

# Stepping Stones

Inspection report for early years provision

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**Unique reference number** EY281815  
**Inspection date** 25/05/2011  
**Inspector** Hazel Meadows

**Setting address** Chilton Fields, Chilton way, Stowmarket, Suffolk, IP14 1SZ

**Telephone number** 01449 770645

**Email**

**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 Nursery, based at the Stowmarket Opportunity Group, was registered in 2003. It is a charitable organisation providing inclusive care for all children. It is managed by a voluntary management committee, made up of health and social work professionals plus parents of children at the group. It has sole use of a purpose built premises, which is in a residential area on the outskirts of Stowmarket. There is level access to the premises and an accessible toilet is available off the main playroom. There are two secure, enclosed outside areas.

The pre-school is registered by Ofsted on the Early Years Register and the compulsory and voluntary parts of the Childcare Register. A maximum of 23 children, in the early years age group, may attend the pre-school at any one time. There are currently 20 children aged from birth to five years on roll. Of these, 14 children receive funding for early education and side by side funding. Children come from a wide catchment area. The setting supports children who have special educational needs and/or disabilities and children who speak English as an additional language.

The nursery is open four days a week, Monday, Wednesday, Thursday and Friday, for 38 weeks of the year. Session times are from 12.30pm until 3.30pm. On Wednesday, there is also a morning session from 9am until 12noon. There is a free lunch club between 12noon and 12.30pm. Children can attend for a variety of sessions. The group also offers an optional holiday club during school holidays, which runs from 9am until 1pm on Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday.

The nursery employs seven members of staff. There are two managers, one of whom is trained to level 3 and one to level 4, all other staff are trained to level 3 or working towards level 3. The group is a member of the Pre-school Learning Alliance and receives support from local authority advisory staff.

## The overall effectiveness of the early years provision

Overall the quality of the provision is good.

Children are very happy and settle well at this stimulating and welcoming pre-school. Committed and competent staff work well as a team to provide an excellent variety of play and learning experiences and children are making very good progress through the Early Years Foundation Stage. Inclusive practice is exceptionally well promoted and each child's individuality is embraced and valued. Positive and trusting partnerships are established with parents and others, ensuring children receive consistent support regarding their care, development and learning. Most documentation is in place and procedures work well in practice to promote children's welfare and safety. Ongoing reflection of practice promotes continuous development and improvement.

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

To meet the specific requirements of the EYFS, the registered person must:

- ensure current public liability insurance is maintained and a current certificate is on display (Suitable premises, environment and equipment). 25/05/2011

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

- develop a systematic method of self-evaluation to highlight strengths and achievements and to identify any areas for improvement.

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

Robust procedures are in place to protect children from harm. All staff have attended safeguarding training and are clear of their responsibilities to protect children. They all have a very secure awareness and understanding of safeguarding procedures and all staff have Criminal Records Bureau clearance. The group has a thorough written policy, plus local safeguarding contact details for staff to refer to, should they have concerns about a child. The premises are secure and staff are watchful of the children and attentive to their safety. Written risk assessments are undertaken for the premises and for outings, which effectively identify and rectify potential hazards to minimise risks to children. All staff are familiar with the emergency evacuation procedure, which is regularly practised and recorded, to ensure it operates swiftly and smoothly.

The group has a very positive attitude and approach towards diversity and promotes excellent inclusive practice. Staff actively support and include all children including several with special educational needs and/or disabilities or children for whom English is an additional language. Their very good knowledge of child development and of individual children enables them to identify early any additional needs a child may have. They work very closely with parents, liaising with other childcare or health professionals, if required, to ensure each child receives appropriate support at an early stage. Staff are very well deployed and excellent adult to child ratios are maintained. High quality and plentiful resources are utilised extremely well by staff to promote children's ongoing learning and development.

The dedicated staff team have a commitment to ongoing training and development to enhance their practice and personal development. There is ongoing reflection of practice through regular staff meetings and discussion which contributes to the setting's ability to maintain continuous improvement. The staff recently reviewed and changed the layout of the nursery to reflect the changing needs of the children. All the recommendations from the previous inspection have been addressed. Action plans outline well targeted and time limited plans for the future but there is no systematic method of self-evaluation.

Most required documentation is in place and very well organised. However, no up to date insurance certificate is available for inspection. Comprehensive details are obtained about each child to support their welfare and signed consents are obtained to ensure children are cared for according to their parents' wishes. Staff are vigilant to ensure rigorous records and procedures are completed regarding individual children's health, allergies or medication to ensure their well-being. All records are very securely and confidentially kept and accurately maintained. Well-written policies, currently being reviewed and updated, are clear and comprehensive and are made available to parents.

Staff establish trusting partnerships with parents which is conducive to children's welfare and continuity of care. Parents are kept very well informed about their child's progress through discussions with staff. Parents are able to review and contribute to their child's Learning Journey development folder at anytime. Some parents are actively involved in the running of the group on the nursery committee. Comments received from parents during the inspection are extremely positive. They find staff friendly and approachable and are confident of their competence. Parents feel well informed through frequent discussions and newsletters. Parents state their children are happy and settled at the setting and they are pleased with the progress they are making. The setting is proactive to establish links with other providers delivering the Early Years Foundation Stage and has close communication with the local children's centre and health visitors. Staff maintain positive links with the schools that children are due to attend, including mutual visits, to promote continuity of care and smooth transitions for the children. The group receives support from and works cooperatively with, their local authority advisory staff and other professionals who support children with additional needs.

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

Children enjoy a wealth of fun play and learning experiences at the nursery. They are busy and purposeful in their play, freely exploring using all their senses, both indoors and outside. Staff are caring and attentive and get to know the children very well as individuals. Initial observations, plus information gathered from parents, offer staff an insight into each child's individuality and identify starting points in their learning and development. This helps staff to support children accordingly. Children's behaviour is generally good. They are well occupied and staff's management of behaviour is calm and consistent, so children begin to understand reasonable boundaries. They are offered clear explanations or options and given time to think and respond. Staff are positive role models and treat children with kindness and respect, which helps them feel safe and secure. Children learn to keep themselves and others safe through explanations and reminders from the staff, for example, to roll the hoops rather than throw them. Positive behaviour is readily acknowledged and praised by staff, for example, 'good sharing'.

Competent staff clearly recognise the importance and benefits of children learning through play and first hand experiences. They use the stimulating variety of toys and resources to offer progressive challenge and ongoing interest for the broad

age range and abilities of children present. Designated areas are clearly defined and used well for different activities, for example, the home corner and messy play area. Young babies have their own space but are keen to join the older children. They are safely integrated into the main room by watchful and attentive staff. Children have time to explore the plentiful resources and staff play alongside them and enter into their play to focus their attention and extend their learning. For example, encouraging mark making, counting and conversation through writing shopping lists on whiteboards. One to one activities also extend children's learning and development, for example, a fun listening game with a variety of objects. Staff are skilled at presenting and changing activities to suit individual children's attention spans, interests, abilities and development needs.

All children are encouraged to confidently communicate in a method which is accessible and meaningful to them, for example, via speech, Makaton signing or the Picture Exchange Communication System. Picture time lines and explanations are used effectively to help children understand what is about to happen next. Children have some opportunity to recognise their names as they self register using photos with their names on, although, they rarely access these during the session. Their imaginative play is well promoted through small world toys and the home area is well resourced with props and dressing up clothes. Children delight in exploring a wide variety of media and materials, such as, glue and glitter, play dough, sand, water and coloured rice. Children learn about their local community through outings to nearby places of interest, such as, the library and supermarket. They have fun problem solving as they sort socks to hang on the washing line and work out how to operate action reward toys. They are becoming confident with technology as they use a digital camera and some are very competent with mouse control at the computer.

Staff have established a very effective method of monitoring children's progress towards the early learning goals. Observations are made and recorded in the child's individual Learning Journey booklet, supported by photographs or examples of the children's work. The observations are utilised well to identify each child's next steps and to inform weekly planning, which aids children's individual progression. Spontaneous events are also used profitably to maximise children's interest in learning. For example, the discovery of some snails in the garden area fascinates the children and leads to much discussion and observation plus follow up activities.

Children are learning good hygiene practice through regular routines and explanations from staff. Many independently wash their hands after toileting and before snack. The group snack time is a relaxed and sociable experience for the children and provides a calm interlude from activities. Children gain skills and independence pouring their own drinks of milk or water and help with cutting up the fruit. They benefit from an excellent variety of fresh and nutritious snacks, promoting their understanding of healthy eating. They can readily access their individual water bottles at anytime or request a drink from staff, ensuring the children are well hydrated. Children have daily opportunities for fresh air and exercise, promoting a healthy lifestyle. They delight in being able to freely play outside and develop their physical skills and confidence with a selection of climbing equipment, hoops, balls and balancing beams. They are also able to rest or play

quietly indoors should they wish to.



## 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	1
The effectiveness with which the setting promotes equality and diversity	1
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	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	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