

Stepping Stones Under 5s

Inspection report for early years provision

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Inspector

Cheryl Thompson

Setting address

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Type of setting

Childcare on non-domestic premises

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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.

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Description of the setting

Stepping Stones Under 5s is a privately owned pre-school. It was registered in 2004. The pre-school operates from a classroom within Coupals County Primary School. The school is situated in a residential area, close to the centre of Haverhill. A maximum of 20 children may attend the pre-school at any one time. The setting is open each weekday from 7.45am to 8.45am for a breakfast club, then from 8.45am to 11.45am for a pre-school session, followed by the lunch session from 11.45am to 12.30pm and the afternoon pre-school session runs 12.30pm to 3.30pm. An after school club is run from 3.30pm to 5.00pm. All these sessions are in term time only. The premises has suitable access and facilities for the disabled. The pre-school is registered on the Early Years Register and the compulsory and voluntary parts of the Childcare Register. The setting can support children who have special educational needs and/or disabilities and those for whom English is an additional language. All children share access to a secure enclosed outside play area. There are currently 60 children aged from two to under five years on roll. The setting serves the local and surrounding areas and employs eight members of staff. Seven members of staff including the manager hold relevant early years qualifications. One member of staff is working towards a National Vocational Level two. The setting receives support from the local authority and Pre-school Learning Alliance.

The overall effectiveness of the early years provision

Overall the quality of the provision is good.

Overall the provision was judged to be good. The wide range of different options for provision at Stepping Stones all meet young children's needs well and parents are very pleased with the options of care the setting provides. The good leadership and management ensure that the setting successfully promotes inclusive practices. The provision for children's learning and personal development is carefully structured to meet their needs so that they achieve well and enjoy their learning in a happy and secure environment. Children are safe because the manager and her staff pay attention to detail and adhere to the clear policies which help to ensure children's health and wellbeing. The good improvements made since the last inspection and the current practice demonstrate the pre-school's good capacity to maintain continuous improvement.

What steps need to be taken to improve provision further?

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

- build on the links with the primary school to increase staff knowledge of how basic literacy and numeracy skills are taught.
- make learning intentions for activities more precise.

The effectiveness of leadership and management of the early years provision

The manager is very well qualified and sets high aspirations for her colleagues. They work as an effective team to promote children's learning and wellbeing. Children's safety and welfare are high priorities. Policies and practice for child protection, for dealing with accidents and illness and for checking the suitability of all adults who work with the children fully meet current requirements. The complaints procedure is appropriate and available for all to see within the setting, however, this information is not yet sent out with the welcome pack. Parents are encouraged to voice their opinions through open evenings and informal meetings with staff. Regular checks of equipment, the building and outside areas ensure they are safe for children to use.

The pre-school's relationship with parents is good. There are many informal, yet effective, opportunities for parents to discuss their children's accomplishments. Parents have many good things to say about the provision. They value the opportunities to contribute to their child's 'learning journey' document and to discuss their children's home accomplishments with staff. They know that every child matters, is valued and is fully included. Parents particularly like the pre-school's facility for children who attend the primary school for the morning to be able to have their packed lunch at the pre-school and stay for the afternoon session. These good links with parents and services, such as social services ensure that children who need extra help are provided with the support needed to ensure good progress both in their learning and their personal development.

There is a strong commitment to providing good quality resources and experiences for children to extend their learning outside. This commitment is evident in areas such as the den and the skittle games. Children use their imaginations in the den and become engrossed in the skittle games and co-operate with each other very effectively.

Self evaluation is good and undertaken with staff. There is a tendency to be extremely self critical but this demonstrates that the setting is always seeking to do even better. There is a clear understanding of the strengths and areas to improve further. For example, staff are very aware that developing children's vocabulary and, for many, their articulation is an ongoing priority. To this end, they have identified that developing more profitable links with the primary school and improving staff's knowledge of how early literacy and numeracy skills are taught are current appropriate objectives. They are also seeking to have more training from speech therapists to raise their own levels of skill in helping children to develop their speech.

The quality and standards of the early years provision and outcomes for children

Children make good progress in their learning and in their personal development because staff are experienced and knowledgeable and make good use of

questioning to promote children's curiosity or to lead them to the next step in their learning. The good, trusting relationships between children and staff give children the confidence to have a go at doing things they are not sure of, for example, climbing into the dark den. Children enjoy learning because staff plan interesting activities based on the children's current interests and their prior learning. This planning is good but, for some activities, it lacks an explicit learning intention. Consequently, it is not always easy for staff to assess a child's accomplishments and plan the precise next step for their learning.

A strong feature in the setting is the happy atmosphere in which children work very well together in activities such as making peppermint creams as gifts to take home. In this activity children demonstrate a very good understanding of basic hygiene such as washing hands and making sure they have aprons on. Children's social skills and understanding of healthy lifestyles are promoted well through enjoyable snack times with a good range of healthy options. At lunchtimes, staff encourage children to eat their 'healthy' food before any chocolate. The setting also encourages parents to consider the type of food they provide for their child's packed lunch.

Children are encouraged to be active and inventive in the well resourced outside area. They know the importance of moving safely around the setting, especially on the doorstep and know what to do if there is a fire. They behave very well and are caring and helpful towards each other.

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

The overall effectiveness of the early years provision

How well does the setting meet the needs of the children in the Early Years Foundation Stage?	2
The capacity of the provision to maintain continuous improvement	2

The effectiveness of leadership and management of the early years provision

How effectively is the Early Years Foundation Stage led and managed?	2
The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	2
The effectiveness with which the setting deploys resources	2
The effectiveness with which the setting promotes equality and diversity	2
The effectiveness of safeguarding	2
The effectiveness of the setting's self-evaluation, including the steps taken to promote improvement	2
The effectiveness of partnerships	2
The effectiveness of the setting's engagement with parents and carers	2

The quality of the provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage

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Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage

Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The extent to which children achieve and enjoy their learning	2
The extent to which children feel safe	2
The extent to which children adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which children make a positive contribution	2
The extent to which children develop skills for the future	2

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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