

Stepping Stones Pre-School

Inspection report for early years provision

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Inspector Isobel Randall

Setting address Bedford Road Lower School, Hillgrounds Road, Kempston,
Bedford, MK42 8QH
Telephone number 01234 400114
Email steppingstones.preschool@ntlworld.com
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*.

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Description of the setting

Stepping Stones Pre-school has operated since 2007 from purpose built accommodation in a children's centre in the grounds of Bedford Lower School, Kempston in Bedford Borough. Children have access to a secure outside area. The setting is registered on the Early Years Register for a maximum of 24 children aged from two to five years and it is run by a committee of parent volunteers. In total 59 children attend for a variety of sessions on Monday to Friday, from 9.00am to 3.15pm during school term time only. There are 34 children in receipt of funding at present. The pre-school supports children with special educational needs and/or disabilities, and also children for whom English is an additional language. There is access and appropriate facilities for children with disabilities. Nine staff work with the children. Of these, three hold appropriate childcare qualifications at Level 3, and two at Level 2.

The overall effectiveness of the early years provision

Overall the quality of the provision is good.

Stepping Stones Pre-school meets the needs of the children well. Since the previous inspection leaders have examined their practice effectively so that they are implementing improvements well. There is suitable provision for children with special educational needs and/or disabilities, and also for children whose home language is not English. There is 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:

- engage parents more actively in sharing information to promote their children's progress
- involve staff, parents and committee members throughout the self-evaluation process
- encourage children to contribute to their nursery by helping to clear away after play.

The effectiveness of leadership and management of the early years provision

The pre-school is well organised to ensure that children are safe, and to promote their learning and development. Recruitment practices are thorough so that all adults are suitable to work with children. Staff are informed about safeguarding, and there are always at least two on site who hold current qualifications in first aid for children. Hygiene procedures are thorough. Visitors are monitored and the site is secure. Risks are assessed for all areas including the outdoor play area, and all areas and equipment are regularly checked. Staff, deployed as key workers for individual children, meet weekly in order to plan for children's learning and

development. Close links with the early years staff at the neighbouring school, supplemented by support from the local authority and network meetings with other settings, ensure that staff have acted effectively to improve their provision for children's learning. They are encouraged to improve their skills and knowledge by taking further qualifications so that they are well informed about systems to help children to feel safe, enjoy their experiences and learn from them. Self-evaluation covers all of the requirements of the Early Years in detail, although there is greater emphasis on actions taken, rather than the evaluation of the difference that they have made to the development of the children. Although parents have been consulted by means of questionnaires in previous years, the involvement of parents, staff and committee members comes later than the initial stage of self-evaluation, so that their influence is not as strong as it could be. Parental involvement is satisfactory. They have opportunities to examine their children's progress through learning journals. While they are invited to contribute their views and report children's experiences through the use of contact books, they tend to concentrate on necessary information related to the collection of children at home time or health issues. The sheets designed for parents to report their children's achievements are not obviously available, and so few are present in the children's learning journals. Parents are well involved in fund-raising and in the provision of new equipment through the active committee. Their efforts are in part responsible for the good level of resources that provide a wide range of experiences for the children. The outdoor area is well equipped for children to explore their environment by playing with sand or water, growing fruit, vegetables and flowers and finding mini-beasts. They have good opportunities to climb, ride, run and play ball games. The active play surface is safe so that they can use the climbing frame or slide without hurting themselves. Staff are well deployed to monitor play in all indoor and outdoor areas. Indoors the setting is well provided with good areas for quiet reading, using the computer, story telling, role play, arts and crafts. Activities and displays raise awareness of different cultures while encouraging children to read, count and begin to write. Resources therefore have a positive impact on the children's learning and development.

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

Children enjoy coming to the pre-school. They settle down quickly when they come in, and enjoy choosing their own activities. They are friendly towards adults, showing that they feel safe. Children know the routines for keeping clean, eating their snack and lunch. They make good progress in their personal and social development, responding well to adults' encouragement to cooperate with each other and to be considerate when playing together. There is good staffing provision for children with special educational needs and/or disabilities so that their needs are met. In previous years adults have initiated the identification of specific needs, but no instance has arisen in the present year. Key workers allocated to all children maintain detailed learning journals on their attainments, showing also that they follow the next steps that they have identified for each child, such as developing mark-making. These next steps, however, are not fully effective as they are identified around once every half term, and do not cover all areas of development. Children make good progress in communication as a result of skilled

questioning by staff and an encouragement to read and to write. They are confident when counting in songs and in response to adult's questions. Their physical development is well supported by the good range of active play opportunities. Children make a satisfactory contribution to the community around them. Although the children are friendly and cooperate well, adults do not always insist that they clear up, for example, when they have spread toys around the floor. The good relationship between the pre-school and the adjacent school has broadened the children's experiences by enabling them to use the school field at specific times for ball games. Children have a series of visits to the school so that they become accustomed to it before they move on, and are therefore well prepared for the next phase. This is enhanced by good liaisons between the school staff and the adults in the pre-school.

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	3
The effectiveness of partnerships	2
The effectiveness of the setting's engagement with parents and carers	3

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	3
The extent to which children develop skills for the future	2

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