

Stepping Stones Pre-School

Inspection report for early years provision

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Inspector	John W. Paull
Setting address	Church Road, Leverington, Wisbech, Cambridgeshire, PE13 5DD
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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 Pre-School opened originally in 1996 as Leverington Playgroup. It moved into its present building in September 2002. It is registered on the Early Years Register and the voluntary and compulsory parts of the Childcare Register and is committee run. It operates from the grounds of Leverington Primary School, Leverington, Lincolnshire. A maximum of 16 children between the ages of two and under five years old may attend and it is open to children with special educational needs and/or disabilities. There are currently 30 children on roll. Of these, 28 children are in receipt of funding for early education.

The Pre-school serves the local community and surrounding area. It operates daily sessions on Monday morning, 9.00am to 11.45am and Tuesday to Friday, 9.00am to 11.45am and 12.45pm to 3.15pm, term time only. A lunchtime club is available, 11.45am to 12.45pm. Children attend for a variety of sessions.

Five staff work with the children, all of whom have appropriate early years qualifications. The setting receives support from a teacher from the Early Years Development and Childcare Partnership and a Special Needs Co-ordinator.

The overall effectiveness of the early years provision

Overall the quality of the provision is good.

It meets the needs of children in the early years effectively. The staff work well together to ensure that children's learning and development are good. Children are cared for and safeguarded, irrespective of their ethnicity, learning needs or social circumstances. The relationship with parents is particularly friendly and open, which helps children to settle effectively and to progress well. The success achieved to date suggests a good capacity for continuous improvement.

What steps need to be taken to improve provision further?

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

- improve the outdoor facilities, especially the availability of shelter to provide children with greater opportunity to acquire skills outdoors across all areas of learning.

The effectiveness of leadership and management of the early years provision

Organisation at the pre-school is good. Safeguarding, child protection and first aid arrangements are prioritised effectively and training is up to date, to the required standards. Certificates are displayed prominently along with the pre-school's registration and other relevant documents. Records, policies and procedures that support the setting to promote positive outcomes for children are appropriately

maintained. These are all signed off and dated by the committee chair. That said, the setting has not properly informed the regulator of the change to individuals who are members of its governing committee, which is required by the Early Years regulations. Daily risk assessments are carried out effectively. Each member of staff takes responsibility for the care, welfare and learning of a particular group of children, ensuring that each individual's needs are thoroughly assessed and known. Response to recommendations in the previous inspection report is good. For example, permission from parents to provide emergency medical treatment for children, if required, is now part of the home/pre-school agreement.

Leaders, managers and the pre-school's committee understand fully the importance of continuous improvement. They complete self evaluation documents, which they use to establish what should be done next to sustain improvement. Parents are involved in the process and the partnership with them is very warm, open and advantageous to their children's learning. One comment sums this up, 'The staff are so willing all the time to tell me what I need to know. They could not do more'. Another added, 'My child loves it here. There is never a problem in bringing him'. The staff and committee seek the best means of informing and involving parents in their children's early education. A wide range of options is available, including visiting the pre-school, attending formal and informal meetings, as well as written information and a home communication book. This excellent partnership helps children to settle in quickly each day and to enjoy activities outstandingly well, while often making rapid development in all the areas of learning. The pre-school also enjoys an excellent relationship with the school where it is situated, benefiting from the use of its field and exterior areas and good communications with its Reception staff and with relevant local authority services.

A good sense of direction is apparent amongst all staff, whose teamwork is first rate. As a result, procedures to assess children's achievements have been updated since the last inspection, using the latest guidance in the Early Years Foundation Stage framework. As a result, clear information is gathered in children's learning profiles, which is then used to decide the skills that individuals should learn next and how they might acquire them best. This also serves the needs of children with special educational needs and/or disabilities, as it means that relevant adaptations to what is planned are made effectively to meet their learning requirements and that resources are deployed effectively.

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

The quality of what is available to children is good. All the staff use resources and materials available to them very inventively to ensure that all areas of learning are constantly on offer. Several improvements are evident since the last inspection. For example, they provide children with a permanently set up area to write their names and attempt mark making and writing for a variety of purposes. Consistent opportunities are available to learn about food, understand how it affects children's bodies and to use the lunchtime club to help them develop their social skills. Both these developments provide further evidence of how seriously the managers have addressed previous recommendations. Outside, boards and chalks are available to

address writing skills further. Grass, hard spaces and planters provide opportunities to use a wide range of resources, so children can acquire skills in all aspects of learning. That said, the space is rather limited and lacks cover. This causes some difficulty in allowing children freedom to flow in and out during inclement weather. Staff take opportunities to challenge children's thinking on a broad front. For example, they were very interested in a DVD presentation about the Chinese New Year that was playing on one of the computers. Good use of information and communication technology contributes much to children's great enjoyment of sessions. It also means that they acquire skills successfully in hand and eye coordination as they control the software, while gaining good knowledge for their future. Opportunities for recognising numbers and counting, learning about the world, creative work and using construction toys are set up using all available space. Dressing up and role play are also readily accessible. For example, a boy was dressed as a red cross emergency worker and other children happily played the parts of those who required bandaging. The adults display a very good range of techniques to engage children's interest in all the pre-school's provision, ensuring children's rapid learning and development and very high levels of enjoyment, as confirmed in the records. Personal, social and emotional development is good and children quickly learn to share. They play cooperatively and behave very well.

Parents confirm that their children feel safe at the pre-school. Staff frequently remind the children about being careful and looking after themselves and each other. Good routines ensure that children are passed safely to their parents or carers at the end of sessions and they understand the need for these sensible arrangements. Parents whose children attend the lunchtime provision are engaged in the process of helping to provide packed lunches that are nourishing and the pre-school provides healthy snacks during its sessions. Children contribute well to helping the pre-school run smoothly, carrying out tidying up tasks, helping to get resources out and registering themselves when they come in or eat their snack. The staff encourage the children to think of people less fortunate than they are themselves and from time to time, they raise funds for charities. The good relations with the school provide a further community link. At the same time, this link helps in smoothing the transition to the next stage of education, adding to strengths in the development of skills to support literacy, sociability and numeracy. All of this together means that the children are prepared outstandingly well for their future.

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	1
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	1
The effectiveness of the setting's engagement with parents and carers	1

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	1
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	1
The extent to which children develop skills for the future	1

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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
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The provider confirms that the requirements of the voluntary part of the Childcare Register are:	Met
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