



Office for Standards
in Education

COMBINED INSPECTION REPORT

URN 133083

DfES Number: 535801

INSPECTION DETAILS

Inspection Date	05/10/2004
Inspector Name	Charlotte Jenkin

SETTING DETAILS

Day Care Type	Sessional Day Care
Setting Name	Stepping Stones Pre School
Setting Address	Ascension Church Hall Claude Avenue, Oldfield Park Bath BA2 1AG

REGISTERED PROVIDER DETAILS

Name	Stepping Stones Pre School 1083646
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ORGANISATION DETAILS

Name	Stepping Stones Pre School
Address	Ascension Church Hall Claude Avenue, Oldfield Park Bath BA2 1AG

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 is an established committee run group, based in a church hall serving the Oldfield Park residential area of Bath. It has an established staff team of four, of whom two have early years qualifications, and the remaining two are currently training to level three. The group is registered for up to 24 children and opens each morning, except Wednesday, from 09:30 to 12:00. The group has use of the main hall and a separate story room, and there is a separate enclosed garden for outdoor play.

The pre-school has gained Pre-school Learning Alliance accreditation and has been awarded the Children's Rights Charter.

How good is the Day Care?

Stepping Stones Pre-School provides good quality care for children.

Staff have or are working towards appropriate qualifications and attend regular training. They are very creative in setting up a child friendly and welcoming environment for children and parents, where space is well organised into clear learning areas which children eagerly visit. High adult to child ratios and effective staff deployment means children are well supported during activities and are supervised at all times. The pre-school has a good range of toys and equipment that cover all areas of development.

Staff demonstrate a high priority to ensuring children's safety daily and checks effectively minimise risks to children indoors, although there are some hazardous plants in the garden. Staff promote good hygiene practices with the children through daily routines and give parent helpers information regarding hygiene when preparing snacks. There are good arrangements to ensure staff are aware of children's dietary needs, these are well catered for and snacks given to the children include healthy options. Staff have a good knowledge of child protection issues.

Staff plan a good balance of structured and free play activities that help children

make progress in most areas of learning. They are very aware of children's individual needs and support their participation in the activities and routines well, allowing flexibility for children where needed. Staff are very good role models for children and are calm and consistent in their approach to managing children's behaviour. They provide appropriate support for children with special needs, although there is scope to further develop staff's confidence in this area.

Staff liaise very closely with parents regarding the care of their children and respect their wishes fully. Parents receive detailed information regarding the provision and have formal and informal opportunities to discuss their child's progress and development.

What has improved since the last inspection?

At the last inspection the pre-school agreed to ensure the child protection policy includes a procedure for if an allegation of abuse is made against a staff member and to ensure all staff have induction training which includes health and safety and child protection. The pre-school also agreed to obtain written permission from parents before administering medication and produce an action plan to minimise risks in the garden.

The child protection policy now includes a procedure for if an allegation of abuse is made against a member of staff and staff are aware of this. All staff have a detailed induction which covers all policies and procedures, including health and safety and child protection and staff are very aware of their responsibilities in the setting. Staff are aware of the need to gain written permission from parents prior to administering medication, although they have not had to administer medication yet. Detailed risk assessments have minimised risks to children in the garden, although some overgrown plants continue to pose a hazard to the children.

What is being done well?

- Staff plan a good balance of structured and free play activities that help children make progress. Staff interact very well with the children during activities and encourage their thinking and communication skills. Children relate very well to others and are engaged in purposeful play.
- Staff are very aware of children's individual needs and support children well so they can participate in all activities and routines of the group. They encourage children to develop relationships with peers and are aware of children's limitations, allowing flexibility in the routine of the day. There are positive images of diversity available to children in their daily play.
- Staff use age appropriate methods for managing children's behaviour and implement the behaviour management policy consistently. They are calm in their approach, are very good role models to children and encourage good behaviour through praise and reward. Children's behaviour is very good.
- Staff liaise very closely with parents regarding the care of their children and gain detailed information about children's backgrounds. They respect parents

wishes fully and encourage honest relationships to ensure children's welfare is paramount at all times. They have formal and informal opportunities to discuss their child's progress and receive detailed information about the pre-school's policies, routines and curriculum implemented.

What needs to be improved?

- staff's knowledge and understanding of special educational needs in order to gain confidence in liaising with parents
- children's safety in the garden with respect to hazardous plants.

Outcome of the inspection

Good

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

Std	Recommendation
6	Ensure plants in the garden do not pose a hazard to children.
10	Develop staff's knowledge and understanding of special educational needs in order to gain confidence in liaising with parents.

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

How effective is the nursery education?

Stepping Stones Pre-School is an acceptable provision, of good quality, where children make very good progress towards the early learning goals in personal, social and emotional development and in communication, language and literacy, and make generally good progress towards the early learning goals in all other areas of learning.

Teaching is generally good. Staff demonstrate a generally good knowledge of the early learning goals and interact very well with the children during activities. They plan a good range of activities that engage children's interests and challenge them well, although four-year-olds have limited chances to develop independence in selecting and using activities. Plans have clear learning outcomes for children, and include grouping of children, resources to be used and adult input. Support for children with special needs and for whom English is an additional language is generally good. Assessments of children's progress are not supported with observations and examples of work.

Leadership and management is generally good. The supervisor and committee work closely together, support staff well and enable them to access training opportunities. Staff work well as a team and share all responsibilities of the group. Appraisals are effective in developing staff's confidence in identifying their strengths, as well as areas for future development. Staff monitor the provision and correctly identify areas for future development, although monitoring of long term plans does not successfully identify gaps in the curriculum.

Partnership with parents is very good. Parents receive detailed information regarding the curriculum and the six areas of learning. They have easy access to activity plans, receive topic webs and know the activities their children will take part in. Parents and staff have both informal and formal opportunities to discuss their child's progress. Parents contribute to assessments and are actively involved in their child's learning.

What is being done well?

- Children enter the pre-school with confidence and are eager to explore the activities on offer. They form good relationships with staff and peers, and are confident in initiating conversations with familiar and unfamiliar adults.
- Children freely make marks and give meaning to these. They attempt writing for various purposes in the home corner, and often carry notebooks around the playroom, continuing to develop their emergent writing skills in all curriculum areas.
- Staff plan a good range of activities that challenge children well and help them make progress in all six areas of learning.

- Parents are actively involved in their children's learning. A successful parents rota enables parents to see their child's play and learning in progress, and a lending library is well established. Parents regularly take home activities to do with their children at home, including puzzles, games and books.
- Staff monitor the provision and successfully identify areas for improvement, for example, observations and the outdoor provision. Action plans are put in place and the success of these are monitored and evaluated.

What needs to be improved?

- the monitoring of the planning of the educational programme to ensure equal attention is given to all six areas of learning, especially knowledge and understanding of the world
- four-year-olds independence in selecting and using activities and resources, especially in creative development
- assessments of children's progress, to include observations of children at play and examples of their work.

What has improved since the last inspection?

Stepping Stones Pre-School has made generally good progress since the last inspection.

At the last inspection the pre-school agreed to include more identification of staff deployment in plans and include all aspects of learning in both plans and assessments.

Secondly, they agreed to ensure that resources to promote all areas of learning are identified and provided regularly.

Finally, they agreed to ensure that children have regular opportunities to use a range of resources freely to further develop their own imaginative ideas.

Plans are now very clear and include clear learning outcomes for children. Staff deployment is effective and ensures children are supported well during both free play and structured activities.

Plans are also clear in identifying resources to be used and these are linked into plans and rotated to ensure children have access to all resources. Children have limited opportunities to independently select and use activities and initiate their own play and learning.

Children have regular opportunities to engage in planned art and craft activities and they begin to express themselves well. They have limited opportunities to select materials of their choice to use and initiate their own art activities.

SUMMARY OF JUDGEMENTS

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Judgement:	Very Good
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Children enter the pre-school with confidence, are eager to explore the activities on offer and spend long periods of time engaged in these. Children are confident initiating conversations with familiar and unfamiliar adults about their interests and form good relationships with their peers, seeking out their friends to play with. Children develop good turn-taking and sharing skills, demonstrate a sense of pride in their achievements and are keen to show their creations to others.

COMMUNICATION, LANGUAGE AND LITERACY

Judgement:	Very Good
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Children speak with confidence, when talking about what they are doing during activities. They use a widening range of vocabulary when talking and less able children use gestures and eye contact and are confident in attempting to communicate with others. Children develop good listening skills and take turns in conversation. Children develop an interest in books and independently select them and look at the pictures. Children freely make marks and give meaning to these.

MATHEMATICAL DEVELOPMENT

Judgement:	Generally Good
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Children use numbers spontaneously in their play and more able children count up to 9 objects with confidence, and say the number after a given one. Children use language to describe size and position and explore quantity. They observe and comment on patterns and sort various objects according to similarities, for example shape and size. Routine activities are not utilised well to develop more able children's skills in linking numbers to counting and comparing numbers.

KNOWLEDGE AND UNDERSTANDING OF THE WORLD

Judgement:	Generally Good
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Children explore various textures and natural materials and observe change over time, for example when growing bulbs. They select from various materials and build and join, making models often with a purpose in mind. Children remember and talk about past events and gain awareness of other cultures. Children have limited opportunities to explore the local environment, develop skills in ICT, talk about the weather and days of the week and examine objects to find out how they work.

PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT

Judgement:	Generally Good
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Children move with confidence and control around the room and show awareness of themselves and others. They move in a range of ways and use movement well to express their feelings, for example when pretending to be animals. Children develop good climbing and balancing skills and use various writing implements and tools with increasing control. Children have limited opportunities to observe the effects of activity on their bodies and gain awareness of healthy practices with respect to hygiene.

CREATIVE DEVELOPMENT

Judgement:	Generally Good
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Children explore various textures and use these to create collages and models. More able children's drawings are developing well and include detail such as faces and features. Children freely paint and talk about what they are doing. Children enjoy singing songs and explore sounds musical instruments make. They use their imagination well in role play and are keen to dress up. Children have limited opportunities to freely select from resources and materials and initiate their own art activities.

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

- continue to monitor the planning of the educational programme to ensure equal attention is given to all six areas of learning, especially knowledge and understanding of the world
- develop four-year-olds independence in selecting and using activities and resources, especially in creative development
- continue to develop assessments of children's progress, to include observations of children at play and examples of their work.

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.