

# Stepping Stones Preschool

Inspection report for early years provision

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**Unique reference number**

EY427491

**Inspection date**

15/09/2011

**Inspector**

Sue Taylor

**Setting address**

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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*.

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## **Description of the setting**

Stepping Stones Preschool is a committee run group. It has been registered since 1996 and re-registered in 2011 at the current address. It operates from a purpose built building in the residential area of Hollington, St Leonards-on-Sea. Children have access to an enclosed outdoor play area. The preschool is open each weekday from 9am to 4pm, school term time only.

The preschool is registered on the Early Years Register. A maximum of 24 children aged from two years may attend at any one time.

There are six permanent and two temporary members of staff, seven hold appropriate early years qualifications to at least National Vocational Qualification level 2. The preschool provides funded early education for two, three and four-year-olds.

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

Overall the quality of the provision is good.

Children clearly benefit and thrive in this nurturing setting. They make good progress in their learning and individual needs are well catered for. Effective arrangements and supporting documentation help ensure children's safety. Very positive links with parents are in place and they are generally involved in supporting their children's learning. Overall, established partnerships with others contribute to supporting children's achievements and well-being. The preschool are confident about their plans to improve further and show a clear capacity for continuous improvement.

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

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

- strengthen communication links with other providers delivering the Early Years Foundation Stage for particular children, to improve continuity of learning and care
- consider ways to encourage further contributions from parents in supporting their child's next steps and individual learning needs.

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

Robust steps are taken to safeguard children. Recruitment processes are very clear and criminal record checks obtained for all staff, to help ensure their suitability to

work with children. The preschool demonstrates a high level of commitment to promoting children's safety. There are detailed procedures in place for identifying children at risk of harm and liaising with appropriate child agencies. The premises are very secure and children can choose whether to play indoors or outside throughout the session. Risk assessments are carried out, with daily checks made of certain aspects and recorded.

There is a focus and sense of purpose between the staff team. They work well together so that all children have the opportunity to achieve as well as they can. The environment in which children are cared for is safe and very supportive. The high quality resources are used exceptionally well to meet the needs of the children and support their ongoing progress. There are plans to extend the already excellent choices available to children, by using more low storage and taking more resources out of the cupboard. Children confidently make decisions about their play, particularly enjoying activities involving the adults. The environment, resources and some activities provide positive images of other cultures and backgrounds, helping children to gain an awareness of the wider world.

The staff team are very keen to develop their knowledge. Recent training has had a positive impact on practice and improved children's outcomes. To date, plans have been met well. Future target setting is realistic and based on improving options for children, such as the development of the garden boxes.

Outcomes for individual children are good. Key persons use the assessment and planning process to close any identified achievement gaps. There are clear systems in place that provide staff with a good knowledge of each child's background and needs. A child's need for additional support is identified as early as possible. Efficient partnership working helps ensure each child gets the support they need. However, communication with other providers delivering the Early Years Foundation Stage is not so effective, to fully support continuity of learning and care.

There is a highly positive relationship with parents. These relationships are well-established and help to ensure each child's needs are met. Parents are kept well informed about their child's achievements through discussion, the home/setting books and learning journeys. Staff welcome contributions from parents, who can be involved in the running of the preschool by joining the committee. However, systems to engage parents in supporting their child's next steps and individual learning needs are less successful.

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

Comprehensive policies and procedures help ensure that children are protected and well supported. All legally required records are complete and organised. All staff are well deployed to support children's learning and welfare and they are good at promoting positive attitudes to learning. Overall, children's development records include useful written observations with next steps identified for future

planning. Key persons have a good awareness of where children are in their learning and contribute to the planning. Behaviour is very good and children are beginning to show a good awareness of responsibility within the setting. Children's progress in developing the skills they need for their future learning is good.

Children display a strong sense of belonging and appear very settled and happy. They are confident and build strong relationships, especially with the staff. New children settle quickly, benefitting from an environment and routines that encourage them to make choices. Children are motivated and interested in the broad range of activities. A particular strength of the group is the encouragement children have to use the outside play area, with the door being open in most weathers. Children have great fun as they chase bubbles or join in with a spontaneous game of tag, squealing with delight. They demonstrate good coordination skills while safely using various ride on toys or bats and balls.

Children's progress in information and communication technology is supported well, as they use the computer or compact disc player. Children's creative development and imagination are encouraged. Children easily and readily access a range of materials and recyclable items to create their own models. The home made play dough is made more interesting with added glitter and children spend time creating or exploring. A planned activity of bread making is very popular, with children taking turns to mix the dough. The staff continually support and extend children's development as they play. For example, a young child is encouraged to make marks in the flour left on the table.

The relaxed rolling snack time allows children to decide when they are ready to eat. They gain independence skills, as they easily access the toilets for hand washing or use knives to spread butter and cut up fruit. Packed lunches are stored appropriately in a fridge. A recent visit from the Environmental Health Department resulted in a five star rating, with their cleanliness of the premises praised. Children engage in a wide range of physical activities, both indoors and out, increasing their understanding about the importance of regular exercise as part of maintaining a healthy lifestyle.

## 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	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	3
The effectiveness of the setting's engagement with parents and carers	2

### 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>	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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