

Stepping Stones Pre-School

Inspection report for early years provision

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Inspector Narinder Dohel

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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 opened in 1999 and operates from two rooms in a modular building, in the grounds of Lynsted and Norton School, near Sittingbourne, Kent. A maximum of 20 children may attend the pre-school at any one time. The pre-school is open each weekday from 8.50am to 3:00 pm. All children share access to a secure enclosed outdoor and a play area which is shared with the Reception class of the school. A maximum of 20 children may attend the pre-school at any one time. It is registered on the Early Years Register and the compulsory and voluntary parts of the Childcare Register.

There are currently 39 children aged between two and five years on roll. Of these, 26 children receive funding for nursery education. Children attend from a wide catchment area. The pre-school currently supports a number of children with learning difficulties. The pre-school employs seven staff, of whom six, including the manager, hold appropriate early years qualifications to National Vocational Qualifications at Level 2 and above. A staff member is working towards a qualification. One staff member is the administrator and is also qualified, and one qualified volunteer also work with the children. There is regular information sharing and planning of learning and activities with the Early Years Foundation Stage staff of the school.

The overall effectiveness of the early years provision

Overall the quality of the provision is outstanding.

The depth of understanding about the learning and development needs of young children, combined with the high quality of relationships and the provision, ensure that children make outstanding progress at Stepping Stones Pre-school. The attention paid to children's welfare needs is exemplary. All staff including committee members, led by the manager, review the work of the pre-school regularly and thoroughly, and know its strengths and areas for development. The pre-school demonstrates that it has outstanding capacity to improve further.

What steps need to be taken to improve provision further?

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

- displaying weekly activities in a way that is more accessible for parents and carers
- ensuring dates on actual policies are revised to reflect that they have been reviewed.

The effectiveness of leadership and management of the early years provision

Children are greeted warmly into a well resourced, safe and vibrant environment by well prepared staff. Procedures for safeguarding are exemplary, ensuring that all staff are suitably qualified. They take great care in ensuring that all children in the pre-school are safe, both inside and outside the building, and they carry out comprehensive risk assessments. The pre-school has developed a range of policies, including anti bullying, equal opportunities, special educational needs and/or disabilities and complaints, which are regularly reviewed, although the dates on policies do not always reflect this. All staff are clear about the medical and dietary needs of all children.

The manager and staff have excellent systems for recording progress in line with the early learning goals in the Early Years Foundations Stage framework. Children's records in the form of a 'Learning Journey' book have a detailed focus on the range of activities and experiences children are offered, how much they enjoy them, the skills they are learning and the progress they are making. Parents, carers and the children themselves contribute to the Learning Journey. They also help evaluate the work of the pre-school through questionnaires and providing verbal feedback to staff. Even the youngest children have a written and pictorial record of their likes, dislikes, views and ideas for improvement. The manager and staff work with the local authority in evaluating their work and have a good understanding of their strengths and an accurate understanding of the areas for development.

Planning and resources demonstrate the pre-school's excellent commitment to promoting diversity and equality. Children with special educational needs have individual education plans which ensure that their specific needs are planned for and met well. As a result, all children are fully included in the activities. Staff are extremely well deployed to enable children, including those with special educational needs, to make choices and be included. Staff appraisal and opportunities for training ensure that the provision is of the highest quality.

Partnerships with parents and carers, and other agencies, are outstanding. The pre-school works closely with the school in sharing training, provision and information. The parents' indoor notice board and letters provide clear and relevant information about what the children are doing, although some parents would like this to be displayed more accessibly. Leaders and managers of the pre-school have good and regular communication with partners such as the school, local authority Early Years Service and social and specialist care for children with specific needs, which promotes improving care and provision for all children .

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

The manager and her staff have high aspirations and are skilled in providing high quality provision for all the children, including those in the Early Years Foundation

Stage. Planning is comprehensive and fully meets the early years requirements. There is a strong emphasis on developing children basic skills through creative and imaginative play. There are many opportunities for children to converse and mark make, leading to writing such as making appointments in the Veterinary Surgery and to learn about number and sequencing through songs, rhymes and computer programs. The learning environment is enriched through information and story books and resources that encourage enquiry such as globes, microscopes, number lines and images of themselves and others. All of this results in children being extremely well prepared for the future.

Each child has an adult who is designated to know about their needs, progress and welfare. There is a sharp focus not just on what children should experience, but the also the skills they must develop. The impact of this is seen the outstanding progress children make in their learning and development. Children make their own choices about the resources and activities provided and this has a positive impact on their learning and development. They play happily and confidently and the Learning Journey books show children taking great pleasure in the wide range of activities provided and their enjoyment over time.

Great care is taken in promoting and learning about healthy foods and hygiene with children and their families. Children have the opportunity to grow foods such as cress, tomatoes and lettuce and use these and fruit in preparing healthy snacks. Children make a positive contribution to the day to day running by tidying up and helping to prepare snacks for snack time. This is part of the planning for learning. Children know about washing their hands before eating or after messy play. Relationships between children and staff are strong and boys and girls play well together. Children clearly feel safe and have an excellent understanding of how to stay safe. They are familiar with the daily routines and this gives them the confidence to explore and develop curiosity, as well as their social, physical and language skills.

The outdoor space provides excellent areas of large role playing and climbing equipment and an appropriately challenging obstacle course, for the development of physical skills such as balancing, sliding, crawling. It also provides opportunities for gardening and water play, as well as exploration activities such as finding and gathering mini beasts.

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

The provider confirms that the requirements of the voluntary part of the Childcare Register are: Met