



Office for Standards
in Education

COMBINED INSPECTION REPORT

URN 402243

DfES Number: 582513

INSPECTION DETAILS

Inspection Date 26/11/2004
Inspector Name Julie Ann Birkett

SETTING DETAILS

Day Care Type Sessional Day Care
Setting Name Stepping Stones (The Knares Basildon)
Setting Address Lee Chapel South Community Hall
Kibcaps, The Knares,
BASILDON
Essex
SS16 5RX

REGISTERED PROVIDER DETAILS

Name The Committee of Stepping Stones Pre-School Committee

ORGANISATION DETAILS

Name Stepping Stones Pre-School Committee
Address Lee Chapel South Community Hall
Basildon
Essex
SS16 5RX

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 in 1964 and operates from one room within Lee Chapel South Community Hall. It is situated in the Lee Chapel area of Basildon. A maximum of 26 children may attend the pre-school at any one time. The pre-school is open each weekday from 09:00 to 11:30 and from 12:45 to 14:45 on Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday. The pre-school opens for 39 weeks of the year. All children share access to a secure enclosed outdoor play area.

There are currently 36 children from 2 to 5 years on roll. Of these 26 receive funding for nursery education. Children come from a wide catchment area.

The pre-school employs seven staff. Four of the staff, including the manager hold appropriate early years qualifications. One member of staff is working towards a further qualification. The group receives support from the Early Years Development and Childcare Partnership (EYDCP) and the Pre-School Learning Alliance.

How good is the Day Care?

Stepping Stones provides satisfactory care for children.

The pre-school operational plan provides clear and positive aims and objectives. Indoor space is used effectively. Children play comfortably at different levels and have space to work both on a small or large scale. Staff ensure that children can use the outdoor area when they choose. This enables children to learn from and enjoy the freedom of the outside space. There is a wide range of good quality equipment to support children's learning. However, children have limited independent access to further resources to support their own play and learning. The staff are warm and welcoming and make the environment interesting through displays of pictures and artwork and by presenting activities attractively.

Documentation is in good order. There are appropriate systems, policies and procedures in place to ensure the safety, wellbeing and inclusion of all children, although the child protection policy lacks some minor detail. Children enjoy a range

of foods and drink at snack time, but staff do not use this opportunity fully to promote children's social and independence skills.

Children benefit from the balance of the staff team's early years experience and ongoing training. Staff plan and provide a range of activities to interest and motivate the children. Staff support and guide children's learning through play. They are interested in what the children say and do and encourage children's learning through conversations and gentle questioning. They use positive methods to promote good behaviour in the children. Staff and children build good relationships and the children are confident, settled and secure.

Information about the pre-school is available to parents. The daily communication between staff and parents is open and friendly. Staff have implemented an effective system to ensure that the children's progress is regularly shared with parents.

What has improved since the last inspection?

At the last inspection the pre-school agreed to develop an operational plan, a policy for administration of medication and exclusion of children who are ill or infectious, to update the complaint policy and to obtain consent from parents for any emergency medical advice or treatment.

The group have worked hard in implementing these and all are now in place. These systems assist in assuring that children's wellbeing is promoted and parents are aware of the setting operational plans.

What is being done well?

- There is an excellent range of good quality equipment available. Staff set up a broad range of activities each day to ensure that the children remain interested and motivated and are able to learn through their play.
- Staff are warm and caring. They are actively involved with the children and are interested in what they say and do. They ask children open-ended questions and give them time to think, reflect, suggest ideas and predict. As a consequence children form good relationships with staff and are confident and eager to share in conversations and discussions.
- Opportunities for children to use the outdoor area are very good. Children can choose when and if they want to play outside and they move freely between the two, even in inclement weather. This enables children to enjoy the freedom of the outdoors while learning from the activities and experiences provided outside.
- Staff share the children's progress at the pre-school with parents. This is a recently implemented system and is working effectively. Key workers meet with the parents of their key children to discuss the children's development. This enables parents to become involved in their children's learning at pre-school and fosters good home links.

What needs to be improved?

- organisation of snack time
- provision of further resources that children can access themselves
- child protection policy.

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.)

Since April 2004 Ofsted has received one complaint relating to National Standards 11: Behaviour. The complaint raised a concern that staff were not managing children's behaviour appropriately.

Ofsted requested an internal investigation on 18 August 2004. It was found that some behaviour management systems, policies and procedures lacked detail. Ofsted raised one action in relation to Standard 11 to ensure there is a named member of staff with responsibility for behaviour management issues. In addition, two recommendations were given to update written behaviour management policies and to ensure information is shared with parents in a consistent manner.

At this inspection it was demonstrated that a member of staff is designated to support staff with regard to behaviour management issues; that the policy is in line with requirements and is understood by all staff; that staff do share relevant behaviour information with parents in a consistent manner. Ofsted is satisfied that the registered person has taken appropriate steps to address the concern, and the provider remains qualified for registration.

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

Std	Recommendation
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2	Review the organisation of snack time to provide further opportunities for children's social and independence skills
5	Review the provision of resources so that children have opportunities to access further equipment by themselves to support and extend their own independent play and learning
13	Review the information in the child protection policy with regard to if allegations are made against a member of staff to ensure that it reflects good practice and is within the ACPC procedures

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

How effective is the nursery education?

The provision for pre-school education at Stepping Stones is good. Children make generally good progress towards the early learning goals in all the six areas of learning.

The quality of teaching is generally good. Staff have a developing understanding of the Foundation Stage through daily use. They plan and provide a wide range of activities and opportunities for the children. They establish how children can make progress along the stepping stones of learning through some planned activities . However, it is not always evident what the learning intentions of other activities are, how these will be achieved and how individual children's learning will be supported or extended. Staff make observations of the children and record their progress. They get to know the children well and have an understanding of how to support or extend the individual children.

Staff are very involved with the children and guide their learning throughout the sessions. They use spontaneous opportunities to promote the children's learning further through everyday events. They introduce new ideas and concepts to the children in a meaningful way. Children are able to revisit and consolidate their skills in the activities provided and are secure and settled. Staff and children develop warm and friendly relationships. Children get to know routines well. They learn about acceptable boundaries for behaviour and their behaviour is good.

Leadership and management is generally good. Areas for improvement have been identified by the team of staff and they have arranged training to meet their needs . Management and staff are a cohesive team and work effectively together complementing each other's strengths.

Partnership with parents is generally good. Parents have access to information about how the children learn through pre-entry visits, newsletters and displays. Children's development records are shared with parents.

What is being done well?

- Staff effectively use spontaneous opportunities to extend the children's own ideas and learning. An example is, children were playing as builders when they decided that they should decorate the house, a member of staff suggested that perhaps they could make wallpaper. The children became completely engrossed in this activity, busily designing, colouring and sticking paper to the play house.
- Staff introduce new ideas and concepts to the children well. They use their knowledge of what the children already know and can do so that new information and skills are explained at the appropriate level for the individual

children. Subsequently children remain motivated and interested and develop good self esteem by being able to achieve what is expected of them.

- Children develop a good understanding of acceptable boundaries of behaviour in the pre-school. Staff have introduced new behaviour rules and strategies which they discuss with the children regularly. Children remind each other about what is and is not acceptable. They negotiate with each other and are polite and helpful.

What needs to be improved?

- curriculum planning
- staff's understanding of the stepping stones of learning.

What has improved since the last inspection?

At the last education inspection there were two key issues raised.

The group have made generally good progress with regard to the key issue to extend the programme to promote children's physical development, by including more planned opportunities for promoting gross motor skills and health and bodily awareness. The children have daily opportunities to use sit and ride on toys, use equipment and join in, for example, an obstacle course. The children notice the effects exercise has on their bodies when they comment that they are hot after running around and feel that their hearts are beating faster. However, the planned curriculum does not show how equal emphasis is given to this area of learning or how individual children will be supported or challenged to make progress against the stepping stones.

Generally good progress has been made in the second key issue to provide more child-initiated creative activities on a daily basis, to enable children to express their own ideas and feelings. Children enjoy a range of creative activities presented to them in an attractive way. They use their imagination well in their pretend play and are able to express both real and imagined experiences. They listen to music, dance, use instruments, paint, draw, make collages and models. They investigate a range of materials such as corn flour mix, play dough, rice, glitter and fabrics. However, planning for child led creative activities does not show what the learning intentions of these activities are and how children make progress against the stepping stones of learning in this area.

SUMMARY OF JUDGEMENTS

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Judgement: Generally Good

Children are happy and settled and their behaviour is good. They concentrate well on things that interest them and show a sense of pride when they finish a task. Children talk confidently about different parts of their lives. They share and take turns and work happily together. They are aware of their own needs and feelings and learn about others feelings for example when using puppets and books. Children learn about different people and the wider world through a range of activities.

COMMUNICATION, LANGUAGE AND LITERACY

Judgement: Generally Good

Children are confident speakers and express their ideas as they play talking about past, present and future events in their own lives. They are introduced to new vocabulary through everyday conversations or topic work. They listen well and respond to songs and stories with enjoyment. They choose books from the book corner. They practice their emergent writing at the writing table or when making a gingerbread man book. Children learn about letter sounds and recognise their own names.

MATHEMATICAL DEVELOPMENT

Judgement: Generally Good

Children count the number of bricks in a tower and compare the heights. They begin to solve number problems as they calculate how many bricks they will need to make it as "big as". They learn to recognise and name numerals as they use number games. They explore 2 and 3D shape when they use puzzles and when junk modelling. They discuss size, weight and volume as they fill buckets of sand and use play dough. They begin to understand simple addition and subtraction when they sing number rhymes.

KNOWLEDGE AND UNDERSTANDING OF THE WORLD

Judgement: Generally Good

Children find out about living things when they grow cress and do bark rubbing. They talk about changes when they look at the weather, raw and boiled eggs and melting snow. They use torches, magnets and magnifying glasses and learn about what they are and how they work. They learn about their local community when out on walks. They build during craft activities and with construction kits. Children use tools well have access to simple technology equipment.

PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT

Judgement: Generally Good

Children notice the effects of exercise on their bodies when they are hot after running around outside. They learn about healthy eating through topics and everyday, practical experiences. They develop a sense of space and move with awareness of others when riding bikes, skipping and jumping. They use large equipment with skill. They develop very good hand eye coordination when using a wide range of tools and equipment such as bead mazes, rollers and cutters, scissors and pencils.

CREATIVE DEVELOPMENT

Judgement: Generally Good

Children use their senses when food tasting or making 'feely' posters. They use their imagination in different role-play situations such as being builders or preparing for a birthday party. Children explore a range of materials to express and record their ideas. They join in with singing a range of songs and actions rhymes and also use instruments to experiment with sounds. They have regular planned music and movement sessions and enjoy acting out familiar stories.

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 planning of the curriculum to show how and what children are expected to learn from activities across the six areas of learning and how individual children will be supported or extended in the activities to ensure that they build on previous learning and make progress through the stepping stones of learning. This is particularly relevant to providing more able children with ongoing challenges.
- develop all staff's awareness of the stepping stones of learning to enable them to participate in planning of the curriculum and to deliver the curriculum more effectively.

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.