

Stepping Stones Pre-School

Inspection report for early years provision

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Inspector

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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 1985. It operates from the first floor of Clewer St Stephen's Church Hall in Windsor, and serves the local area. A secure outdoor play area is available for all children.

The setting is registered on the Early Years Register and both the voluntary and compulsory part of the Childcare Register. There are currently 38 children within the early years age range on roll. The setting is in receipt of government funding for free early education and they support children with special educational needs and children who speak English as an additional language.

The setting is open for 38 weeks of the year and some of the summer holidays. Opening times are from 9.00am to noon, Monday to Friday and from 12.30pm to 3.30pm Monday to Thursday. A lunch Club is available to all children, every day from noon to 12.30pm. Full day sessions are also available from 9.00am to 3.30pm. During the summer, the setting is open Tuesday to Thursday from 9.30am to 1.30pm for children who attend the setting. The setting employs four members of staff to work with the children, all of whom hold early years qualifications.

The overall effectiveness of the early years provision

Overall the quality of the provision is good.

Overall, children are making good progress in their learning and development and the systems for observing and assessing children's development are successful. Partnerships with parents and carers are extremely effective and children's individual needs are well met. Children are taught about healthy lifestyles and their safety is well promoted. Self-evaluation is comprehensive and reflective, which means that the setting is continually improving all aspects of their childcare service to benefit the children. Strong emphasis is placed on children's uniqueness and enabling them to thrive and flourish in this setting.

What steps need to be taken to improve provision further?

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

- consider including the next steps in the children's learning journals so that parents can be further involved in their children's continuous development
- refine the record of risk assessments so that they include details of the risk assessments for outings.

The effectiveness of leadership and management of the early years provision

The team work well together to ensure that the individual needs of the children are identified and well met. The practitioners have a clear understanding of safeguarding issues and the procedures to follow should they have concerns that children are being harmed. In addition, there are written policies and procedures in place to support practice and practitioners keep themselves updated as they attend regular training provided by the local authority. Effective risk assessments are in place which identifies possible hazards that children may come into contact with, and appropriate action is taken to ensure these risks are minimised. The setting has recently begun to take children on outings. Practitioners carry out visual risk assessments prior to taking children out to ensure that children are safe and adult to child ratios maintained, as yet, they do not include this in their written risk assessment records. Practitioners are well deployed which ensures that children are well supervised and kept safe. There are robust recruitment procedures in place to ensure that those adults caring for the children are suitable to do so. In addition, visitors to the premises are monitored and any individuals who are not vetted do not have unsupervised access to the children. Subsequently children's safety and welfare is well promoted.

The manager has a clear vision and knows where the strengths of the setting lie and where improvements are needed, she is able to identify realistic but challenging steps for improvement which will improve outcomes for the children. The setting have worked with their local authority to reflect on their practice and have completed an Early Childhood Environmental Scales Audit, which they continue to review in order to ensure that future targets and improvements are identified and acted upon. The views of parents and carers have been actively sought through the management committee meetings. The manager recognises the importance of ongoing professional development and practitioners are encouraged to attend regular training courses provided by the local authority. As a result, practitioners develop their skills and knowledge which impacts positively on their ability to improve outcomes for children. In addition, the setting has met the recommendations raised as a result of the last inspection, which has improved outcomes for children. The children are provided with an environment that is rich in signs, notices, numbers, words, books and pictures that take into account children's different interests, understanding, home backgrounds and cultures. They are enabled to make choices in their play and readily help themselves to toys and equipment from the low-level cupboards. Consequently, the children are helped to feel included and valued as practitioners are aware of their individual needs and backgrounds.

There are excellent systems in place to develop effective partnerships working with parents and carers. Parents are actively encouraged to be involved with the setting and they are encouraged to share information about their child prior to care commencing. For example, detailed forms are in place which holds information about the children's health, dietary requirements, cultural and religious observations, languages spoken and social development. The setting has a range of policies and procedures which are shared with the parents. In addition,

information about the Early Years Foundation Stage, Every Child Matters outcomes and the activities that children take part in are attractively presented. For example photographs depict children at play in relation to the different areas of learning, posters about the Early Years Foundation Stage are displayed and children's artwork presented throughout the setting. This supports the parents understanding of the ethos and practices of the setting. The setting recognise that parents could be further involved in their children's continuous development if the next steps in the children's learning are also included in the learning journals. Discussions with parents reveal that they are extremely happy with the service that is offered and that the children are learning and are happy. In addition, the setting has made effective links with other professionals involved in the care of the children. For example, they work well with the local authority inclusion team to ensure that any issues surrounding the children's development are identified and addressed early.

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

Children are making good progress in their learning and development. This is a result of the effective systems that are in place which identify children's likes, dislikes, interests and abilities. Observation and assessment is clearly linked to planning which is flexible, responding to children's individual interests, their starting points and their capabilities. Children are challenged and encouraged to extend their learning as they actively explore and take delight in playing with the resources available to them. For example, the children thoroughly enjoy exploring the texture of the rice and transferring it from one container to another. The children's progress in communicating, literacy and skills relating to information and communication technology are developing well. The children have opportunities to mark make whilst involved in the shaving foam activity as they use their fingers and tools to make patterns, shapes and form letters. They also practise writing for a variety of purposes such as, when they write their name on the computer list. This also supports the children's understanding of turn taking. In addition, the children have access to programmable toys and the computer which increases their interest in technology. The children are well supported in developing their numeracy and problem solving skills as daily routines support this. For example, during snack time the children enthusiastically talk about how many boys and girls there are and how many children are seated at the table. This is further developed as practitioners then involve simple addition and subtraction into the conversations with the children.

Children are learning to play and work alongside their peers and are beginning to understand the need to co-operate and resolve situations by themselves. However, practitioners are close by to offer support and guidance if need be. The children are provided with opportunities to express their views and opinions as practitioners encourage the children to express themselves verbally and allow them time to talk and practitioners listen attentively to the children. Children's behaviour is managed in a calm and sensitive manner by practitioners who set clear, reasonable and consistent limits. The children are given lots of praise and encouragement for their efforts and achievements which promotes their self-esteem and confidence.

The children are provided with a good selection of resources that are fit for purpose and which provide them with sufficient challenges and which are fun. The children are learning about respecting their environment and are encouraged to put away toys and resources at tidy up time. In addition, the children are supported in developing an understanding of sustainability as discussions take place with the children about recycling milk bottles and paper. The children are learning about the wider environment as the setting acknowledges a selection of festivals such as Diwali, Easter and Chinese New Year. As a result, the children are supported in developing a respect and understanding of their own and others cultures.

The children are cared for in a safe and secure environment and are learning the importance of how to keep safe. For example, children know what to do in the event of a fire because they routinely practise the evacuation procedures and the local fire officers have visited the setting to further support children's understanding in this area. In addition, the children are reminded to not to run whilst inside as they may hurt themselves.

Children are learning about the importance of following routines that support their understanding of self-care. For example, many of the older children are aware of the need to wash their hands before eating or after using the toilet. The children's dietary requirements are supported as practitioners are aware of any allergies or religious observances that must be respected. Mealtimes are a social time and are used to support the children's understanding of making healthy choices. For example, there are discussions about not eating too much chocolate as it is not good for your teeth. Children's physical skills are developing as they routinely access the outdoor area where they can round around freely and play with the equipment available. For example, they enjoy practising their skills as they manoeuvre scooters and tricycles around obstacles and other children.

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?	2
The capacity of the provision to maintain continuous improvement	2

The effectiveness of leadership and management of the early years provision

The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	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	2
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	2
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Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage

Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	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
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The provider confirms that the requirements of the voluntary part of the Childcare Register are:	Met
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