

Stepping Stones Pre-School

Inspection report for early years provision

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Inspector Marie Thompson

Setting address Bridport United Church Hall, East Street, Bridport, Dorset,
DT6 3LJ

Telephone number 0777 3516481 o r 01308 458972

Email

Type of setting Childcare on non-domestic premises

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Royal Exchange Buildings
St Ann's Square
Manchester
M2 7LA

T: 0300 123 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.ofsted.gov.uk

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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 Pre-school was registered in 1992. It is a committee run group and has been established for over 30 years. The group operates from a church hall situated in the centre of the town of Bridport, Dorset. Children have use of the main hall for three days of the week. On Wednesdays and Thursdays a smaller room is used to offer sessions for the older children due to start school. There is a small outdoor play area. Children attending come from the main town of Bridport and surrounding villages with a catchment area of approximately 10 miles.

The pre-school is registered on the Early Years Register to care for 26 children in the early years age group at any one time. There are currently 20 children aged from two to under five years on roll. It is also registered on the compulsory and voluntary parts of the Childcare Register. Stepping Stones opens from Monday to Friday during term time only. Sessions run from 9.15am to 12.15pm. The nursery supports children with special educational needs, and those for whom English is an additional language.

The pre-school employs four members of staff who work with the children. They all either hold, or are working towards, a level three early years qualification. The team are supported by an administrator, and a volunteer who is a retired teacher. The pre-school receives support and seeks advice from Dorset Sure Start, and is visited regularly by the early years consultant.

The overall effectiveness of the early years provision

Overall the quality of the provision is good.

Children are happy and confident in the setting, where they explore the play opportunities independently under the warm and friendly supervision of the staff. Children are developing their interests and skills competently. Effective partnerships with parents help to ensure children's needs are understood and met appropriately. Staff are enthusiastic and pro-active in their roles and have identified areas of practice they feel need improvement. Staff meetings enable the staff to pool their ideas and make continuous improvements to the service they offer.

What steps need to be taken to improve provision further?

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

- further improve partnerships with other provisions children attend, such as schools
- ensure all written policies are regularly reviewed
- improve risk assessment to include any action taken following a review or incident
- encourage children to discover and frequently use new mathematical words,

ideas, concepts and language.

The effectiveness of leadership and management of the early years provision

Staff encourage children to think about their safety as they play and, consequently, children demonstrate an increasing awareness of safe behaviours. For example, they remind the children each morning during circle time of the rules for the toys and apparatus set out that day such as only four children on the climbing frames and explain the reasons why. Staff carry out and record risk assessments regularly. However, the record of risk assessment does not contain information regarding any action taken following a review or incident. Staff have a good understanding of their responsibility in safeguarding children. The pre-school has a reasonably good set of written policies and procedures which staff are knowledgeable about the day-to-day use of. However, all policies are not reviewed regularly enough to ensure they reflect current practice.

The self-evaluation process is developing and plans are in place for more input from staff to the process. The current evaluation indicates a good understanding of areas of strength and weakness. The staff are very enthusiastic in their roles and their interaction with the children indicates their professionalism and commitment to their roles. Interaction is excellent and staff spend their time focused on children's enjoyment and achievement. The pre-school is a fully inclusive setting. Staff gather valuable information before children start, to ensure their welfare needs can be met. They use observations and assessments to identify achievements and the children's next steps in learning. Good use is made of space and resources. The large hall enables children to experience a variety of activities and move around freely, making choices. A broad range of good quality age-appropriate toys are available and labelling is prevalent everywhere within the hall. The daily routine is well organised to ensure every resource and play area, including the outdoors, albeit small, is child centred and used to its full potential.

The setting works with other professionals to continue to develop the service they offer. For example, the speech therapist visits the setting regularly to help some of the children and support staff. Reception teachers from the schools the children will be going to are invited and do visit the pre-school prior to the children joining their classes. However, staff do not consolidate and build on the positive relationships beginning to form by visiting the schools which would enable them to talk to the children about the environment they are going into thus helping their transition to school. Parents comment on the warm, friendly and supportive staff who make their children very welcome. They feel their children progress well. Parents know what their children do through face-to-face conversations and opportunities to meet with key workers. They receive regular newsletters which inform them about forthcoming events and general news about the pre-school.

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

Children are made to feel extremely welcome by the friendly, dedicated staff; consequently, they are motivated learners and make good progress within the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS). Children learn about cultural events throughout the year through their topics and activities such as Chinese New Year and the forthcoming 'chopstick challenge' promises to be lots of fun. The pre-school welcome visitors from their community such as the dentist and author Jean Godfrey who read her book 'On the way to Bethlehem' to the children at story time. The regular help from volunteers is invaluable and the children benefit from the additional support and unique skills and experiences volunteers bring to the setting. Staff are excellent role models and, as a result, children are extremely polite and beautifully behaved. Staff's demeanour helps children to feel safe consequently evoking a positive interaction and reaction from the children. This results in a happy buzz of children involved in varied activities around the room. There is an excellent balance of adult-led and child-initiated activities that support learning across all areas, ensuring children are always fully involved in worthwhile tasks. Children's creativity is evident in their imaginative games in the home corner, on the climbing frame and in their paintings. Staff facilitate this further by changing the home corner daily. For example, at one session it was a grocers shop with a range of 'real' foods and the following day it was a repair workshop with tools and pieces of wood for the children to saw and hammer.

Information and communication technology (ICT) is promoted through the use of a computer with lots of quality educational programmes. For example, 'Gigglebies' and 'Simple City' CD roms. These programmes link into the topics the children are learning about such as healthy foods and 'all about me'. The numeracy table, set up for the children to access freely, is set up with an abacus, counting toys, sliding cars, shape sorters, Russian dolls for size recognition and a Kaleidoscope. However, the use of mathematical language, words, ideas, concepts and language is not fully, consistently and frequently used throughout the sessions to bring it to the forefront of all children's learning. For example, staff missed the opportunity to talk about children's toys brought in for the interest table which comprised of differing shapes, sizes, lengths and weights. Children visited the fire station to learn about fire safety, they tried on boots and hats, and 'fireman Nick' let them have a go with the fire hose. Each week the children take turns to go to the bakers and the green grocers with a member of staff to buy the foods for snacks time.

Communication, language and literacy is a key strength within the setting. Story time is delightful because the staff talk to the children and include them in the book they read. Staff read with very nice animation using different puppets to enhance the story which captures and holds the children's interest. Children with speech and language difficulties are extremely well supported at the pre-school through the implementation of the 'Stripy Club'. This group has received excellent accolades and was chosen by Dorset Sure Start to be filmed to promote the narrative therapy programme which received very positive feedback from local primary schools and has been recommended for observation by other groups. A delightful adaptation to the club is 'Dogum the dog' and his diary of adventures.

The children take turns to take Dogum home and fill his diary with their photos, writing, drawings and pictures of all the exciting things they have done together which are then shared the following week at the club. The staff are gentle, kind and attentive and, as a result, the children are clearly learning through play.

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

The quality of the provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
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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