

Stepping Stones Pre-School (Clipston)

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique reference number	219879
Inspection date	14/05/2009
Inspector	David Shepherd
Setting address	Clipston School, High Street, Clipston, Market Harborough, Leicestershire, LE16 9RU
Telephone number	01858 525113
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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).

Description of the setting

Stepping Stones Pre-School opened in 1993 and operates from a converted kitchen within the local school in the rural village of Clipston. Children have access to a small outside area and have use of the school playground and field. Disabled access is via the front door. A maximum of 18 children may attend the pre-school at any one time. The pre-school is open from 09:15 to 11.45 Monday to Friday during school term times. The pre-school also runs a lunch club from 11:45 to 12:45 on a Tuesday, Thursday and Friday and afternoon sessions on Monday and Wednesday from 12:30 to 15:00. There are currently 29 children aged from two years six months to under five years on roll, all of whom are of Early Years Foundation Stage age. Of these 24 children receive funding for nursery education. Children come from the local and surrounding villages. Seven part time staff work with the children and are appropriately qualified. Staff regularly attend training and the setting receives support from a teacher/mentor organised by the local authority. Links with the school are excellent. The pre-school is registered on the Early Years Register.

Overall effectiveness of the early years provision

Stepping Stones Pre-school meets the welfare and learning development needs of children excellently. Staff know the children extremely well and ensure, by identifying the next steps in their learning, that the needs of individual children are met exceptionally well in this fully inclusive setting. A wide variety of indoor and outdoor activities is provided for the children that reflects all aspects of Early Years Foundation Stage provision. Links with parents are outstanding. The staff have an excellent capacity to improve provision further.

What steps need to be taken to improve provision further?

To further improve the high quality early years provision the registered person should consider:

- make sure the areas for further development identified through self-evaluation are included in the action plans.

The leadership and management of the early years provision

Policies and procedures have been devised that ensure the safe and efficient management of Early Years' Foundation Stage provision and that the needs of all children are met. Children are supervised very closely by the staff. Three members of staff have NVQ Level 3 or equivalent qualifications and two are working towards a Level 3 qualification. One member of staff is a qualified teacher and one has completed the EYFS induction training. All have paediatric first aid certificates and are Criminal Record Bureau checked. All staff are trained in safeguarding children and three are studying for further qualifications to help improve provision.

Staff are deployed very well. Each is a key worker for a small group of children. They work conscientiously with the children, know them extremely well and assess and record the progress they are making in all areas of Early Years Foundation Stage provision. They are trained very well and work with the children confidently.

At the end of sessions, staff evaluate systematically the strengths and weaknesses of provision for the children. They share their thoughts with each other and make improvements for the next session in the light of their findings. Evaluative comments are then included in plans for the following sessions. Children's comments about what they would like to do next are also included in this process. They are written on post-it notes by staff and stuck on to the "Children's Planning Tree". This is excellent practice. The leader and her staff use the national guidance on self-evaluation very well in order to reflect on all aspects of provision. Some very useful points for further development are included in this self-evaluation, but not all appear in the school's action plans for further improvement. In spite of this, the overall quality of self-reflection indicates that the staff have an excellent capacity to make improvements.

Staff ensure that children are very safe. External doors and gates are secure, risk assessments for on-site and off-site activities are carried out to ensure that no unnecessary accidents take place and children are closely supervised at all times. Daily risk assessments are carried out and recorded, but these do not include checking on the wear and tear of the furniture, toys and other equipment in regular use.

All children are included in activities because they are encouraged to do so by staff who keep an eye on what each child is doing. Staff work with the children very effectively and start from where each child's interests and enthusiasms are. If a child wishes to carry out certain activities, staff respond to this and encourage learning from the child's interests on that day. For example, during the inspection, one child, playing on a rail track, wished to make and decorate a hat as part of this activity. With staff help, he did this and started a trend for other children to make hats for themselves also. In ways like this, the needs of all children are met very well.

Links with parents are outstanding. The admissions form includes all the information necessary and there is a useful policy on parental involvement. Parents talk to staff at any time when bringing or collecting their children. There is a parents' table by the entrance that includes staff's plans and other documents that are useful to help parents guide their children in their learning. Portfolios of activities carried out by the children through which parents can browse are also available each day. A detailed and comprehensive portfolio of activities that includes records of children's progress is also compiled and given to parents when children leave the pre-school. Parents are asked for any ideas to help improve provision in a book on this table.

The quality and standards of the early years provision

Staff are very attentive to the welfare and learning and development needs of all the children. All children are included in activities because they are encouraged to do so by staff who keep an eye on what each child is doing. These include gluing and sticking, building with bricks, playing with small toys on a track, playing games on a computer, water play with spaghetti and containers and activities that help them practise counting. The pre-school is a busy environment that is bright and colourful. It includes some attractive displays of activities in which children have been involved. The small outside area allows children to learn in the fresh air at any time. Activities carried out in this area include crayoning, playing with small toys and planting plants and vegetables. The use of the school playground and field adds to the opportunities for outside learning. Children enjoy making chalk marks on the playground and playing on the tyres on the field. They have opportunities to ride bikes and other toys and to play with balls of different sizes and hoops in the playground. All the equipment and toys are appropriate for the ages and stages of development of the children. They also have opportunities to go off-site to places of interest around the village, such as the church and post box. All areas of early years provision are included with good emphasis being placed on listening, speaking, arts and crafts, and physical development. An excellent balance of indoor and outdoor activities is provided. Children have good opportunities to choose what they wish to do as well as respond to staff when they encourage them to wash their hands before eating their snack.

Activities are planned thoughtfully and are based upon evaluations of the next steps in children's learning that have been identified by staff. These are recorded in children's individual files. These comments are very helpful and highlight the key points of children's achievements as well as areas for further learning.

Children are developing very good social habits and behave very well for their ages. Relationships between staff and children are excellent and this helps the children to feel settled and cooperate with what is being provided for them. Children are learning in a safe environment and are being taught effectively about healthy eating and the importance of washing their hands. During the inspection, their snacks included slices of apple, raisins, Marmite, crackers, milk and water. They enjoy the activities provided for them and eagerly take part in them. They are taught to become independent by spreading their crackers with margarine, selecting what to put on their crackers, pouring out their own drink, putting on their own footwear and tidying up after their activities. This helps to make them good early learners and helps them for the next stage in their development.

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?	1
How well does the provision promote inclusive practice?	1
The capacity of the provision to maintain continuous improvement.	1

Leadership and management

How effectively is provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage led and managed?	1
How effective is the setting's self-evaluation, including the steps taken to promote improvement?	1
How well does the setting work in partnership with parents and others?	1
How well are children safeguarded?	1

Quality and standards

How effectively are children in the Early Years Foundation Stage helped to learn and develop?	1
How effectively is the welfare of children in the Early Years Foundation Stage promoted?	1
How well are children helped to stay safe?	1
How well are children helped to be healthy?	1
How well are children helped to enjoy and achieve?	1
How well are children helped to make a positive contribution?	1
How well are children helped develop skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being?	1

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