Inspection report

Stepping Stones Pre School and Playgroup
Day Care of Children

Village Hall
Ecclefechan  DG11 3PA

Inspected by:  Angela Bradford
(Care Commission Officer)

Type of inspection:  Unannounced

Inspection completed on:  16 November 2006
Service Number: CS2003047509
Service name: Stepping Stones Pre School and Playgroup
Service address: Village Hall
Ecclefechan  DG11 3PA

Provider Number: SP2003002741
Provider Name: Stepping Stones Pre School and Playgroup

Inspected By: Angela Bradford
Care Commission Officer
Inspection Type: Unannounced

Inspection Completed: 16 November 2006
Period since last inspection: 8 months

Local Office Address:
Galloway House
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**Introduction**

Stepping Stones Pre School and Playgroup has been registered to provide sessional day care for children since April 2002.

The Playgroup is currently registered to provide care to a maximum of 20 children at any one time, from age 2 years 9 months upwards to not yet attending primary school.

The playgroup operates within a village hall. The Playgroup has access to a shared outdoor area.

**Basis of Report**

Before the visit:
- the playgroup submitted a paper annual return and a self evaluation document.
- parents/guardians returned six parental questionnaires.

During the unannounced visit which took place on Thursday 16 November 2006, the Care Commission Officer spoke with:
- the chairperson
- the manager
- three members of staff
- children and parents

The Care Commission Officer also looked at a range of policies, procedures and records including the following:
- Recruitment policy.
- Complaints policy.
- Child protection policy.
- Children's Personal Learning Plans (PLP’s).
- Information for parents.

and spent time observing how staff members worked with the children.

The Care Commission Officer took all of the above into account and reported on whether the service was meeting the following National Care Standards for Early Education and Childcare up to the age of 16:

Standard 3 Health and well-being
Standard 4 Engaging with children
Standard 7 A caring environment
Standard 10 Involving other services
Standard 12 Confidence in staff

Not all of the elements of each standard were covered during this inspection visit.

The Officer also took account of the Care Commission's themes for the 2006 - 2007 inspection year: Child Protection, Nutrition and the Scottish Executive's "Birth to Three" document and Safer Recruitment.

**Action taken on requirements in last Inspection Report**

There were no requirements in the last inspection report.
Comments on Self-Evaluation
The self evaluation document gave a true reflection of the groups operational practises. Areas of strengths and developments had been identified.

View of Service Users
Observation of and discussion with the children present during the inspection formed an integral part of the assessment. Children were seen to be happy and content in the playgroup. They were confident in speaking to adults and enjoyed the play opportunities provided. A child said “I enjoy coming and doing everything”.

View of Carers
Information obtained from the parental questionnaires stated that five parents were “very happy” and one parent was “happy” with the service provided by the playgroup.

A parent stated that “I watch my child running to playgroup with a smile and running out still smiling, telling of her experiences in the day”.
A parent stated “I don’t feel they give them enough fruit at snack time”. A parent stated she was “unhappy with the range and choice of food provided” another parent stated that they were “unaware of the range and choice of food provided”. One parent was “not aware of the child protection and complaints policies”. A parent stated that they “particularly like the way children are encouraged to be independent, staff interact in a positive way. My child never stops talking about how wonderful they are”.

Those parents spoken to at the time of the inspection were very supportive of the playgroup and staff. One parent said “they would like to have more information from staff on their child’s development.” She was aware of her child’s Personal Leaning Plan but unsure how she could access this document.
Regulations / Principles

Regulation:

Strengths

Areas for Development

National Care Standards

National Care Standard Number 3: Early Education and Childcare up to the age of 16 - Health and Wellbeing

Strengths

Good communication between home and playgroup was valued by staff in the playgroup. An informative notice board was accessible to parents. Children and parents were welcomed into the playgroup room and staff provided opportunities for discussions at the beginning of the day.

Staff understood their responsibilities for protecting children from harm and abuse. Training had been completed by all staff. Staff ensured that there was a safe environment for children to learn and play in. Risk assessments had been completed.

There were policies and procedures in place regarding child protection. Staff were aware of the Dumfries and Galloway’s Child Protection Committee guidelines.

Staff were aware of the Scottish Executive Nutritional Guidance for Early Years document. They were beginning to make use of this information and had revised the types of snacks being offered. The responses stated within the parental questionnaires had been written prior to the review of snack provision. Staff had implemented a procedure to include children and parents suggestions. The menu was displayed in the hall to inform parents of the playgroup weekly snack.

The menus showed where children had opportunities to try out new tastes at snack time. Staff spoke to the children to encourage and discuss healthy eating options. Children’s likes, dislikes and dietary requirements were taken into account. Staff accommodated parent’s requests.

The playgroup provided some opportunities for children to learn about relationships, healthy lifestyles, hygiene and personal safety. Children were familiar with the playgroup routines and were aware of the reasons why they should have good hand washing routines. This activity was supervised by a member of staff.

The layout of the playgroup included the use of two rooms. The pre school children had free access to both rooms. The layout had been reviewed and changes made to support children’s learning opportunities.
Children have planned opportunities to access outdoor activities. A music and movement activity was observed as part of the day’s activities. At the time of the inspection children were seen to participate well and enjoy this activity.

Most staff had completed First Aid training.

**Areas for Development**

Staff had obtained a copy of the Standards for Nursery and School Tooth brushing Programmes. They are continuing to discuss the implementation of this procedure. A risk assessment should be completed prior to carrying out the tooth brushing process.

Children wash their hands prior to snack and messy play. Two washing units with stored water were situated in the playroom and corridor. As discussed the hand washing procedure should be reviewed to ensure there are good hygiene practices with children to prevent the opportunity for cross infection. See recommendation 1.

To be in line with the nutritional guidelines children should be given a choice of healthy foodstuffs at each snack time. Staff and committee should discuss and implement a food purchasing, preparation and handling policy.

See recommendation 2.

As best practice guidance staff should make themselves aware of other nutritional guidance documentation.

As discussed it would be good practice to increase children’s opportunities for daily outdoor play experiences.

The existing verbal communication process with parents used at the end of the day should be reviewed to ensure it is effective. Parents should be informed on how they can gain access to their child’s Personal Learning Plan folder.

The committee and staff should review the child protection procedure to ensure it is pertinent to the service. See recommendation 3.

**National Care Standard Number 4: Early Education and Childcare up to the age of 16 - Engaging with children**

**Strengths**

Staff knew children well and were sensitive to individual circumstances. Staff encouraged children’s learning opportunities. They engaged children in conversation and used questions effectively. Staff were seen to build children’s confidence, listen to them and support self help skills and encourage them to complete these tasks. Staff were seen to be effective in praising the children. All children were seen to be valued as individuals and were treated with respect. Staff met each week to discuss their planning and include identified areas of children’s development.

Staff had recently introduced Personal Learning Plan folders (PLP’s) for each child. Formal observations had been carried out and used to support children’s learning and
developments. Staff had begun to record their evaluations of children’s learning and next steps.

Staff were aware of children’s individual interests and provided opportunities for children to follow their ideas through.

Most children were confident in speaking and singing to adults and their peers. They were forming friendships with each other and were seen to have good relationships with staff.

**Areas for Development**

Staff should have further opportunities to discuss and familiarise themselves with the Birth to Three document. Where areas are identified for further development, these should be implemented as best practice guidance. See recommendation 4.

Staff should continue to use the PLP’s to record children’s learning and next steps. This information should continue to support the planning document. Parents should be encouraged to access their child’s PLP file.

**National Care Standard Number 7: Early Education and Childcare up to the age of 16 - A Caring Environment**

**Strengths**

Parents, carers and children received information about the playgroup. The playgroup's aims and objectives were stated within the parental handbook.

There is a clear code of behaviour in the playgroup. Children were encouraged to share, take turns and respect each other.

Staff worked well as a team and a caring ethos was evident within the service.

Informative documentation on the notice board showed where parents and carers were valued as individuals. Parents spoken to stated that their views were respected and taken into account. Staff were seen to have established positive working relationships with parents/carers.

Most children were confident in expressing their ideas. Staff were supportive and aware of children’s abilities and individual needs.

**Areas for Development**

As best practice guidance the playgroup's aims and objectives stated within the parental handbook should be displayed on the group’s notice board.

Staff should look at how they can continue to involve parents in the playgroup.

Requirement 1. The chairperson shall supply a written copy of the complaints procedure to every parent. Scottish Statutory Instruments 114 Regulation 25 (5)
National Care Standard Number 10: Early Education and Childcare up to the age of 16
- Involving other Services

Strengths

The playgroup had made good links with local schools, the Education Development Worker, Scottish Pre School Play Association Development Worker and other relevant health and support agencies such as Speech Therapists and the Social Services Department.

Stepping Stones Pre School and Playgroup is in partnership with the Local Authority. Staff attended cluster group meetings with colleagues from other child care organisations.

Areas for Development

To continue to build relationships and work effectively with partnership organisations.

National Care Standard Number 12: Early Education and Childcare up to the age of 16
- Confidence in Staff

Strengths

There is a good staff team working at Stepping Stones Pre School and Playgroup. They worked well together to ensure that the needs of the children were provided for.

Most staff had or were working towards a nationally recognised qualification. Staff who had not yet acquired the desired qualification for their designated position plan to complete the appropriate SVQ. Staff had attended a variety of training to support the good practices that were observed in the playroom. The committee were seen to support staff well. Staff were seen to be supported, supervision had been given and records were maintained. Staff appraisals had been completed on most staff. All staff had a very positive attitude to their personal development and learning.

The manager and staff were aware of the registration requirements for the Scottish Social Services Council. They had copies of the Scottish Social Services Code of Practice.

A Scottish Pre School Play Association recruitment procedure was in place. This included the checking of staffs’ enhanced Disclosure Scotland. Staff files had been maintained and showed where checks had been completed.

There were sufficient staff available to meet the needs of the children using the service. Staff numbers complied with the adult: child ratios as detailed in Annex A of the National Care Standards.

Staff met to discuss the work of the group and to ensure continuity of care for the children.

As part of the inspection process a safer recruitment audit was completed on a selection of staff files. This resulted in 2 requirements and 2 recommendations as stated below.

Areas for Development

Where evidence is not available in staff files, the following checks should be completed on
staff who are currently employed:

1. Checks should be completed for all staff / volunteers regarding their own health and fitness.
2. Two reference requests should be obtained. One from a person of high status within the community and the other from their last employer.
3. Enhanced Disclosure Scotland Information maintained.
   (See requirement 2.)

The recruitment policy requires to be reviewed to ensure safer recruitment of staff. This should include the procedure which the provider would take where the service receives an unsatisfactory check on a proposed member of staff. The procedure for obtaining a formal declaration from candidates about their own health and fitness: a procedure to request two references as indicated above: a procedure to obtain an Enhanced Disclosure Scotland: a procedure for checking the SSSC professional register. (See recommendation 5.)

The chairperson should develop a recording system to record that the employer has checked professional registers for all applicants to care service posts. (This procedure should be included into the recruitment policy, see above) SSSC Codes of Practice -1.2, SSI 2002/114 Regulation 9 (2) (c) Fitness of Employees & Regulation 19 (2) (d) Check criminal records & relevant registers. (See requirement 3.)

A volunteer and student recruitment procedure should be written and implemented to ensure the safety and well-being of the children. (See recommendation 5.)

It would be good practice to recheck Enhanced Disclosure Scotland Checks for all care service staff every 3 - 5 years. Staff files checked had ‘Fit Person letters’ from the Registration and Inspection Unit Dumfries and Galloway Council.
SSSC Codes of Practice -Employer responsibilities.

Staff have recently implemented (CPD) Continual Professional Development portfolios. These should continue to be developed in particular to the March 2007 registration with the Scottish Social Services Council.

The chairperson and Manager should ensure that staff appraisals are completed for each member of staff within the desired timescale. (Recommendation 6.)
Enforcement
No enforcement action has been taken against this service by the Care Commission.

Other Information

Requirements

Requirement 1. The chairperson shall supply a written copy of the complaints procedure to every parent. Scottish Statutory Instruments 114 /2002 Regulation 25 (5). Timescale for the completion of the requirement - 2 weeks.

Requirement 2. A system should be implemented to ensure the safe recruitment of staff and volunteers. Scottish Statutory Instrument 2002/114 Regulation 9 (1)(2)(a) of fitness and SSSC Code of Practice - employer responsibility to ensure people are suitable to enter the work place using a rigorous and thorough recruitment and selection process. Timescale for completion of the above requirement - 12 weeks.

Requirement 3. There should be a recording system to record that the employer has checked with the Scottish Social Services Council (SSSC) professional registers. Scottish Statutory Instrument 2002/114 Regulation 9 (2)(c) and Regulation 19(2) (d) and SSSC- 1.2. Timescale for completion of the above requirement - 12 weeks.

Recommendations

Recommendation 1. The hand washing procedure should be reviewed. National Care Standards for early education and child care up the age of 16. Standard 3.3 Health and well-being.

Recommendation 2. Staff and committee should discuss and implement a food purchasing, preparation and handling policy. National Care Standards for early education and child care up the age of 16. Standard 3.3 Health and well-being.

Recommendation 3. The committee and staff should review the child protection procedure to ensure it is pertinent to the service. National Care Standards for early education and child care up the age of 16. Standard 3.2 Health and well-being.

Recommendation 4. Staff should have further opportunities to discuss and familiarise themselves with the Birth to Three document. National Care Standards early education and child care up the age of 16. Standard 4. 2 Engaging with children.


Recommendation 6. The chairperson and Manager should ensure that staff appraisals are completed for each member of staff within the desired timescale. National Care Standards early education and child care up to the age of 16. Standard 12.1. Confidence in staff.