



Office for Standards  
in Education

## NURSERY INSPECTION REPORT

URN EY291177

DfES Number: 517366

### INSPECTION DETAILS

Inspection Date 01/11/2004

Inspector Name Ann Revell

### SETTING DETAILS

Day Care Type

Setting Name Steephill School

Setting Address Castle Hill  
Fawkham  
Longfield  
Kent  
DA3 7BG

### REGISTERED PROVIDER DETAILS

Name

## 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

Steephill School is an independent school and was established in 1935. It is now an educational trust and is run by a board of governors. The school adheres to Christian principles but welcomes children of all beliefs. The school occupies a large, converted house in rural surroundings near Fawkham, Kent. There are extensive grounds consisting of playing fields and gardens. The children attending are largely from the surrounding area.

There are currently 97 boys and girls on roll between the ages of three and a half and eleven years. Of these, 13 are in receipt of nursery education funding. Since the last inspection, only the four year olds who can be accommodated in the nursery class are in receipt of funding. The school is open on weekdays during term time and the nursery hours are from 09.00 to 15.00. The children attend either full time or for a minimum of two whole days each week.

Three members of staff work in the nursery. They all have an appropriate qualification in Childcare and Education. The nursery does not receive support from the Early Years Development and Childcare Partnership.

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

### How effective is the nursery education?

SteePhill School provides good-quality nursery education overall, which enables children to make generally good progress towards the early learning goals.

The quality of teaching is generally good. Staff plan an interesting programme of practical activities that are relevant to the children and motivate them to want to learn but they do not give sufficient priority to the planning for mathematics. They are clear as to what they want children to learn at direct teaching times and are skilful at adapting their teaching and the activity to match the needs of all the children. They provide good reinforcement of learning and give children opportunities to demonstrate what they know. Children benefit from a good balance of group times and times when they initiate their own activities.

Staff regularly observe children at their activities and record their progress. However, current records do not reliably reflect the stepping stones and the early learning goals so the recording of progress in some aspects is not reliable and does not facilitate the planning for the next steps in children's learning.

Leadership and management are generally good. The nursery teacher and her staff work closely together and all staff are clear about their roles. Staff regularly undertake training to update their knowledge and skills. In most aspects of the curriculum, expectations for children's achievements are high but the current planning for mathematics is not reliably providing challenges or ensuring their steady progress. Staff have identified assessment of children's progress as an area for further development.

Partnership with parents is very good. Information about the educational provision and current topics and activities is comprehensive. Staff fully support parents in extending children's learning at home. Parents benefit from the on-going, informal, shared observations of children's progress and also from more formal written reports.

### What is being done well?

- All relationships are warm and friendly. Children are kind and polite to each other and work harmoniously together.
- Children are making good progress in their early reading skills. They understand how books work, know the sounds that letters make and recognise a range of familiar words.
- Parents receive good information about the curriculum and current activities. They are fully involved in supporting and extending their children's learning.
- The nursery makes full use of the varied outside play areas each day. Children enjoy energetic play and the opportunities to develop good physical

skills and control. They regularly explore first hand, a range of natural objects, and living things.

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

- the system of assessment in order that it reflects the stepping stones and the early learning goals
- the planning for mathematics to ensure it receives greater priority in the overall programme.

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

Improvement since the inspection has been generally good.

The school were required to improve planning and teaching for the funded children in the Lower 1 class and to develop assessment of children's learning and progress in both Lower 1 and the nursery class. Following the last inspection, the school took the decision to continue to teach Lower 1 according to their own approach and they now only apply for funding for the four year olds who are accommodated in the nursery.

Assessment has been developed and staff regularly record children's response to activities. However, the system of recording, although in all the six areas of learning, does not sufficiently link to the stepping stones and the early learning goals to enable planning for children's next steps in learning to be reliable or systematic.

## SUMMARY OF JUDGEMENTS

### PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Judgement: Very Good

The children are happy and have good self esteem. They confidently contribute to group discussions. They are interested in activities such as planting their seeds and concentrate well as they practise writing letters correctly. They take turns in snap games and can share favourite toys in the sand tray. Children respond well to praise for all their small achievements. They are kind, polite and considerate and behave very well. Children are developing good personal independence skills.

### COMMUNICATION, LANGUAGE AND LITERACY

Judgement: Very Good

Children speak clearly and confidently in their group and in school assemblies. They take turns in conversation and listen attentively. They are developing very good early reading skills. Children enjoy learning the sounds that letters make and are learning to recognise their names and a range of familiar words. The children join in rhyming stories and benefit from individually sharing books with staff. Children learn to form letters correctly and confidently write their names on all their work.

### MATHEMATICAL DEVELOPMENT

Judgement: Generally Good

Children say number names in order and are beginning to count accurately. They recognise numbers on the playground snail. However, overall, there are too few planned opportunities and insufficient use of routines for children to make good progress in counting objects recognising numbers and using mathematical ideas to solve simple problems. Children are confident in naming shapes and using positional language and can order by size. They understand 'heavy' and 'light' when cooking.

### KNOWLEDGE AND UNDERSTANDING OF THE WORLD

Judgement: Very Good

Children are very curious and enjoy finding things out as they collect leaves, find conkers and hunt for spiders in the orchard. They observe weather changes and compare cooked vegetables with raw. They are developing good skills on the computers and support their learning with a variety of programs. Children enjoy looking at photos and baby clothes and finding out about past events in their lives. Children benefit from sharing in Christian celebrations and those of other cultures and beliefs.

### **PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT**

Judgement: Very Good

Children benefit from the many varied and energetic physical activities planned in the course of each week. They use the apparatus and move to music in the school hall, they play games in the playground and enjoy the bikes and the small apparatus in the nursery garden. Staff encourage the children to develop good skills, control and coordination. Children use scissors and knives confidently to cut the dough. They are developing good control using pencils and the computer mouse.

### **CREATIVE DEVELOPMENT**

Judgement: Very Good

Children select from a range of resources to confidently paint, make models and design collages. They enjoy expressing their own ideas and imagination and staff value and display their work. They learn about rhythm and how to clap their names and enjoy accompanying their singing with the instruments. Children draw on their experiences and imagination as they play in the varied role-play scenarios. They respond to their senses as they make soup and smell and taste the cress they grow.

**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**

- when planning the programme, give greater priority to mathematics. Ensure that there are daily planned activities and routines that will further develop children's counting skills and number recognition. Use incidental opportunities and routines to develop children's understanding of comparing numbers, adding objects and taking some away, and solving simple practical problems.
- further develop the system for assessing and recording children's progress. Ensure that it is linked to the stepping stones and the early learning goals and that it is systematic and informative. Use the information to plan for the next steps in children's learning.

*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.*