

Stepping Stones

Inspection report for early years provision

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Inspector

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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*.

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Description of the setting

Stepping Stones runs from a privately owned building on the site of Staplegrove C of E Primary School, Taunton. It re-registered in 2009, but has been under the ownership of the same person since 2004. The setting has sole use of the premises, of which there is one large playroom with access to two fully enclosed outside play areas. There is an office, bathroom facilities and kitchen off the main room, and a cloakroom. The setting is registered on the Early Years Register. A maximum of 34 children between the ages of two to the end of the early years age range may attend at any one time. There are currently 77 children in this age group on roll, attending at different times. The owner/supervisor is a qualified primary school teacher and holds Early Years Professional Status (EYPS), she is supported by two deputies who both hold at least Level 3 qualifications. There are six additional members of staff, four of whom have Level 2 or Level 3 qualifications, and a fifth member of staff is working towards this. The setting is open from 9am to 3pm, Monday to Friday, term time only.

The overall effectiveness of the early years provision

Overall the quality of the provision is outstanding.

Children's individual needs are met extremely well and they make excellent progress towards the early learning goals, relative to their starting points. They enjoy an inclusive environment where the staff team's strong relationships with parents and others involved in their welfare, learning and development, ensure their specific requirements are consistently very well supported. Self-evaluation within the setting is rigorous and excellent monitoring of all aspects of the provision enable staff to identify areas for development that focus on sustaining high quality outcomes for children. Staff involve children most effectively in the self-evaluation process. For example, reviews of risk assessment have included children's understanding of how to keep themselves safe. In order to promote this further, staff have improved resources that encourage adventurous play, involving children in identifying potential hazards and how these can be avoided.

What steps need to be taken to improve provision further?

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

- ensuring that labelling in languages other than English includes the home languages of all children currently attending the setting.

The effectiveness of leadership and management of the early years provision

Excellent leadership and management in the setting has resulted in a knowledgeable and skilled staff team who are extremely secure in their

understanding and implementation of the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS). This ensures children are very well safeguarded in the setting. All staff undertake safeguarding training, and they have an excellent understanding of Local Safeguarding Children Board procedures, policies and procedures related to safeguarding are clear, providing good quality guidance to staff and information to parents and carers. Staff have confidence in implementing safeguarding procedures and ensure that parents understand their responsibility to protect children in their care. Employment procedures ensure that all staff are checked to confirm their suitability to work with children, and there are effective processes in place to ensure staff remain suitable. Routines that support safeguarding practice are very thorough. Visitors are asked to provide suitable identification, their presence is recorded and they are supervised at all times. Excellent daily routines and systems of checks ensure that children remain safe and secure. For example, risk assessments of all areas are detailed and are supported by rigorous daily checklists that ensure the premises and all equipment remain safe and suitable for children's use. Extremely good risk assessments and associated practice also ensure children's safety as they enjoy walks in the local community. All documentation supporting the health, safety, and welfare of children is clear and well maintained. For example, registration systems show when children and staff are present and confirm that children benefit from high adult ratios. Records of any accidents or incidents involving children are clear and these are completed with due regard to confidentiality. All regulatory policies and procedures are in place and implemented well by staff, and these are made easily accessible to parents.

The management team show high levels of commitment and motivate staff very well. There is an emphasis on personal development and training, resulting in skilled practitioners who confidently support children's welfare, and progress in learning. There is a strong culture of reflective practice within the setting and self-evaluation is extremely good. Parents' views are sought in a variety of ways, including questionnaires, one-to-one discussions, and the use of a suggestion box. Children are involved, for example, at the end of each session they review what they have done and provide staff with ideas for the future, which are carefully noted and fed into the self-evaluation process. Action plans focus very well on ongoing improvements and ensuring these are sustainable. For example, in considering how inclusion could be further promoted with children, an area of development has been communication. This has resulted in all members of staff training in the use of Somerset Total Communication (STC); a form of sign language, which is used as a matter of course with children throughout the day. Therefore, children quickly develop signing skills themselves and learn that there are forms of communication that do not rely on speech.

Staff develop excellent relationships with parents and work very closely with them to ensure their children's needs are understood and met. Parents are kept very well informed about their children's progress towards the early learning goals because they have frequent opportunities to meet with staff, and they are fully involved in identifying the next steps in their children's development plans. Information about the setting is shared well, newsletters and notice boards provide regular updates and reminders of key events, and regulatory information, such as policies and procedures are easily accessible for independent reference. The setting has access to information for parents in languages other than English, on

request. Children's home languages are respected and introduced to their English speaking friends. For example, simple words and phrases in languages other than English are included when labelling displays and resources; these generally accurately reflect the home languages of children currently attending, although there are occasional omissions. Wider partnerships are supported very well. Staff have extensive experience of working with other professionals, for example, where children have specific learning requirements, in order to enable full participation for each child. Some children also attend other settings that provide the EYFS, such as nurseries or childminders. Staff have established successful relationships with these, in order to share information regarding children's learning and development, and to ensure consistency in planning individual aims and objectives.

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

Children's welfare is supported extremely well. Health and safety promotion with children is excellent. Daily routines are used most effectively to promote children's awareness of how to keep themselves safe. For example, when the group comes together at register time, staff remind children of what they should do should they hear the fire alarm; regular repetition ensures that children can easily identify where they should go if the bell rings. The setting has 'golden rules' that focus on safety and respect for each other, children go through these with staff at the beginning of each session to remind themselves of expected standards of behaviour and codes of conduct. Children demonstrate their understanding of these in the consideration they show for each other during activities, respecting each other's space and taking turns and sharing well. Children learn to express their emotions and to demonstrate these appropriately because staff provide an environment where they feel emotionally secure. For instance, a simple system of coloured clouds enables children to identify how they are feeling today, and they confidently express why they are feeling happy or grumpy.

Children are kept safe from the risk of illness and cross infection because staff implement the setting's health and hygiene policies and procedures very well. Clear information provided to parents ensures that they know they will be contacted immediately should their child become ill, and that they are aware of exclusion times following illnesses, such as stomach upsets. Any specific health needs, including allergies and dietary requirements, are noted and supported well. Children learn that illnesses can be spread through poor hygiene, and they carefully wash their hands after using the toilet and before meals. They demonstrate their hygiene awareness in everyday actions, such as, at lunchtime, a child drops part of a sandwich on the floor, they pick it up and put it to one side telling staff 'It may have dirt on it even if we can't see it'. Mealtimes are used most effectively to promote a healthy eating message with children. They thoroughly enjoy the cafe style snack time where they are able to choose when they want to eat. They are provided with a selection of healthy fruits and vegetables to choose from, and they help themselves to milk or water. Children bring packed lunches and parents support the setting's healthy eating policy by ensuring that these generally contain nutritious items. Staff use mealtimes very well to engage children in discussions that promote their awareness of healthy foods. For example,

counting with them how many of their 'five a day' portions of fruit they have had.

Children make excellent progress in their learning and development, relative to their individual starting points. Staff are extremely confident practitioners who use their knowledge of the EYFS to provide children with a wealth of learning opportunities in all areas. Planning is excellent. Staff use their observations of children most effectively to identify their current stages of development and to plan for their next steps in learning. Children enjoy an extremely good balance of adult-led and child-initiated activities because staff ensure that they have a meaningful involvement in planning. Discussions with children identify key themes that they would like to pursue, such as learning about sea life, and staff use these well to link different types of activities. For example, children have used recycled materials to make puppets of starfish, crabs, fish and other creatures, and they thoroughly enjoy using these as props as they sing songs and re-tell stories. Systems used to monitor children's progress towards the early learning and development goals are maintained extremely well. Staff use their observations, photographs, and examples of children's work, such as formative writing and drawings, to provide evidence of children's attainments. Progress records accurately reflect children's current level of achievement and identify the next steps in each child's individual learning plan.

Children are immensely enthusiastic learners who are keen to explore and investigate activities and resources. They are developing skills that will provide a strong foundation for future learning. For example, children are extremely competent in the use of computers and everyday technology. They independently select programmes on the computer that support a variety of learning opportunities, they can explain how to use these and how to save and print their work. They can programme a CD player to select tunes according to number, and they know how to use a digital camera. Children are very confident communicators who enjoy sharing their thoughts and ideas, secure that they will be listened to. For example, at the end of each session, children come together as a group to review what they have done, they talk about what they enjoyed most and share their ideas regarding how favourite activities can be taken further.

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?	1
The capacity of the provision to maintain continuous improvement	1

The effectiveness of leadership and management of the early years provision

How effectively is the Early Years Foundation Stage led and managed?	1
The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	1
The effectiveness with which the setting deploys resources	1
The effectiveness with which the setting promotes equality and diversity	2
The effectiveness of safeguarding	1
The effectiveness of the setting's self-evaluation, including the steps taken to promote improvement	1
The effectiveness of partnerships	2
The effectiveness of the setting's engagement with parents and carers	1

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	1
The extent to which children achieve and enjoy their learning	1
The extent to which children feel safe	1
The extent to which children adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which children make a positive contribution	1
The extent to which children develop skills for the future	1

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