

Stepping Stones Playgroup

Inspection report for early years provision

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Inspector Lisa Jane Cupples

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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 Playgroup has been registered for over 20 years. It is a community group, which is managed by a committee of volunteers and serves the children of Sheet and the surrounding area. The playgroup operates from the scout hut, which is situated in the village recreation ground. Children have the use of the main hall and there is a kitchen area and toilet facilities. Stepping Stones operates during term-time only on Mondays and Wednesdays from 9am to 3pm, and on Thursdays and Fridays from 9am to 12 noon. Children can attend for full day care or for a variety of sessions and have the option of attending the lunch club on Wednesdays. All children have access to an area of the recreation ground for outdoor play.

The playgroup is registered to provide care for a maximum of 26 children in the early years age group at any one time. It is group policy to not take children younger than two years nine months. There are currently 35 children in the early years age range on roll. The playgroup is registered on the Early Years Register and both the compulsory and voluntary parts of the Childcare Register.

The group has six members of staff, and of these, three have an early years qualification and two are in training.

The overall effectiveness of the early years provision

Overall the quality of the provision is good.

All children are happy and settled during their time at the playgroup because staff take the time to get to know them and their families well. Children are making good progress towards the early learning goals in all six areas and all children's welfare and learning are promoted successfully. Comprehensive systems are in place to evaluate and monitor the effectiveness of the setting. All staff work together closely to identify and address any areas for development, continuously driving improvement for the benefit of the children.

What steps need to be taken to improve provision further?

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

- continue to develop the observation system and planning to clearly identify the next steps in children's learning and development, including evaluation for success or improvement
- extend the information shared with parents to include the children's next steps to fully involve them in their children's learning.

The effectiveness of leadership and management of the early years provision

All children are safeguarded because staff have a good understanding of child protection procedures and know how to implement them to protect the children in their care. Written policies and procedures are shared with parents and referral charts are displayed around the setting for information. Robust recruitment and vetting procedures are implemented effectively to ensure all adults working with the children are suitable. All visitors are required to sign in and out of the building to ensure a full and accurate record of everyone coming into contact with the children is maintained. Children benefit from a safe and secure play and learning environment because detailed written risk assessments are carried out and are reviewed regularly.

The setting has made good progress since the last inspection and has addressed the previous recommendations in full. For example, the staff team now ensures all records include the children's full names and are completed in ink to provide a permanent record to protect themselves and the children. The staff team and management committee work closely together to drive improvement across the setting for the benefit of the children. Self-evaluation is good and staff effectively identify the setting's strengths and weaknesses. Actions plans are devised and include timescales to ensure all recommendations are addressed as soon as possible. For example, the use of the outdoor play area has been extended to ensure all six areas of learning are covered outside, enhancing the children's outdoor play and learning experiences. The children's garden has also been developed and now includes opportunities for children to plant and grow fresh fruit, vegetables and herbs.

Children benefit from the open lines of communication between the staff team and their parents. Information is shared through discussion and the use of questionnaires. Parents are able to talk to the staff at any time and the pre-school has an open door policy, making the parents feel welcome. Parents have access to their children's records and are able to make contributions if they choose to. However, information about the children's identified next learning steps is not currently shared regularly to enable the parents to be fully involved in their children's learning. Good systems and procedures are in place to support children who speak English as an additional language and children with special educational needs and/or disabilities. The staff team work closely with the parents and other agencies to fully support all the children who attend. Procedures are also in place to share information with other providers of the Early Years Foundation Stage to ensure the care and learning for children who attend other settings is consistent and complimentary.

All children have access to a wide and varied range of resources and activities that are suitable for their age and stage of development. The learning environment is organised to ensure all children can self-select resources and choose activities, increasing their independence and decision-making skills effectively. Children are beginning to learn about the world around them through activities and themes to celebrate a range of cultural festivals, such as, Divali and Chinese New Year and

they have access to multicultural resources on a daily basis. Parents are encouraged to share their knowledge and expertise to promote the children's understanding of diversity. For example, one family organised activities and brought traditional costumes in for Divali. The children enjoyed dressing-up and took part in food tasting sessions. They listened to traditional Indian music and made Rangoli patterns and lanterns for the Festival of Light, helping to introduce other cultures and beliefs to the children.

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

All children are making good progress towards the early learning goals because staff have a very clear understanding of the Early Years Foundation Stage. Staff spend time observing what the children can do and they incorporate their individual interests into the daily activities. The children's next learning steps are identified and all staff know what they are working towards with each child. However, the next steps are not recorded in the children's records or in the planning, making it difficult to evaluate if the learning intentions are being met or to identify aspects for improvement in this area. Staff plan for continuous provision so the children's learning is continued outside. As a result, children benefit greatly from the successful organisation of the daily routines and effective staff deployment. The sessions run smoothly and children are occupied and engaged in purposeful play and learning throughout the day. Children participate fully in a wide range of child-initiated and adult-led activities and learning experiences, promoting their social skills and self-esteem effectively. Children's spoken language is developing very well and staff introduce new vocabulary at every opportunity. For example, during story time the children learn about stalagmites and stalactites. Children are encouraged to use descriptive language during activities as they explain what they can see, hear or feel.

Children use their imaginations and cooperate well with each other during role play. For example, the children create characters and negotiate roles, deciding the course of the game in advance and then changing ideas and adapting their play as it develops. For example, children dress up as mums and dads and put the dolls into the pushchairs. They talk about doing the house work and then decide to take the dolls to the shops. They find some paper and pencils and make a quick shopping list. The children then walk around the hall trying to remember what they need to buy and use a range of other resources to represent items on their shopping list. They count how many things they have bought. They take them back to the home corner and pretend to cook for each other. Staff are skilled at knowing when to stand back and let the play develop naturally and when to give gentle guidance to redirect less purposeful activities, fully supporting the children's ideas and extending their learning. Children use a range of electronic and programmable toys and resources to develop their understanding of everyday technology, such as keyboards, telephones and Bee-Bots.

Children are beginning to learn the importance of keeping themselves safe through discussion, group rules and routines. For example, children know they should wear sun hats outside to protect their heads from the sun and they know they should

not run inside the hall. Children and staff practise regular fire drills. Older children are able to explain what happens during a fire drill, demonstrating a clear understanding of how to evacuate the building quickly and safely in the event of an emergency. Children are developing good self-care skills as they wash their hands at appropriate times and use disposable paper towels to help prevent the possible spread of infection. Children are developing an understanding of healthy eating through the provision of nutritious snacks, such as, fresh fruit and vegetables. They talk about the types of food and drinks that are good for them and show high levels of independence as they pour their own drinks and spread their own crackers. Staff are introducing the concept of sustainability to the children in simple terms by encouraging them to grow their own fruit and vegetables for snack time. They have started to talk with the children about the benefits of recycling, and are introducing the use of a compost bin.

Children behave well because all staff implement the clear rules and boundaries consistently. As a result, the children know exactly what is expected of them. Staff are attentive and respond well to the children's needs, which has a very positive effect on their behaviour. Children respond well to the expectations of the staff team and are able to follow simple instructions. Children are beginning to show consideration for others during their time at the playgroup. For example, children ask others if they would like to join in their games and they help children with English as an additional language to learn new words. Children share and take turns, cooperating well with each other throughout the day.

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