

# Stepping Stones Pre-School

Inspection report for early years provision

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EY275967

**Inspection date**

29/11/2010

**Inspector**

Louise Bonney

**Setting address**

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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*.

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## **Description of the setting**

Stepping Stones Pre-school is run by a voluntary committee and first opened in 1972. It is located in a building in Tilehurst that used to be the Meadway School, which has now closed. Children have access to a secure enclosed outdoor play area. The pre-school serves the needs of families in the surrounding area. It runs from Monday to Friday, 9.30am until 12.30 noon, with a lunch club on Tuesday to Thursday from 12.30noon until 1.30pm.

The pre-school is registered on the Early Years Register. A maximum of 30 children may attend at any one time. There are currently 17 children on roll, most in part-time places. The pre-school receives funding for the provision of free early education for children aged three and four. The pre-school currently supports children with special education needs and/or disabilities as well as children who speak English as an additional language.

The pre-school employs six members of staff who work with the children. Of these, five hold appropriate early years qualifications. The pre-school receives support from the local authority.

## **The overall effectiveness of the early years provision**

Overall the quality of the provision is satisfactory.

Staff safeguard children through the rigorous implementation of policies and procedures and their thorough risk assessments. Although the premises are in an otherwise disused building the staff provide a safe, warm and caring environment where children feel valued and welcome. Staff's knowledge of the Early Years Foundation Stage learning and development requirements varies, leading to overall satisfactory outcomes for children. Staff work well with parents and other professionals to support children who have special educational needs and/or disabilities and provide an inclusive environment. Although staff do not yet rigorously self-evaluate their provision, they show sufficient commitment to continual development as they seek and follow advice from local authority advisors and implement recommended changes that benefit the children.

## **What steps need to be taken to improve provision further?**

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

- lead and encourage a culture of reflective practice, self-evaluation and informed discussion to identify the setting's strengths and priorities for development that will improve the quality of provision for all children
- develop further the use of sustained shared thinking by offering encouragement, clarifying ideas and asking open questions which support

- and extend children's thinking and communication skills
- evaluate how effectively routines at snack time allow children time to complete a particular line of enquiry or activity to their own level of satisfaction.

## **The effectiveness of leadership and management of the early years provision**

Staff safeguard the children well through the rigorous implementation of policies and procedures and the maintenance of records. They thoroughly risk assess the premises, equipment and outings and complete a daily check list to ensure hazards are minimised and that the premises are clean and secure. New staff and committee members undergo appropriate vetting procedures to ensure their suitability, and inductions ensure staff quickly familiarise themselves with the pre-schools policies and procedures. Staff demonstrate understanding of the procedures to follow should they have concerns about a child's safety. They discuss with parents any injuries children arrive with and record incidents and concerns. This ensures children are safeguarded well.

The newly appointed committee is enthusiastic and are already planning fundraising activities to purchase new equipment on the staffs wish list, such as resources to reflect diversity. This supplements the already wide range of resources already available and further support children's growing awareness of social diversity. The staff team is well established and works closely together. Each child has an allocated key worker who monitors their progress and ensures their needs are met. Although outside the premises appear unkempt and unwelcoming, inside staff create a friendly and welcoming environment for families and carers, with colourful displays of children's work and informative notice boards and publications. Staff act upon advice and guidance received from other professionals, such as Portage, the Area Senco and the early years advisor. They attend joint meetings with other service providers. This helps to ensure children with identified needs are fully supported and provides an inclusive environment.

Staff have not yet completed an independent self-evaluation but do work closely with the early years advisor, who identifies actions that they then implement. Since their last inspection they have made improvements, such as to their planning and assessment of children's progress, and successfully applied for a grant to develop their outdoor area. This benefits the children and planning and assessment systems further help develop staffs understanding of the learning and development requirements. The supervisor appraises staff annually and identifies their training needs, although courses have not always been found to support these, such as for child development.

Staff develop good relationships with parents who receive clear information about the provision through the prospectus and informative display boards. Staff involve parents and other carers in their children's learning by sharing termly reports that summarise their progress and identify their next possible steps. They seek information about children's home backgrounds and liaise with parents and others to ensure children's special educational needs and/or disabilities are fully assessed

and supported.

Staff use childrens progress records to support planning, and include differentiation so that all staff can see how to adapt plans to childrens different levels of understanding. They organise routines that help children feel fully involved, and have recently shortened large group activities so that younger children find it easier to fully participate. However, staff routinely call children to the snack table in turn. This interrupts the flow of their play just as they begin to concentrate on an activity or particular line of enquiry, and does not allow children to complete their activity to their own level of satisfaction.

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

Children settle well and show friendly and trusting relationships with staff and each other. They develop a sense of belonging as they self-register on arrival and find their own name tag, or as other children enthusiastically welcome them. Children show independence as they make choices about their activities from the wide range set out accessibly. They quickly follow known rules as they line up and walk calmly to the sensory room or outdoor area. Children respond to staffs expectations as they invite them to adult-led activities, such as to rehearse their Christmas songs. Staff frequently praise the children as they participate in activities, such as when they follow instructions during a game and find a named shape or colour. Staff adapt adult-led activities to provide the right level of challenge, which encourages children to persist as they develop confidence in being able to achieve something new. This helps children develop positive attitudes towards learning.

Children show good understanding of hygiene as they follow established routines. They enjoy healthy snacks of warmed pancakes and fruit, and wash up their own cups afterwards. Children play outside daily and pedal at speed without colliding into each other, showing awareness of how to stay safe. Staff encourage children to dress appropriately in cold weather and talk to them about movement keeping them warm, raising their awareness of their bodies response to exercise. This supports their good health.

Staff encourage childrens imagination as they develop the role play area to reflect their interests. Children enjoy pretending to be postmen as they deliver the mail, with a table nearby displaying cards and envelopes for them to write on and post. Some children recognise their own names and are beginning to write them. Children learn about shapes during craft activities and staff revisit their prior learning, helping them recall the diamond shape of their kites, and showing them how half a diamond is a triangle. Children count spontaneously as they play, using number charts on the wall. They have opportunities to experiment with various materials such as sand, water and dough. Some children enjoy looking at books independently, and staff quickly offer to read their favourite story which children join in with as they know it off by heart. Children love going into the dark tent in the sensory room and exploring toys that light up in different ways, although this

has to be accessed as part of a group activity rather than always being available.

Staff frequently record their observations of the children during their activities. Childrens key workers use these observations, photographs and samples of childrens finished activities to track their progress in all areas of learning. They identify childrens next steps in learning, and staff collaborate as they take turns to develop weekly plans for the group. The support children receive from staff during their activities varies. Sometimes staff successfully extend childrens chosen activities by making suggestions, at other times they just supervise activities without interaction, even when childrens play is mundane. They teach children how to use resources such as stamps and ink pads and name resources for children who have little language, but staff do not always encourage children to think problems through or spend sufficient time asking open questions and giving children time to respond to further encourage their communication skills. This leads to children making satisfactory progress in their learning and development overall.

## 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

<b>How well does the setting meet the needs of the children in the Early Years Foundation Stage?</b>	3
The capacity of the provision to maintain continuous improvement	3

### The effectiveness of leadership and management of the early years provision

<b>The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage</b>	3
The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	3
The effectiveness with which the setting deploys resources	3
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	2

### The quality of the provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage

The quality of the provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	3
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### Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage

<b>Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage</b>	3
The extent to which children achieve and enjoy their learning	3
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	3

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