

Stepping Stones Pre-School (Portslade)

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique reference number

EY409145

Inspection date

21/09/2010

Inspector

Christopher MacKinnon

Setting address

Peter Gladwin School, Drove Road, Portslade, BRIGHTON,
BN41 2PA

Telephone number

07963 680201

Email

Type of setting

Childcare on non-domestic premises

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, work-based learning and skills training, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for looked after children, safeguarding and child protection.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may copy all or parts of this document for non-commercial educational purposes, as long as you give details of the source and date of publication and do not alter the information in any way.

T: 0300 123 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.ofsted.gov.uk

© Crown copyright 2010

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).

Please see our website for more information about each childcare provider. We publish inspection reports, conditions of registration and details of complaints we receive where we or the provider take action to meet the requirements of registration.

Description of the setting

The pre-school first opened in 1993 and has re-registered at new premises in 2010. It is now located at Peter Gladwin Primary School in Portslade, Brighton and Hove. The setting's premises are separate, but located within the school. Children have a large main play room with access to a covered deck and outdoor area. The setting is open from 9am to 1pm Monday, Wednesday and Friday, and on Tuesdays and Thursdays from 9am to 2.45pm, during term time only.

The setting is registered on the Early Years Register. No more than 24 children may attend in the early years age group, none of whom may be under two years. The setting currently has 36 children on roll, and all are in early years age group. The setting is able to support children with special educational needs and/or disabilities and children who speak English as an additional language. The setting is also in receipt of funding for nursery education. There is a staff team of five, all of whom have early years qualifications, with two temporary learning support/cover staff currently training. The manager has Early Years Professional Status.

The overall effectiveness of the early years provision

Overall the quality of the provision is outstanding.

The pre-school is consistently well organised and the staff provide excellent support for individual children's welfare and development. Children benefit greatly from access to a highly stimulating play environment that includes a purpose built outdoor play area. Staff are highly organised in their provision of planned activities and use of assessment, and children make excellent progress with their learning. The pre-school works closely and effectively with parents and other carers, and is highly consistent in the provision of inclusive care. Reflective practice is thoroughly applied, and staff make confident use of self-evaluation to promote improvement.

What steps need to be taken to improve provision further?

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

- continuing the development of the outdoor play environment

The effectiveness of leadership and management of the early years provision

The pre-school has newly opened at its current site, and is a long established childcare setting that has relocated. The organisation and management of the

setting is highly effective and provides an excellent programme of play and learning. The staff team are highly experienced and well qualified, and the manager has completed Early Years Professional Status. A particularly well organised and successful key person system is in place to ensure children's progress is promoted. The setting's planning is also significantly strong, and includes clear guidance for staff on extending and supporting children's development. As part of the setting's effective leadership and management, and to promote continuous improvement, the setting has engaged in a locally organised quality assurance scheme with several modules successfully completed and certificates awarded. These good results give testimony to the high quality of the setting's learning development programme and highly effective application of observation and assessment. The setting has consistent safeguarding measures, and ensures children are kept safe and secure. Staff have an effective awareness of child protection procedures, and well organised policies and practice guidance also contributes to effective safeguarding.

Children make good use of an exciting and well presented range of play resources, particularly for developing problem solving and widening their understanding of the world. Children are consistently encouraged to explore the play environment, and have many opportunities to adapt and combine play materials. Children's responses to the planned environment are excellent, and many aspects of the setting are highly stimulating, for example, the use of an 'interest table' where children can explore and compare objects. In addition, the use of visual timetables and learning displays support the children's routines and interests. A specific area in the play environment is also set aside where children can explore sounds and listen to tapes with headphones to promote sounds and listening. The pre-school makes excellent use of its outdoor play area for a wide range of learning experiences, for example, children have two large sand play boxes and a separate area for large outdoor assembly play systems. There is also a push ride circuit, with cones and a children's garden provides opportunities for learning about growing and nature. The overall accessibility of play items and attention given to promoting learning opportunities make the presentation of resources a significantly outstanding feature of the setting. As part of the setting's ongoing development plan, further modifications are currently in hand to enhance the outdoor learning space, and this is noted as an area for continuing improvement.

Individual children are provided with excellent close support within the setting to encourage their development and progress. The overall sensitivity and strong focus shown by the staff team towards developing children's achievement is exemplary, and an outstanding aspect of the provision. All children are consistently monitored and have regular one-to-one learning. Children who attend with specific development needs are particularly well included and guided by their key staff, who work in close partnership with parents, individual support workers and visitors from outside agencies. Children are able to successfully extend their level of achievement, and make measurable progress across learning gaps. The pre-school is also highly consistent in its support for children's understanding of equality and diversity. Children are provided with a rich range of activities that helps them understand about people's differences. For example, a language interpreter regularly attends the setting to provide support for children with an additional language. Representative play resources, books and music also effectively support

children's awareness of other cultures.

The pre-school has established good links with other carers and play settings. The setting is located within a school site and children from the same families attend both provisions. Care is taken by key staff to gather information on children's other care arrangements and their family backgrounds. The pre-school's partnership with parents is highly organised. Parents have access to a full and detailed handbook about the setting, and are encouraged to work closely with key workers to chart and support their children's development. The staff make good use of starter information and information gathered from home to ensure children's learning stages are well known; this is another strong and consistent aspect of the setting. For example, parents are asked to contribute to detailed notes that are recorded on commencement about their children's abilities, interests and favourite things. Frequent opportunities are also provided by key staff for parents to review their children's observation records. Parents are also consistently included and encouraged to contribute to the pre-school's play programme.

The pre-school staff are confident and experienced childcare practitioners and show considerable skill in their application of reflective practice. Staff make excellent use of a range of methods to assess the effectiveness of the activities and presentation of resources. For example, frequent changes are made to play areas to facilitate specific learning initiatives, such as exploring sounds or a seasonal art and crafts theme like autumn. The weekly play and activity plans are also subject to change and revision as the children's own ideas are explored and child-led learning ideas predominate. The staff have produced and submitted a detailed and thorough self-evaluation document that outlines the setting's practice and clearly identifies areas for improvement. Frequent staff meetings are held to discuss development and drive improvement. Through close scrutiny of practice and favourable Quality Assurance input, the senior staff are clearly committed to maintaining quality within the setting.

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

The pre-school's organisation of children's learning and development is highly effective and an outstanding aspect of the setting's play programme. Staff take care to devise and generate a consistently stimulating and challenging range of play themes, which successfully helps children to explore the six areas of learning. The presentation of play resources is most effectively planned, with children's own ideas and interests well included. For example, one child's use of a magnifier to explore a 'mystery' has created a whole learning theme based on discovery and hidden items. Another child's information from home showed a strong interest in robots, which has also been included as a play and learning theme. The setting's planning over the long term is soundly based on the Early Years Foundation Stage principles. It is then broken down into shorter term planning that includes focussed play sessions and initiatives. For example, there is a current focus on communication and social learning this term as many new children are attending. The most precise element of the setting's planning is the weekly activity plans,

which act as a consistent guide for staff to explore and develop activities with the children.

The quality of the teaching and promotion of children's enjoying and achieving is exemplary. Children benefit greatly from their contact with staff, who skilfully extend their learning and use good questions to challenge and promote their thinking. For example, staff continually remind children about sizes and hard and soft during outdoor play. Staff are highly effective in responding to the children's variations in play, and children are encouraged by staff to move freely indoors and outdoors as they use the play environment. A significantly strong and consistent aspect of staff teaching is the highly effective use that is made of key staff, and their personally managed small group learning sessions. These allow for a close focus on individual children's learning needs, and are effective in encouraging children to join in with play, and get to know one another.

The pre-school has a definite strength and shows outstanding quality in the organisation of observation and assessment. Key staff are highly focussed on supporting individual children, and much information is gathered to facilitate their learning progress. Well detailed development records are kept on each child, which successfully follows their development and progress through the learning stages. Well presented work folders are also kept on each child, using photos and descriptive notes on children's responses and engagement with activities. These documents, combined with consistent home information, provide the setting with an excellent system to know about and maintain children's progress. Individual children's next steps in learning are planned by their key workers and reviewed on a weekly basis. Regular long term assessments of children are also carried out every term to ensure children have consolidated their achievements, and are ready to move on. Overall a highly robust and thorough programme is in place to support individual children's learning.

Care is taken by staff to ensure children have time to settle and feel safe and welcome at the setting. This is successfully demonstrated by the time taken with new children starting in the autumn term. For example, all new children have significant input from their key person at this time to help them gain social confidence and to promote their communication skills. A well organised range of procedures are in place to ensure children are kept safe and secure. Staff carry out daily checks of the premises and play equipment, which are recorded. The organisation of risk assessment within the setting is thorough and highly detailed, with all aspects of the children's activities included. A clear process is also in place to ensure risk assessments are regularly reviewed and continually updated. The pre-school successfully promotes children's health and development. Staff support children's independence, with prompts for hand washing and guidance during snack time. Children have regular learning activities linked with foods, for example, the setting's own tomato crop is being used to make tomato salsa. Children's physical development benefits from many opportunities to be active, both indoors and in the setting's well planned outdoor play area. Children particularly enjoy role play games that free-flow to the outdoor area. Opportunities are also provided for more expansive group-based outdoor activities in the field and grounds adjacent to the school.

Staff are highly effective in their encouragement of children's social learning, and helping them to build confidence. Staff work well within their key groups to encourage sharing and turn taking, and good consideration is given to promoting children's awareness of others and encouraging their willingness to help and tidy up. Staff are highly consistent in their exploration of feelings with the children. For example, a specific visual learning area in the setting is devoted to feelings awareness, and children talk easily about stories they know that are happy and sad. Children are encouraged to cooperate during their play, and are successfully guided to work positively and get results. For example, while using the big builder outdoors, several children worked together with staff to produce a play-man and a push-cart.

The development of children's skills for future learning is excellently promoted. There is consistent emphasis on communication and language and staff show good skill with encouraging children's interest in books. For example, a child-led animal themed role play game with cushions was successfully channelled by a staff member into reading a story book about animals. The use of music and exploring sounds is a well included aspect of the play programme, and singing and saying rhymes are well used to promote clear letter and word sounds. Children have daily whole group story times, and many opportunities are provided for mark making. Children are also encouraged to write their names when they want to take a turn on the push ride circuit. Children's problem solving and numeracy is well promoted, with many opportunities for counting and learning about numbers. Children particularly enjoy problem solving with the big builder kit outdoors, and are able to learn about time and long and short periods by using sand timers.

Children's creative development is confidently supported, and children are given good scope to be expressive with role play and dressing up. Children enjoy a wide range of art and crafts and painting, and learn about colours and how to mix them. One child particularly enjoyed learning how to make orange, for example. This was successfully extended by the staff member into talking about other items that are orange. Much excellent support is provided to encourage children's creative thinking, with their own ideas well used to generate learning. For example, children make good use of a play camera with animal images to invent games where they pretend to be animals and make animal noises. Children are also encouraged to combine resources creatively, with a wide range of assembly sets and floor layouts easily available within the play environment. Children's knowledge and understanding of the world is strongly featured. The setting has an ongoing theme of 'textures' at present, and this is well explored though the use of nature items, where children can feel different surfaces like pine cones and wood bark. All the children's senses are well stimulated, with a particularly effective learning opportunity provided with exploring smells, using a small box of cloves. Another ongoing project that promotes children's wider experience is the theme of 'mystery' and the many opportunities provided for discovery learning. For example, staff use prepared paper bags with different sized and textured items for children to explore. Children are also encouraged to find 'treasures' outdoors, which are in fact large coloured glass beads, hidden in the sand play section.

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

The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	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

The quality of the provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	1
--	---

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

Any complaints about the inspection or report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk

