

# Stepping Stones Pre-School

Inspection report for early years provision

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<b>Unique reference number</b>	255211
<b>Inspection date</b>	09/02/2011
<b>Inspector</b>	Jasvinder Kaur
<b>Setting address</b>	West Smethwick Methodist Church, St. Pauls Road, Smethwick, West Midlands, B66 1EX
<b>Telephone number</b>	0121 565 3209
<b>Email</b>	
<b>Type of setting</b>	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 Playgroup opened in 1999. It operates from two large rooms in West Smethwick Methodist Church in Smethwick. The provision serves children in the local community.

The pre-school is registered on the Early Years Register. A maximum of 20 children from two to five years may attend the playgroup at any one time. There are currently 30 children on roll. The pre-school is open each weekday from 8.45am to 3pm for 50 weeks of the year. The pre-school supports children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, and who speak English as an additional language.

The pre-school employs three permanent and four fixed long-term staff, all of whom hold appropriate early years qualifications to level 3 or above. The manager holds a Bachelor's degree with honours in Childhood Studies, and Early Years Professional Status. The deputy manager is currently working towards a Foundation Degree.

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

Overall the quality of the provision is good.

The commitment and enthusiasm of the new management to continuous improvement is the key strength. Consequently, the children settle well in a compatible environment and are engaged in play that interests and stimulates them. Policies and procedures are inclusive and implemented successfully to promote children's welfare. There are well-established channels of communication with the local community, professionals and other providers involved with individual children, which successfully promote their learning, development and welfare. Regular self-evaluation by the managers and staff, with the contribution of the Local Authority and parents, makes sure that most priorities for development are identified and acted on to promote good quality education and care.

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

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

- increase the challenges set for more able children to write simple words and their own names to advance their skills
- improve a two-way flow of information with parents with regards to the arrangements for obtaining information when the child first starts to attend.

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

Children's welfare is protected as staff have a clear understanding of safeguarding children. They are aware of their responsibility to report any concerns to the Local

Safeguarding Children Board. Thorough policies and procedures are shared with parents to ensure they understand the duty of adults to safeguard children. A rigorous system is in place for the recruitment and selection of staff to be certain that any adults employed are suitable and have appropriate levels of qualification and experience. All staff are well aware of health and safety regulations through induction and well-documented policies. A detailed risk assessment and daily safety checks are carried out on all areas and for prospective outings to eliminate risks. Children learn to keep themselves safe and healthy through practical daily routines and guidance from staff. Constructive opportunities for reinforcement are also arranged, including visits from dentists, dieticians and police, ambulance and fire officers.

The new management has implemented a robust system to monitor and evaluate their practice, which enables the setting to identify targets effectively for further improvement. All recommendations raised at the previous inspection visit have been met successfully. Evaluation of the setting includes working in partnership with the local authority and listening carefully to the views of parents and staff. Parents are encouraged to be actively involved through regular questionnaires, newsletters and daily dairies. Staff recognise parents' and carers' contribution as partners in children's care and wellbeing. Opportunities are provided to share what children have been doing, and parents days are organised every term to discuss children's progress and achievements. However, arrangements with regard to obtaining information from parents when the child first starts are not sufficiently comprehensive, which impacts on the challenges presented to individual children. Excellent working partnerships are in place to ensure every child receives high level support at an early stage and benefits from a wide variety of services provided within the community or by the local authority to promote their learning. Staff meet with and invite local pre-school staff to discuss individual children in order fully to promote continuity and progression.

Children independently access well-organised resources in a clean, bright and colourful environment, where they are confident and develop warm and friendly relationships with staff and peers. Staff are proactive in promoting equality and diversity. Children are encouraged to understand and respect the values and differences of others, as they celebrate special events from different cultures and festivals all through the year, including the Chinese New Year, Diwali, Raksha bandhan, Eid and Easter. As well as bilingual staff, books and labels in different languages and an ample selection of resources are available depicting positive images of diversity to promote children's self-esteem.

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

Children are provided with a wide range of opportunities to help them make good progress across all areas of learning and development except for more advanced writing skills. An effective settling-in policy ensures that new children soon become familiar with the provision and feel safe. All staff contribute to planning, which considers detailed information on the six areas of learning and development to cater for the needs of the individual and to plan next steps in learning. They have

good observation skills for assessing effectively the progress children make.

Children demonstrate a developing understanding of numbers and shapes through daily routines, number games and rhymes, play and visual displays. Good opportunities are provided to exploit their simple calculation skills. For example, they are encouraged to recognise different quantities and sizes, count, calculate and solve number problems such as how many elephants are in a group. Children extend their vocabulary by sharing their thoughts and experiences, and asking and answering questions of staff and peers. They all listen to and join in with stories read by a visitor from the local library, and they enjoy singing their favourite nursery rhymes, for instance 'Twinkle twinkle little star' and 'Wheels on the bus'. Although good opportunities are provided for children to make marks and to read, limited challenges are set for more able children to advance their skills by writing simple words or their own names.

Children learn about animals and other creatures, people, plants, planets and transport during routine play and themed activities. They take good advantage of their local facilities, such as visiting local farms, parks and Asian grocery shops and participating in charity walks. Staff also invite visitors to the setting, including an 'animal person' and a musician. All children acquire basic skills in operating simple equipment to develop their knowledge of technology. In the home corner, they pretend to make drinks or to be a doctor, checking the heartbeats of their friends. To develop their creative skills, children exercise their imagination and express thoughts whilst using a good range of art materials.

Children's physical development is supported well, as the staff emphasise the benefits of healthy activities. Daily use of physical play equipment, regular outings and access to the outdoor play area promote children's manipulation and movement skills. Younger children show increasing control in holding objects and equipment and in using mark-making tools. Children are encouraged to learn the importance of basic personal hygiene and wash their hands before they eat and after using the toilet. They enjoy fresh fruits and drinks at snack times. Drinking water is available throughout the session. Children are confident, well behaved and have good awareness of right and wrong, responding positively to directions from staff, including setting disagreements.

## 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>	2
The capacity of the provision to maintain continuous improvement	2

### 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>	2
The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	2
The effectiveness with which the setting deploys resources	2
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	2
The effectiveness of partnerships	1
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	2
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### Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage

<b>Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage</b>	2
The extent to which children achieve and enjoy their learning	2
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	2

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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