

Stepping Stones Playgroup (Wells)

Inspection report for early years provision

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Inspector

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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 is run by a committee of parents. It is situated in an Elliot building within the grounds of Stoberry School in Wells, Somerset. It is registered on the Early Years Register and the compulsory and voluntary parts of the Child Care register. A maximum of 18 children may attend the nursery at any one time. The group is open term time only Monday to Friday from 9.00 am until 11.30 am, and Tuesday and Friday from 9.00am until 2.00pm during the Autumn term. They are open for all ten sessions during the Spring and Summer terms. All children share access to a secure enclosed outdoor play area and also have use of the school playground. There are currently 35 children aged from two and a half to under five years on role. Of these, 24 children receive funding for early education. Children come from Wells and the surrounding villages. The group is able to support children with special educational needs and/or disabilities. The pre-school employs six members of staff. Five staff hold appropriate early years qualifications and the other is undergoing training to obtain one. The group receives support from the local authority.

The overall effectiveness of the early years provision

Overall the quality of the provision is outstanding.

Stepping Stones is an excellent playgroup and makes outstanding provision for the children who attend. Children's learning and development are outstanding because of the wide variety of exciting and stimulating activities made available for them. The manager works very closely and effectively with her team to ensure that the needs of all children are met. Partnership with parents and carers, and relationships with the school in whose grounds it is sited, are excellent. There is a good focus on monitoring and evaluating practice and staff are well focused on on-going improvement. There is an outstanding capacity for further 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:

- making greater provision for children to practice their early writing skills outside in order that the quality of the outdoor provision fully reflects that of inside.

The effectiveness of leadership and management of the early years provision

At the time of the inspection, safeguarding procedures were extremely comprehensive and there is a great emphasis on ensuring that children are kept safe at all times. All procedures for ensuring that staff are suitable to work with children are fully in place and staff have first aid and child protection training. The

quality of written risk assessments is high. At the start and end of each session, the inside and outdoor areas and equipment are thoroughly assessed for risks. The kitchen area is secure and inaccessible to children. Staff are highly vigilant to ensure all surfaces and resources are scrupulously clean.

The setting is very well run by a skilled and experienced manager and an accomplished and committed team. Processes of self-evaluation are well established and the whole team has an excellent understanding of the strengths, and areas for further development, to drive on-going improvement of provision. All the recommendations from the last inspection have been successfully addressed. Risk assessments are now undertaken daily. Record keeping is excellent and all details of the complaints procedure are available for parents to see. Children have excellent opportunities to learn about cultural diversity, and equal opportunities and cultural diversity are promoted extremely well. Discrimination of any sort is not tolerated.

All observations made are dated which ensure that children's progress can be tracked effectively and regular meetings are held with parents at which they receive feedback on their children's progress. Parents are involved very well in their children's learning and development and the manager is very receptive to their ideas and suggestions. For example, the parents sign up to 'stay and play' on a regular basis. This means that they gain first hand knowledge of the day-to-day running of the setting and also see for themselves the progress children make. They receive regular newsletters and a wide range of information about activities taking place. They are active in raising funds to support the setting and are extremely happy with the provision for their children. They receive regular feedback about their children and staff make themselves available to speak with them at any time. There are more formal opportunities to discuss their child's progress and next steps in learning and development at regular intervals.

The pre-school has very close links with the Reception class of the school in whose grounds it is sited. They share a wide range of activities and resources such as the large playground and adventure trail. The Reception teacher is on the management committee. These links are highly effective in helping to make the transition to school a smooth one when the time comes.

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

Children settle quickly and happily as soon as they arrive in the morning. They rapidly become absorbed in a wide variety of activities which enable them to develop and learn effectively. A visual timetable at their own height ensures they understand the programme for the morning's activities. They are sociable and inquisitive, asking questions freely, and their personal and social skills are developing extremely well. They learn how to share and are beginning to work together. They cooperate willingly with other children and adults.

The room is small in size but huge in the wealth of learning experiences offered. An exciting themed approach is evident. In the last half term 'The Very Hungry

Caterpillar' has been used to excellent effect to increase children's knowledge and understanding. They have learned to count confidently to five and can match numbers to objects. They understand the life cycle of a butterfly. They have created a myriad of collages, prints and paintings about various aspects of the story, learning how to mix paint, select materials and how to print without smudging. Most of all they have learned how to appreciate and enjoy a good story.

Because activities are imaginative and exciting, children really enjoy their time at pre-school and make excellent progress in their learning and development. Good attention is paid to ensuring that the needs and interests of all children are met. At the time of inspection children were happily making fireworks from a range of recycled materials and papers. Staff took every opportunity to discuss with the children what they were doing and to increase their vocabulary by encouraging children to learn and use new words to describe the materials they were using such as 'glittery' and 'shiny'. Adults ensure that children use scissors correctly and safely and 'show' rather than 'do' for them.

The outside area is small but children really enjoy using the fort and other activities provided. However, opportunities are missed to further promote children's early writing skills as, for example, there are no large white or chalk boards which could easily be accommodated on the fences. The playgroup also has daily access to the school's adventure trail where children can learn to take risks safely. They also use the playground where they enjoy riding bikes and other wheeled toys and thus improve their coordination.

Planning shows coverage of all areas of learning and specific activities planned for the week, based on the children's interests and needs. It clearly indicates what knowledge and skills are to be gained from the activities, particularly those planned and led by adults. Regular observations are made of children's progress and these are recorded in their Progress Records. These are excellent records of children's achievements and are enhanced by photographs and samples of children's work. Next steps in learning are clearly identified and show clearly what the child needs to do to reach the next stage in learning and development.

Snack times are sociable occasions. Children enjoy a wide range of healthy snacks. The story of The Very Hungry Caterpillar is used to good effect to reinforce these and the need for fruit and vegetables in a healthy diet, with only occasional treats. Children have plenty of exercise and fresh air in the outdoor environment, which they access freely. All activities are well planned to ensure children understand the need to stay safe. They all fully understand the importance of playing safely together and moving around the premises sensibly. Behaviour is good and children understand the 'Golden Rules' well. These are emphasised and reinforced very well through the skilled use of role play by the adults. All children are well supported. There is plenty of positive reinforcement, use of signing, and action songs to ensure they are all fully included. Children enjoy taking responsibilities, such as helping to tidy up and get out the drinks and snacks. Self-registration and the opportunity to choose their own activities means they learn to take responsibility for their own learning and make excellent progress towards achieving the necessary skills for the 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?	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
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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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