

Stepping Stones Pre-School (Brackley)

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique reference number	EY366925
Inspection date	11/03/2009
Inspector	Anne Felicity Taylor
Setting address	Springfield Way, Brackley, Northants, NN13 6JJ
Telephone number	0775 1597251
Email	
Type of setting	Childcare on non-domestic premises

Introduction

This inspection was carried out by Ofsted under Sections 49 and 50 of the Childcare Act 2006 on the quality and standards of the registered early years provision. 'Early years provision' refers to provision regulated by Ofsted for children from birth to 31 August following their fifth birthday (the early years age group). The registered person must ensure that this provision complies with the statutory framework for children's learning, development and welfare, known as the *Early Years Foundation Stage*.

The provider must provide a copy of this report to all parents with children at the setting where reasonably practicable. The provider must provide a copy of the report to any other person who asks for one, but may charge a fee for this service (The Childcare (Inspection) Regulations 2008 regulations 9 and 10).

The setting also makes provision for children older than the early years age group which is registered on the voluntary and/or compulsory part(s) of the Childcare Register. This report does not include an evaluation of that provision, but a comment about compliance with the requirements of the Childcare Register is included in Annex B.

Description of the setting

Stepping Stones Pre-school was established in 1969 and was registered in a new purpose-built building in 2009. The setting is situated in an area of land adjacent to the leisure centre in Brackley, Northamptonshire. Children have access to an enclosed outdoor play area. In term-time the setting offers Breakfast Club to children in pre-school and children who attend Bracken Leas School, from 07.45 to 09.00, a pre-school session for three and four-year olds from 09.00 to 12.00 noon, a playgroup session for rising three and three-year-old children from 12.45 to 15.00, and After School Club for children from Bracken Leas School from 15.15 to 18.00. A walking bus is used to pick up and drop off school-age children. After Easter 2009, the setting will operate a lunch club for playgroup and pre-school children and full day care. During school holidays, the setting offers a full day care holiday club for children aged from two years six months to eleven years.

The setting is registered on the Early Years Register, and the compulsory and voluntary parts of the Childcare Register to care for a maximum of 48 children at any one time. There are currently over fifty children on roll, some in part time places. The setting currently supports children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and is able to support children with English as an additional language.

There are nine members of staff, seven of whom hold appropriate early years qualifications to at least NVQ Level 2. The setting provides funded early education for three and four-year-olds.

Overall effectiveness of the early years provision

Overall the quality of the provision is good. A well-developed key worker system enables staff and parents to support successfully all areas of children's welfare, learning and development. The various services offered at the setting ensures continuity for children from the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) through to the end of junior school, with strong partnerships promoting good education and care. The building and play resources are organised so that all children have easy access to all activities, and information about inclusion is part of the welcome brochure. Regular self-evaluation enables the committee and staff team to plan future developments and to respond quickly to any identified weakness, which results in a comprehensive childcare service that meets the needs of all users.

What steps need to be taken to improve provision further?

To further improve the early years provision the registered person should:

- develop additional opportunities for children to recognise familiar words and attempt writing for different purposes
- ensure detailed and clear information is available regarding legal contact and parental responsibility.

The leadership and management of the early years provision

The manager and staff team are focused on offering an extensive service to children and parents in the local community, which ensures that each family's needs are met. This enables children to be cared for, and develop and learn in the friendly setting. Children are cared for by staff with the appropriate skills and qualifications because the committee and senior staff recognise the benefits of on-going training and development. Staff complete professional qualifications and short courses including child protection, first aid and food hygiene. There is also an appropriate induction for students, volunteers and new staff. Alongside the robust vetting procedures used at the setting, this ensures that the children are cared for by suitable people.

Services in cooperation with the local school are a great benefit to parents and children, offering coordinated care and learning to children in the EYFS and older children. Staff deployment enables children to be supported one-to-one if they have identified needs, enabling all children to make good progress. The organisation of planning indicates the full range of activities offered to the children, and how these are adapted for younger and less able children. They also indicate when children need support because they find an area of learning challenging. Staff display great skill and understanding as they involve children in all major events at the setting, including the move to the new building. This means that children feel valued and are settled and happy.

The staff team take part in a regular self-evaluation system, looking critically at their practice, and developing ways of improving the care and learning. Regular staff meetings enable all the staff to discuss and plan the educational programme and to talk about any issues. Staff discuss and evaluate activities, considering how they can be adapted or extended to meet the interests of the children, be made more interesting, or more inclusive. Daily diaries used by the staff and parents record achievements and progress, and sometimes indicate areas that need change or improvement, and therefore, these can be implemented promptly.

Comprehensive policies and procedures are in place and are available to parents and carers. Informative booklets are given to parents and generally all the required records are completed on admission, and on a daily basis. However, sufficient details are not kept for each child on legal contact and parental responsibility. There are comprehensive child protection policies and procedures in place, which are understood by all the staff. Full risk assessments are in place and reviewed regularly. Therefore, children are kept safe.

The quality and standards of the early years provision

The play areas of the building are light, bright and attractive, with colourful furniture and good quality books and resources. Each room is set out with inviting and exciting activities appropriate to the children's stage of development. Therefore, children are keen to learn and investigate. They are offered lots of choice and are able to organise their own play, for example, small world play with

a fort and figures, or they take part in adult-led learning as they plant primulas in pots for the outdoor area. Younger children investigate wet and dry sand enthusiastically. Group work encourages the children to gain confidence as they discuss the weather forecast they watched on television at home. They also learn about listening to others. The children love books, listening to 'Peace at Last' with concentration and great enjoyment, joining in with familiar phrases. They look at books with friends or have a story with a member of staff. Children's vocabulary is developed as staff introduce new words into their conversations and they generally make very good progress with their communication, language and literacy skills. However, opportunities to read, recognise and write their own names and other familiar words are limited.

The staff team is dedicated to providing a comprehensive and inclusive service to parents and children. Planning is easy to follow and can be adapted to meet children's individual interests and reflects the progress children make towards the early learning goals. Accurate observations ensure that activities match children's needs, providing challenge and interest, therefore ensuring that all children can succeed. Staff support children appropriately, ensuring children have the right equipment to encourage their skills, for example, left-handed scissors. Children's health and well-being benefits enormously from the easy access children have to outdoor play. They bowl hoops, running after them with great delight, getting plenty of exercise and fresh air. Music and movement encourages balance and imaginative movement. Healthy meals and snacks teach children about sensible eating, for example, a snack of fruit with water, squash or milk. Local nature walks looking at clouds, shadows and bugs provide exciting learning and encourage good physical development and exploration. Outings offer opportunities for staff to discuss any safety issues with the children, heightening their awareness and teaching them to keep themselves safe, for example, road safety.

Annex A: record of inspection judgements

The key inspection judgements and what they mean

Grade 1 is Outstanding: this aspect of the provision is of exceptionally high quality

Grade 2 is Good: this aspect of the provision is strong

Grade 3 is Satisfactory: this aspect of the provision is sound

Grade 4 is Inadequate: this aspect of the provision is not good enough

Overall effectiveness

How effective is the provision in meeting the needs of children in the Early Years Foundation Stage?	2
How well does the provision promote inclusive practice?	2
The capacity of the provision to maintain continuous improvement.	2

Leadership and management

How effectively is provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage led and managed?	2
How effective is the setting's self-evaluation, including the steps taken to promote improvement?	2
How well does the setting work in partnership with parents and others?	2
How well are children safeguarded?	2

Quality and standards

How effectively are children in the Early Years Foundation Stage helped to learn and develop?	2
How effectively is the welfare of children in the Early Years Foundation Stage promoted?	2
How well are children helped to stay safe?	2
How well are children helped to be healthy?	2
How well are children helped to enjoy and achieve?	2
How well are children helped to make a positive contribution?	2
How well are children helped develop skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being?	2

Any complaints about the inspection or report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk

Annex B: the Childcare Register

The provider confirms that the requirements of the compulsory part of the Childcare Register are: Met

The provider confirms that the requirements of the voluntary part of the Childcare Register are: Met