



**Office for Standards
in Education**

NURSERY INSPECTION REPORT

URN 955834

DfES Number: 518434

INSPECTION DETAILS

Inspection Date	14/03/2005
Inspector Name	Rosemary Davies

SETTING DETAILS

Day Care Type	Full Day Care
Setting Name	Stepping Stones Nursery School
Setting Address	129 Woodfield Road Thames Ditton Surrey KT7 0DR

REGISTERED PROVIDER DETAILS

Name	Mrs Alison Sellers
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ABOUT THE INSPECTION

The purpose of this inspection is to assure government, parents and the public 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 opened in 1990. The current proprietor took over the setting in 1996. The nursery operates as one nursery based on two sites, one in Thames Ditton and one in Long Ditton. Each caters for a different age range.

The Thames Ditton nursery moved to purpose built premises in 2001. Accommodation for the children is in three separate rooms. Children attending come from the surrounding urban area.

The nursery is registered for full day care for 46 children at any one time aged 2 to 5 years. It is open from Monday to Friday from 08:30 until 15:45, during term time only. A holiday club operates during the holiday periods.

There are currently 53 children aged from 3 to 5 years on roll, all of whom are in receipt of nursery education funding. There are 46 children aged 2 on roll who attend for afternoon sessions. Two children have special educational needs, (SEN). There are no children attending who learn English as an additional language.

There are 11 staff who work with the children. Of these, 2 are qualified teachers and 6 have appropriate early years qualifications. Staff receive support from the local authority's early years and childcare department, including the Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator, (SENCO).

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

How effective is the nursery education?

Stepping Stones Nursery School offers acceptable and high quality provision where children are making very good progress towards the early learning goals in all areas of their development. The programme for children's personal, social and emotional development is particularly strong.

The quality of teaching is very good. Staff plan a stimulating, broad and balanced programme of activities making effective use of their in-depth understanding of the early learning goals. Staff base this curriculum on the principles of the Foundation Stage guidance, so that children learn through first-hand, practical play activities, both indoors and out. All staff have a united approach to behaviour management so that throughout their time in the nursery, children know what is expected of them. Children with special educational needs (SEN) progress well, benefiting from the efforts made by the nursery's SENCO with external support from the area SENCO. Staff assess children well.

The leadership and management of the setting are very good. The nursery's proprietor provides strong leadership so that all staff are aware of the aims and principles on which the educational provision is based. She takes a particular interest in SEN. The management team deploy staff effectively so that they are aware of their roles and responsibilities and the nursery day runs smoothly. They monitor and evaluate the provision of nursery education very well, making full and effective use of the premises and resources.

The partnership with parents is very good and a major strength of the nursery. Parents receive an extremely good range of information about the setting and its provision. They are kept very well informed of their children's progress through informal discussions, written reports and parents' evenings. They are strongly encouraged to be involved with their children's learning. This helps the children make quick progress.

What is being done well?

- The room supervisors plan stimulating, interesting activities so that children are enthusiastic and keen to learn. They achieve a very good balance between adult-led and adult-guided activities, and those that children initiate for themselves. This results in children learning new skills and having time to practise them. In role-play, for example, they happily use their emerging mark-making skills to produce 'shopping lists'.
- All staff have a secure understanding of the early learning goals and the stepping stones to achieving them. They use this knowledge well to capitalise on incidental opportunities that arise to help children learn. They use effective questioning techniques to stretch children's thinking so that children become curious to see, for example, what an egg will look like when it is beaten.

- The staff team work together effectively so that children benefit from consistent routines and expectations across the three classes. All know, for example, that they 'line up' before going outside. This helps children feel secure and contributes to them behaving extremely well.
- All children, including those with SEN, receive much individual support. This contributes to them making very good progress in all areas of learning and is particularly beneficial in helping them develop their communication, language and literacy skills.
- Staff welcome parents and work closely with them, to the benefit of the children. Parents are made fully aware of, for example, topic titles and the 'Letter of the Week'. They send relevant items from home and this is a contributing factor to the excellent progress children make in linking sounds to letters.

What needs to be improved?

- the methods used to encourage younger children's recognition of their names.

What has improved since the last inspection?

Not applicable

SUMMARY OF JUDGEMENTS

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Judgement:	Very Good
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Children enjoy their activities, eagerly showing staff what they can do, knowing staff will praise their efforts. They are eager to try new things because they trust the staff and this is a reflection of the warm relationships throughout the nursery. Children behave extremely well, understanding what is expected of them as staff give clear explanations. They enjoy choosing from a particularly wide range of activities and concentrate well to finish them.

COMMUNICATION, LANGUAGE AND LITERACY

Judgement:	Very Good
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Children communicate very well verbally. All benefit from frequent individual conversations with staff. They make excellent progress in learning to link sounds with letters through a variety of activities. All children are learning to enjoy books and listen avidly to dramatically read stories. There are missed opportunities for early name recognition for younger children. Older children use their early writing skills well, proudly displaying their efforts; three-year-olds mark-make confidently

MATHEMATICAL DEVELOPMENT

Judgement:	Very Good
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Children develop their understanding of mathematics through interesting practical activities. They play games in which they accurately count spots on a die and match them to pictures of bears, for example. They act out rhymes such as, 'Five Currant Buns', taking one away as they part with real pennies. They learn about shapes, making circular wheels for their buses. They sort paper into different shapes as they tidy up. They compare quantities as they measure ingredients for cooking.

KNOWLEDGE AND UNDERSTANDING OF THE WORLD

Judgement:	Very Good
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Children have a wide range of opportunities for exploring and investigating a variety of materials, both natural and made. They look closely at blossom. They know that ingredients change when cooked and that a helium balloon will stay on the ceiling. They select freely from resources to make models, choosing from various glues and using other fixing materials such as split-pins. They learn about other cultures and beliefs through, for example, discussing Hanukkah and seeing a menorah.

PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT

Judgement:	Very Good
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Children develop their sense of space well, both indoors and out. Older children negotiate their way upstairs with care. Outside, all run around weaving in and out of each other without too many collisions! They show increasing control of their bodies and of their hand and finger dexterity as, for example, they take careful aim at skittles or make puzzles. They learn to use real tools such as wooden spoons and, under careful supervision, cut fruit with knives and use the laminator.

CREATIVE DEVELOPMENT	
Judgement:	Very Good
Children explore a wide range of media and materials freely, using all their senses. They cut shapes from bubble wrap and thoroughly enjoy watching how marbles roll through red and white paint to create pink. They use pink tissue paper and chalks to create their own blossom pictures. Children use their imaginations freely whilst moving outside, painting and constructing. They are very well supported by staff in pretend-play situations such as the baker's shop or the garden centre.	
Children's spiritual, moral, social, and cultural development is fostered appropriately.	

OUTCOME OF THE INSPECTION

The provision is acceptable and is of high quality. Children are making very 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

There are no significant weaknesses to report, but considerations should be given to improving the following:

- There are no significant weaknesses to report but consideration should be given to improving the following:
- further extend the opportunities for three-year-olds to recognise their names.

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.