

# Stepping Stones

Inspection report for early years provision

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**Inspection date** 13/01/2011  
**Inspector** Barbara Walters

**Setting address** Longfield Childrens Centre, Longmeadow Primary School,  
Broadcloth Lane, TROWBRIDGE, Wiltshire, BA14 7HE  
**Telephone number** 01225350004  
**Email** barbara@steppingstones.plus.com  
**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 is an opportunity group and the district specialist centre for West Wiltshire, for children with special educational needs and/or disabilities. It is managed by a committee. It was originally registered in 1974, and re-registered in 2010 after moving to a new purpose-built Children's Centre in Trowbridge. The children mainly use two downstairs play rooms and associated facilities. Children also have access to a secure enclosed outdoor play area. Children attend for a variety of sessions and all have been referred by health professionals, social workers or parents. The setting is open for various periods of time according to which age group attend the sessions. Morning sessions are from 9.30am to 11am, 11.30am or 12.00noon. Afternoon sessions are held from 12.30pm to 2.30pm on Tuesdays and Fridays and pre-school sessions on Wednesday and Thursdays are from 9.30am to 2.40pm. The setting is registered on the Early Years Register. A maximum of 24 children in the early years age group may attend the setting at any one time. Currently, 49 children from birth to five years on roll attend, which includes 20 funded three and four year olds.

There are 12 members of staff who work directly with the children, of whom 11 hold appropriate early years qualifications to at least National Vocational Qualification at level 2. Staff are supported by regular volunteers. The setting offers assessment and therapy on premises from health professionals and therapists.

## The overall effectiveness of the early years provision

Overall the quality of the provision is outstanding.

Children thrive, making the most of their capabilities in this safe and very inclusive setting. Staff are inspiring in their work and have an excellent knowledge and understanding of the children's individual needs and stages of development. Children's progress is consistently good and they often make significant gains in their learning and development, achieving as much as they can overall, indoors and out. The setting works exceptionally well with the children and their families to promote their welfare and learning. Rigorous ongoing systems are in place to evaluate the practice of the setting and strive towards constant improvements for the children, so the setting's capacity to maintain continuous improvement is excellent..

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

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

- enhancing children's enjoyment in their learning and development by

developing an outdoor natural environment area.

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

The pre-school staff have an exceptionally high commitment to ensuring that children are their first priority, so they benefit greatly from time spent in the setting. Staff have relevant training to ensure that they are all focused in supporting children's well-being and raising their achievements. The required safeguarding policy is in place and all staff and volunteers have a very confident and clear understanding of their role in promoting it to protect children effectively. Robust risk assessments are routinely used to review the setting to ensure that children's safety is fully promoted. Staff share with others on a daily basis any extra steps that may need to be taken to meet their particular needs. The setting has established extensive monitoring systems for evaluating their practice effectively, in which all staff participate. Time is dedicated in the team and management meetings to evaluate and review the provision, to further identify areas of practice that can be improved. Staff maintaining high standards following the move to new premises. They evaluate the layout of rooms, for example, to ensure that they promote the Early Years Foundation Stage framework as well as they can; for example, they provide an activities trolley to support that indoor/outdoor play. The outdoor area does not fully support children's experience of the natural environment, however.

An excellent relationship with parents contributes exceptionally to children's well-being. Parents' views about their children's needs and interests are actively sought before the children attend the setting. Consequently, staff develop a very good early understanding of each child's background and needs so that they can check all children receive a sensitive and high level of support and feel valued. Following discussion with parents, the setting facilitates training support sessions to help them develop confidence in supporting their children's care and development. Parents also receive support when working with other relevant professionals, to help them to develop a greater understanding of their children's unique needs and make informed decisions. Parents appreciate that there is always someone on hand to support and advise them and report that they have become more confident as parents as a result. The setting is highly effective at working in partnership with others and has well established and working relationships with health and education professionals, to successfully support and promote children's learning, development and welfare.

Staff help children to develop a positive attitude towards people's differences by setting a good example of how to respect each other. A very good range of up-to-date toys and resources promote children's understanding of diversity. Children benefit from play in a vibrant and well-resourced setting, which is used by staff very effectively to provide imaginative experiences that meet the needs of all children very well. Children develop a strong sense of belonging as they see photographs of themselves taking part in the daily activities displayed for all to see.

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

Children make consistent gains in their learning in relation to their capabilities. The one-to-one support provided by the dedicated staff team ensures that children are active learners and gain a good deal from their experiences. Staff support children exceptionally well in their individual progress, so they make continuous progress across all areas of learning. Children are offered visual cards to help them make choices and follow simple instructions, which promote their independence and feelings of security. Staff have expert knowledge of how individual children learn and provide a range of exciting experiences. For example, young children begin to create sounds, delightedly shaking tambourines and enthusiastically banging drums in time to staff singing. They begin to make sense of their world and are engrossed in their imaginary play as they help staff bath the dolly and feed the teddy bear. Older children take delight in 'catching the train to the seaside' and sing songs along their journey. Children concentrate well at a sticking activity and show pleasure when they rip tissue paper, developing their hand control skills as they do so. Their independence is continually supported as they are offered choices according to their level of understanding, for example, choosing the colour of paper or the kind of glue they want to use.

All children show a strong sense of security. Purposeful steps are taken to make sure that children are fully protected and they feel safe. For example, children are taught who to approach to meet their personal needs. Staff fully support children to take small risks within their capabilities and to help them develop their skills in safety, for example, when completing an obstacle course by climbing and jumping. Staff increase children's confidence and feelings of safety by using visual cards that display the routines and activities they will be following. Children have a good understanding of adopting hygiene practices and following personal hygiene routines. They take responsibility for their healthy eating by making healthy choices at snack time. They discuss what food is good for them when reading a book with staff. They are very confident in what they do and the trusting relationships with all members of staff, who consistently provide positive role modelling, help children to develop a good understanding of respect for others.

## 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>	1
The capacity of the provision to maintain continuous improvement	1

### 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>	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

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### Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage

<b>Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage</b>	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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