



Office for Standards  
in Education

## COMBINED INSPECTION REPORT

URN 146763

DfES Number: 517432

### INSPECTION DETAILS

Inspection Date 08/12/2003  
Inspector Name Sheila Harrison

### SETTING DETAILS

Day Care Type Sessional Day Care  
Setting Name Stepping Stone Pre-School Group  
Setting Address 111 London Road  
Knebworth  
Hertfordshire  
SG3 6HD

### REGISTERED PROVIDER DETAILS

Name The Committee of Stepping Stone Pre-School 1028293

### ORGANISATION DETAILS

Name Stepping Stone Pre-School  
Address 111 London Road  
Knebworth  
Hertfordshire  
SG3 6HD

## 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 Stone Pre-School opened in 1992. It operates from part of converted council hostel situated adjacent to the school in the village of Knebworth. The pre-school is a registered charity and is managed by a voluntary committee serves the local rural area.

There are currently 71 children from two to five years on roll. This includes 4 funded 3 year olds and 14 funded 4 year olds. Children attend for a variety of sessions. The setting currently supports a number of children with special needs and who speak English as an additional language.

The group opens five days a week during school term times. Sessions are from 09:10 until 11:40 and 12:35 until 15:05.

Eight part-time and full-time staff work with the children. Seven staff have early years qualifications to NVQ level 2, 3 or 4. The setting receives support from a teacher/mentor from the Early Years Development and Childcare Partnership (EYDCP). The pre-school has successfully completed both the Pre-School Learning Alliance and Herts Quality Standard accreditation schemes.

### How good is the Day Care?

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

The provision provides a safe, bright and stimulating environment where the children move confidently. All aspects of the provision are well organised, and effective use is made of the staff, space, and resources to ensure all children are well cared for and their independence is encouraged.

Children are made aware of good hygiene practice. However, infection control procedures need reviewing.

Staff build warm and trusting relationships with the children who appear happy and well behaved. Children are offered activities and resources from a broad and

suitably labelled range. Effective use is made of the inside and outside environment. The carefully planned routine supports the children's learning.

The committed team update their knowledge of child care and education issues, and the committee is supportive in developing the good practice.

The staff welcome parents into the pre-school and the key worker system encourages a two way communicative partnership. Most of the information from the parents needed by the provision is in place.

#### **What has improved since the last inspection?**

The pre-school has successfully completed the Herts Quality Standard accreditation scheme over the past year.

#### **What is being done well?**

- The premises are well organised. The resources are labelled and displayed giving children some choice of activity. The outside area is used to extend and create valuable activities. Children are eager, happy and fully occupied whilst outside.
- Staff manage the children's behaviour well and have high expectations of the children's achievements. They discuss any concerns with the parents and make a united plan of action. Children have many opportunities to share, take turns and negotiate differences. Children share roles within the Christmas production. Staff are good role models using appropriate praise and encouraging good manners.
- Staff are well deployed within the pre-school. They have worked hard to become a strong team, and are committed to developing the provision through quality assurance schemes, regular team meetings, appraisals and further training. This ensures the children are well supported and feel confident and secure.
- Staff have an effective working relationship with the parents and are aware of the importance of good two way communication on a daily basis through the key worker scheme. Information is obtained about the family before a child starts through home visits. They are sensitive to the needs of parents when working with other professionals.

#### **What needs to be improved?**

- infection control measures
- permission for emergency medical treatment.

#### **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
7	Review infection control measures.
7	Obtain parental permission for emergency medical treatment.

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

### How effective is the nursery education?

The provision of nursery education at Stepping Stone Pre-School is of good quality overall. It enables children to make very good progress towards the early learning goals in knowledge and understanding of the world and generally good progress in all other areas of learning.

The quality of teaching is generally good. Staff have a sound knowledge and understanding of the foundation stage. They have developed meaningful relationships with the children, suitably challenging the older more able, and are effectively supporting them through the key worker system. Children behave well in response to high expectations and the sensitive support of staff. The pre-school develops a close, effective partnership with the school and other local pre-schools. Staff work hard to support each other and contribute to the group to ensure worthwhile use is made of time and resources, although there are limited opportunities for child initiated activities.

Assessment informs the planning with the areas of children's development highlighted. Plans include a range of interesting activities and experiences both indoors and outside. Planning is shared and discussed among the staff, the learning intentions are generally understood.

Leadership and management are generally good. The committee are supportive in staff training and professional development. The information from quality assurance schemes, staff appraisals and staff meetings are used to monitor and improve the quality of care and education.

The partnership with parents is very good and contributes to the children's progress towards the early learning goals. An effective and enthusiastic relationship has been established with information and knowledge shared regularly between staff and parents which has a positive impact on the children's development and learning.

### What is being done well?

- The partnership with the parents is strong. Information about the child and the family is sought before a child starts with the pre-school enabling children to be confident and comfortable talking to others about their family. Children develop secure home-school links as they take Wetherby Bear home and complete his diary. Parents are supplied with a wide range of information on the foundation stage and encouraged to take an active role in their child's learning. Parents skills and interests are used to ensure the children have rich and stimulating experiences of French and music.
- The shared assessment scheme provides an effective relationship with the local pre-school and school. They communicate with each other to ensure any special needs are catered for on a change of setting.

- Children's progress in knowledge and understanding of the world is very good. Staff provide a wide range of challenging and practical activities to support the children's learning in this area, including the use of a digital camera, computer and sewing machine.

**What needs to be improved?**

- the opportunities for child initiated activities
- the opportunities for numbers, weight and capacity to be used in everyday activities.

**What has improved since the last inspection?**

n/a

## SUMMARY OF JUDGEMENTS

### PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Judgement: Generally Good

The children respond positively to staff and have formed good relationship with their peers. Children are happy, behave well, take turns and cooperate with each other. Their confidence and independence is promoted through the daily routine and the positive staff support. Visits to the farm and local Chinese restaurant enable the children to develop a sense of community.

### COMMUNICATION, LANGUAGE AND LITERACY

Judgement: Generally Good

Children talk confidently to each other, adults and in groups, willing to express their news. They listen with increasing attention and reflect on their writing and art work, giving a meaning to their marks. Children handle books carefully beginning to understand print goes from left to right. They experience other scripts of other languages and with the Braille books. Children have opportunities to link letters with sounds using the Jolly Phonics scheme

### MATHEMATICAL DEVELOPMENT

Judgement: Generally Good

Children benefit from good staff support to count, recognise number, shape and sizes. Everyday situations are used for the children to develop an understanding of simple number problems. Staff grade the difficulty of the equipment to ensure children have suitable challenge. Children use language for shape and position and they measure during the woodworking sessions, although there was limited discussion on capacity and weight or numbers as labels.

### KNOWLEDGE AND UNDERSTANDING OF THE WORLD

Judgement: Very Good

Children have valuable opportunities to use a variety of technological resources on the pre-schools computers, digital camera and printer. They have stimulating activities that uses a variety of materials, encouraging joining skills through the use of tools during woodwork and on the sewing machine. Children show an awareness of change through an absorbing activity making dough with the effects of adding more flour.

### PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT

Judgement: Generally Good

Children move confidently with an awareness of others and with pleasure. They have suitable opportunities to develop control over their bodies both in large-scale movements such as running, jumping and pedalling tricycles and small -scale movements with tools and equipment. Children have a good awareness of the vocabulary of their body parts and positions as they practice balancing. Children have few opportunities to understand about the changes made to their bodies by vigorous play.

**CREATIVE DEVELOPMENT**

Judgement:	Generally Good
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Children are encouraged to experiment with a variety of drawing mediums. The creative activities on the preparation for Christmas are adult directed leaving little scope for children to explore their ideas to the full. Role play activities are varied and interesting with good quality resources and artefacts. Children's skills and knowledge of music are developed through introduction to different musical instruments and experiences of movement and their voices.

**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**

- increase the range child initiated opportunities particularly within creative development.
- increase the staff's knowledge of how to use everyday activities to help children develop their understanding of number, weight and capacity

*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.*