that children under two years of age have opportunity to interact with a consistent adult at frequent intervals throughout the day.
6	Make sure that cleaning materials in the low cupboard in the utility room are inaccessible to the children and that babies in feeding chairs are fully secured.
14	Obtain written permission consistently from parents before administering

	medication to children and ensure that all entries are countersigned by parents.
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INSPECTION OF THE NURSERY EDUCATION PROVISION FOR FUNDED THREE AND FOUR YEAR OLDS.

How effective is the nursery education?

Stepping Stones Nursery provides good quality nursery education overall which enables children to make generally good progress towards the early learning goals in all areas of learning.

The quality of teaching is generally good. Staff have a generally good understanding of the early learning goals. Planning covers all areas of learning. Focus plans contain sufficient information to inform teaching and are evaluated to identify the next steps for learning from the activity. Staff plan for children of differing levels of ability. They observe children well but do not yet use the information to inform the planning. Most of the children's records have identified next steps for learning. Staff manage children's behaviour well, which helps children to concentrate on activities.

The leadership and management of the nursery is generally good. They are committed to ongoing development through training. They seek advice from an early years teacher from the EYDCP and are improving provision by implementing the recommendations made from visits. Staff are able to identify strengths and weaknesses of the educational provision. A new system is now in place to monitor the educational provision but there has been insufficient time to check its effectiveness.

The partnership with parents and carers is generally good. Parents receive good quality information on the setting including information on the six areas of learning. Staff speak to parents informally on their child's progress. Parents are able to access their child's records at any time but not all parents are aware of this fact. Parents are encouraged to be involved in their child's learning via the library scheme where children take books home to enjoy with parents. They are informed of the topic that is planned for the start of the term but not what children will learn.

What is being done well?

- Staff have used previous training to improve provision and as a result have reorganised the large playroom.
- Staff and children have good relationships.
- Staff manage children's behaviour well which helps children concentrate on activities.

What needs to be improved?

- the provision for children to experiment with creative materials
- the provision for free writing

- the provision for role play

What has improved since the last inspection?

There is no information available from the last inspection therefore no judgement can be made on any improvements since the last inspection.

SUMMARY OF JUDGEMENTS

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Judgement:	Generally Good
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Children make good relationships with each other. They concentrate well on self chosen activities. They are learning to behave well. Children separate from their main carer confidently. They are able to manage their own personal needs and put on their own coats. Children are not sufficiently encouraged to operate independently within the environment e.g. snack time. They are beginning to make connections with other parts of their lives.

COMMUNICATION, LANGUAGE AND LITERACY

Judgement:	Generally Good
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Children speak confidently to each other and adults. They listen well at story time. Children are able to recognise their name card at lunch time and say letters in their name. They are beginning to make a good attempt at writing their own name. Children's free writing and mark making is insufficiently encouraged.

MATHEMATICAL DEVELOPMENT

Judgement:	Generally Good
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Children are learning to recognise number, some children can recognise numbers up to 10. Children can confidently name two dimensional shapes as they complete shape puzzles. They create their own patterns as they join hexagons together. They are beginning to learn about subtraction as they sing "five currant buns". Children are beginning to learn about mathematical language as they discuss big and little etc. Staff do not sufficiently encourage children to count as part of daily routine.

KNOWLEDGE AND UNDERSTANDING OF THE WORLD

Judgement:	Generally Good
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Children learn about their local community as they take part in visits to local parks, school and to the post box to post letters to Santa. They learn about other peoples cultures as well as their own as they celebrate festivals. Children are able to operate simple equipment and perform simple functions on the computer using the mouse. Children learn about how things grow and develop as they plant and care for seeds. Children are not sufficiently encouraged to construct with re-cycled materials.

PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT

Judgement:	Generally Good
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Children are learning to handle a range of tools with increasing confidence e.g. scissors and pencils. Children move confidently and ride bikes well, avoiding collisions. They learn about the importance of hand washing and keeping healthy, and about changes to their body following exercise. Children show respect for each others personal space when playing together e.g. making patterns with hexagons. Planning for outdoor play lacks detail and does not sufficiently challenge older children.

CREATIVE DEVELOPMENT	
Judgement:	Generally Good
Children are learning to recognise colours as they paint and draw. They join in enthusiastically with ring games e.g. 'The Farmers In His Den'. Children sing confidently in groups and alone. Children use musical instruments to explore sound as they use them to accompany familiar songs. Children have insufficient time to engage in role play. Children have too few opportunities to experiment with materials for free painting and collage.	
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

- improve the provision for children to experiment with materials when taking part in making models, free painting and collage.
- ensure that all children have access to role play which includes resources to encourage mark making and writing skills.

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.