

Stepping Stones Pre-School

Inspection report for early years provision

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Inspection date	27/04/2010
Inspector	Judith Goodchild
Setting address	Newlyn School, Carne Road, Newlyn, Penzance, Cornwall, TR18 5QA
Telephone number	01736 363050
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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 Group, Newlyn, is a committee run Day Nursery and Out of School Club that opened in 1991. It operates from its own premises in the grounds of Newlyn School and also uses the school hall for out of school care. The nursery and out of school club, which is named Kidzone, serve the surrounding towns and villages. The setting is registered to care for 30 children on the Early Years Register and a maximum of 46 children on the compulsory part of the Childcare Register. There are currently 48 children attending who are within the Early Years Foundation Stage. The out of school club also offers care to children aged over five years. The provision is registered by Ofsted on the Early Years Register and the compulsory and voluntary parts of the Childcare Register. The group supports children who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. Currently, there are no children who speak English as an additional language. The group opens five days a week all year round, except between Christmas and New Year. Opening hours are from 08:00 until 18.00. Funded education sessions for three and four year olds are from 09:00 until 18.00. There are seven part time staff who work with the children. Five members of staff hold relevant early years or play work qualifications to NVQ Level 3 and the other two have NVQ Level 2. The setting receives support from the local authority and has completed their quality assurance scheme. The setting is a member of the Pre-School Learning Alliance.

The overall effectiveness of the early years provision

Overall the quality of the provision is outstanding.

The Stepping Stones Pre-School is an outstanding and inclusive provision that successfully meets both the welfare and learning needs of children. Safeguarding arrangements are exemplary. Behaviour and social relationships are excellent and the children receive a high standard of care. The Early Years Foundation Stage curriculum is firmly embedded in daily practice. Capacity for continued improvement is excellent and based on thorough self-evaluation of its work that involves all staff.

What steps need to be taken to improve provision further?

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

- develop practitioner training for higher level qualifications, such as the Foundation Degree in Early Years and Foundation Stage

The effectiveness of leadership and management of the early years provision

The strengths of Stepping Stones are the on-going self review of its work that clearly identifies areas for improvement, takes action, the effective team work of staff and the drive and ambition of all to raise the quality of children's experiences. Their capacity to sustain ongoing improvement is excellent. Recommendations from the last inspection have been successfully addressed. Assessment systems record and track rigorously the progress that children make and effective systems of communication ensures that relevant information about children is passed between key workers. Children's progress is discussed at regular staff meetings and activities are planned to ensure that children access areas of learning that need to be developed. Staff are well trained in observation and assessment of learning. The setting works hard to ensure that children gain as much awareness as possible about other cultural groups in the United Kingdom through books, celebrations of festivals and, where possible celebrating the cultural heritage of children. If children are not making the expected progress, or experiencing other difficulties, advice is sought from specialist support agencies. Though no children currently have been identified with special educational needs and/or disabilities, the provision to meet their needs is of a high quality.

Links with the primary school are very good and there is an effective working partnership between the two settings. For example, the school hall is used to accommodate the Kidzone before and after school club. Since the last inspection, procedures to ensure that Kidzone staff know which pupils from the school are likely to attend the after school club have been tightened up and they are now collected from their classes. Transition arrangements are very good. Meetings with Reception staff, where assessment information is shared, identified a need for the pre-school to put more focus on the development of communication, language and literacy skills and this has been built successfully into current planning. Links with parents are excellent. Parents are fully involved in the induction of their child into the pre-school. An easily accessible area has information for parents on a wide range of relevant topics and a digital display of photographs keeps them up to date with all the activities their child has taken part in. Children's progress is discussed on a regular basis with parents. Key workers are available to talk to parents at other times if they have any concerns.

The pre-school runs smoothly on a daily basis. A high priority is given to the welfare of children and all relevant policies and procedures are fully in place. The arrangements for safeguarding of children are excellent. Leadership has recognised, through its accurate forward strategic planning, that staff should be encouraged to gain higher level qualifications in order to meet future requirements.

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

Through well thought out induction procedures, children settle quickly into the welcoming, exciting and secure environment of Stepping Stones. By the time they start in primary school, most have made at least good progress in their development and have reached age related expectations. Excellent use is made of both the inside and outside environments. It is very clear that children really enjoy coming to Stepping Stones and all take a full part in the activities on offer. The topic for this term is 'Creatures Great and Small' and there was a sense of wonderment as children watched tadpoles change into frogs. They were also constructing a 'wormery' and developing an understanding of their role in the natural world. Spiders and snails were also observed in their natural habitats. Pictures show the fascination children had for a 'rainbow' created by rays of sunlight being refracted onto the floor. This exciting environment stimulates children to learn and, consequently, explore their knowledge and understanding of the world around them is good. Children are encouraged to share their thoughts about what they have observed and their contributions are valued by staff. Since the last inspection, early writing skills are promoted at every opportunity. Children have to 'sign themselves in' when they arrive and the writing area is easily accessible and encourages children to want to use it. Effective letters and sounds sessions start children on the path to reading. The book box contains texts suitable for both boys and girls, and parents are encouraged to take these early readers home. The development of problem solving, reasoning and numeracy skills is promoted through a range of activities, such as recognising shapes, including the mats used at snack time. Assessment by Reception staff in the primary school show that children are particularly strong in calculation.

There are many opportunities for children to develop their information and communication technology skills through using computers, video cameras and programmable toys. Independence and responsibility are encouraged and children clear up at the end of sessions and help to prepare tables for lunch and snack time. They are expected to observe basic hygiene routines. Healthy eating is promoted at snack time and through encouraging parents to provide healthy lunch boxes. The good range of outdoor play equipment supports children's physical development and allows them to 'take risks' in a safe environment.

Children work and play well together and social relationships and behaviours are excellent. Sharing is actively promoted and children are taught there is a consequence for unkind actions and the need to be aware of others whilst playing on bikes or other play equipment. They are taught how to keep themselves safe through play but also through road safety talks and a recent visit by the Fire Brigade. Hat, sunscreens and shaded areas protect children whilst playing outside.

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	1
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	1
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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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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