

# Stepping Stones Pre-School

Inspection report for early years provision

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**Unique reference number** 305341  
**Inspection date** 15/01/2009  
**Inspector** Graham Martin

**Setting address** Daven Primary School, New Street, Congleton, Cheshire,  
CW12 3AH  
**Telephone number** 01260 297924  
**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 report includes information on any complaints about the childcare provision which Ofsted has received since the last inspection or registration whichever is the later, which require Ofsted or the provider to take action in Annex C.

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 first opened in 1994 and operates within a double demountable building in the grounds of Daven Primary School, which is in walking distance of the centre of Congleton town. The pre-school group is organised by a committee of parents. The group offers pre-school activities to children on a sessional basis Monday to Thursday from 09.00 to 11.30 and 13.00 to 15.30, and 09.00 to 15.30 on Fridays, term time only. The children have access to two main play room areas, toilets and hand-washing facilities. There is also access to a kitchen for the preparation of snacks and for baking. The group has an enclosed play area with safety surface and use of the school's grassed playing fields for outdoor play.

The setting is registered on the Early Years Register and the compulsory and voluntary parts of the Childcare Register. It may care for up to 44 children at any one time. Currently there are 36 children on the group's register of whom 21 are funded three and four-year-olds. A small number of children attending speak English as an additional language. Children with identified learning difficulties and/or disabilities are supported within the group. There are seven members of staff of whom six are appropriately qualified in childcare. All staff work directly with the children. The pre-school are members of the Pre-school Learning Alliance. The setting is in receipt of nursery education funding for children so it has access to a foundation stage teacher, and other advisory staff from Sure Start Cheshire and the Children's Centre based in Daven School.

## Overall effectiveness of the early years provision

Stepping Stones provides a satisfactory quality of education and care within a secure and welcoming environment. Staff have a good level of commitment to meeting children's needs, and good links with the new Children's Centre are helping them to improve the provision. They are keen to improve their own knowledge and skills and they attend regular updates on the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS). However, training in the safeguarding of children is not recent enough for some staff. Also, there is too much adult-led learning and not enough opportunities for children to develop independence. Parents value the care given to their children's well-being, but there is no formal system for gathering their views to inform staff how to improve provision. There are good arrangements to ensure that all children can participate in all activities. However, the lack of direct access from the playroom to the outdoor learning area hinders learning. Staff have begun to develop better provision for learning and development, such as introducing a good system of assessment, but they are not yet using these assessments well enough to plan learning that improves achievement.

## What steps need to be taken to improve provision further?

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

- ensure that children have wider opportunities to develop their independence and organise and plan more of their own learning
- improve the use of assessments to plan for the next steps in children's learning
- improve the links between indoor and outdoor learning opportunities
- ensure that staff training in the safeguarding of children is updated
- provide parents with opportunities to feedback views which can be taken into account as part of self-evaluation and self-improvement.

## **The leadership and management of the early years provision**

The Registered Person promotes children's welfare well. Procedures meet requirements for checking that staff are suitable to care for children, and ensuring that they are suitably qualified to do their jobs. Staff are well supported in their day-to-day practice by comprehensive procedures and policies that cover all the required areas. The systems for assessing risks on the premises and on outings help staff to promote children's safety. Staff understand the policies for recognising, reporting and recording any concerns, so that children are suitably protected from harm or maltreatment. Some have not, though, had their knowledge and understanding of safeguarding procedures recently updated.

Staff create good relationships with parents, who receive regular verbal feedback from observations of what their children do and enjoy, as well as daily opportunities to exchange information. These enable staff, parents and other agencies to work together to ensure that individuals' health and welfare needs are met well, and that inappropriate behaviour is managed consistently. These links give parents and carers confidence that the quality of care is good and that the opportunities for their children to learn are satisfactory, with a commitment to improvement from all staff. However, the informal way in which staff gather feedback from parents reduces their ability to contribute to the evaluation and improvement of the provision.

Planning and assessment systems are developing well in consultation with other EYFS professionals. Staff records of observations of what children do and learn are good but they do not yet use this information well enough to plan the children's future learning so as to raise achievement.

## **The quality and standards of the early years provision**

Children in all parts of the nursery enjoy a warm, nurturing environment. An effective key person system ensures each child is well-known as an individual, helping them to feel confident and secure. Staff carry out effective safety checks each day. Good standards of hygiene and clear procedures for dealing with sickness or injury mean that children are well protected from illness or infection. There are good systems for ensuring that children's individual dietary requirements are known and met. Children receive nourishing and healthy snacks, which they know are good for them and are eager to eat. Staff work well with parents and other agencies to support children with additional needs and those who use

English as an additional language.

Children have adequate opportunities to make progress in their learning and development. They enjoy sharing books with staff, pretending to write stories and experimenting with a range of messy play materials. Staff engage in spontaneous play activities with children but tend to do too much to prepare some activities, such as the construction toys and railways, that the children could learn to set up for themselves. This also goes for tidying up time, when staff do most of the work to clear away instead of expecting the children to help. However, they do organise resources such as the writing table and book corner attractively, and accessibly, and consequently children use them well. Children have some informal opportunities to set and solve their own problems and express their own ideas but these are not planned for sufficiently well. Much of the work staff choose to display is from adult-directed activities. This does not show children that their own ideas and achievements are valued enough.

The secure outdoor play area contains resources offering interest and challenge to children at different ages and stages of development. Children relish the sense of achievement as they succeed at challenging activities such as catching a ball. However, access to outside play is only possible under close supervision as there is no direct doorway from the nursery playroom, which hinders opportunities for independent outside learning.

Written observations of the children clearly show what they can do but do not always set new challenges for the next steps. However, the children do love to receive their graduation certificates and dress up in caps and gowns when the time comes for them to move on to their Reception classes. Planning is improving and staff are beginning to use the Practice Guidance for the EYFS to support varied and progressive learning for each child. This has been identified by staff as an area for further improvement but is not yet fully developed.

## 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

<b>How effective is the provision in meeting the needs of children in the Early Years Foundation Stage?</b>	3
How well does the provision promote inclusive practice?	3
The capacity of the provision to maintain continuous improvement.	3

### Leadership and management

<b>How effectively is provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage led and managed?</b>	3
How effective is the setting's self-evaluation, including the steps taken to promote improvement?	3
How well does the setting work in partnership with parents and others?	3
How well are children safeguarded?	3

### Quality and standards

<b>How effectively are children in the Early Years Foundation Stage helped to learn and develop?</b>	3
<b>How effectively is the welfare of children in the Early Years Foundation Stage promoted?</b>	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?	3
How well are children helped to make a positive contribution?	3
How well are children helped develop skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being?	3

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](http://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

## **Annex C: complaint/s made to Ofsted**

This section of the report includes details of any complaint/s made to Ofsted when:

- we took action for the provider to meet the requirements of the Early Years Register; or
- we asked the provider to take action in order to meet the requirements of the Early Years Register; or
- the provider had already taken any necessary action to meet the requirements of the Early Years Register.

We will not report on any complaint where the provider met the requirements of the Early Years Register or did not require any action by Ofsted or the registered provider.

### **Detail of the complaint/s**

There have been no complaints made to Ofsted since the last inspection.

The provider is required to keep a record of complaints made by parents, which they can see on request. The complaints record may contain complaints other than those made to Ofsted.