

Stepping Stones Pre-School

Inspection report for early years provision

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Inspector	Catherine Sharkey

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Type of setting	Childcare - Non-Domestic

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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 1992 and is run by a committee. It operates on the ground and first floor rooms which are accessible by some stairs within a village hall. It is situated close to the centre of Alrewas village, Staffordshire. A maximum of 38 children may attend the pre-school at any one time. The pre-school is open each weekday from 9.15am to 3pm during school term times. The setting operates a holiday play scheme during each school holiday, from 9.30am until 3pm. All children share access to a secure enclosed outdoor play area.

The pre-school is registered on the Early Years Register and the compulsory part of the Childcare Register. There are currently 36 children aged from two to under five years on roll. Of these, eight children receive funding for early education. Children come from the local and surrounding areas.

The pre-school employs five staff, all of whom, including the managers, hold appropriate early years qualifications. The setting receives support from the local authority advisory service.

The overall effectiveness of the early years provision

Overall the quality of the provision is good.

Children are making good progress towards the early learning goals in a very happy, safe and caring environment. There is very good team work between staff, ensuring they all know children's individual needs and are able to plan their next steps accordingly. Children are safeguarded very well through the effective implementation of detailed policies. The pre-school is committed to improving their provision through regular monitoring, although this is not always frequent enough. The pre-school has excellent partnerships with parents and carers, fully involving them in their children's learning. They also work very well with other professionals and have close links with the local primary school.

What steps need to be taken to improve provision further?

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

- hold staff appraisals more regularly in order to clearly identify areas for improvement

The effectiveness of leadership and management of the early years provision

Children are safeguarded very well in the pre-school as staff understand and practise the effective policies which are in place. Regular fire drills are carried out, especially when new children start. Daily risk assessments ensure the environment is safe for children and they are taught to take care when moving around the

rooms or outside. All staff are appropriately vetted and qualified and supervise children closely. They all hold up to date paediatric first aid certificates and know what to do in an emergency. The outside gates and doors are locked and parents sign children in and out so that staff always know how many are present and who has collected them in the event of a child going missing.

Staff make the most of the large room and outdoor area, dividing them into different areas for each activity, for example, a comfortable book area with cushions, various small world sections, a shop role play area, a sand tray and tables for adult-led activities. The resources are exciting and easily accessible to the children as they are on the floor of the hall. The upstairs room is used well, mostly for older children to take part in focused activities with an adult. The enclosed outdoor area is also divided up well for the use of wheeled toys, musical instruments, climbing equipment and many other well-planned activities. Children are able to choose freely and there is also an adult-led activity in each session to ensure all children have a balance of experiences.

The pre-school staff meet regularly to discuss improvements in provision and planning and they work very well together as a team. This ensures continuity and consistency in children's learning. They discuss any issues as they arise and have formal appraisals every two years in order to identify individual strengths and weaknesses and set targets for improvement. They are aware this needs to take place on a more regular basis to help them decide which courses they need to attend. There is constant striving for improvement which means children are making good progress in their learning. Previous recommendations have been successfully addressed. For example, children use the wash basins to wash their hands, rather than a bowl; they now have access to a wide range of technological toys, and information from observations is used effectively to inform individual planning. This means children are learning about hygiene and are progressing well in their learning.

The pre-school has excellent relationships with parents and carers. They are given detailed information on every aspect of the provision, including a prospectus and regular newsletters. Information on the early learning goals and planning is displayed in the entrance for them to see. They are involved in their children's learning through working with them at home and bringing in items for topics. They are involved in village activities with the pre-school, such as laying a remembrance wreath and raising funds for good causes. They contribute to their child's records and feel welcome to share information with staff at any time. The pre-school has close links with the local primary school and with other professionals, including the early years team.

Although there are currently no children on roll who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, staff have supported such children very well in the past. They worked closely with parents and other professionals. Children take part in very good activities which give them some insight into what it may be like to have disabilities and they are developing an awareness and sensitivity towards people with differences.

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

A wide range of interesting activities is planned effectively to stimulate children, which means they are able to progress well towards the early learning goals. Staff regularly observe children and use the information to inform planning for individual needs. They enjoy playing in the sand tray, feeling the texture and learning to pour the sand into different sized containers. The shop role play area is used very well for children to practise counting, simple adding and early writing skills by 'writing' shopping lists. An exciting range of ICT toys, old mobile phones and push-button toys allows children to develop their technological skills. They play sound, letter and number games on a laptop and use a wide range of climbing and balancing apparatus to develop their physical skills well. They take part in village activities, visit the local shops and go on trips further afield, such as a train ride to see Father Christmas. This expands their knowledge of the wider world.

Children are safe and secure in the pre-school as staff's caring attitude and key worker system ensures their needs are met. They are comforted if they are upset, are able to bring items from home and move confidently around the environment, chatting happily to staff and each other, which shows they feel secure.

Children are learning about healthy eating through the provision of healthy food at snack time and activities to promote their awareness. For example, supermarket staff came to the pre-school to set up activities to enable children to try a variety of fruit and vegetables. They wash their hands before food and after visiting the toilet. They have access to their own drinks at any time and play outdoors at least twice a day. This means all children are learning about healthy lifestyles and hygiene and developing their physical skills very well.

Children's behaviour is very good and they are learning good manners and take care of younger children, for example, not going so fast on the bikes. This is because staff show good examples and explain reasons why children should do these things. They learn to be independent by trying to butter their own toast or crackers and contribute to their likes and dislikes board. Children show delight as they throw leaves up to blow in the wind and play percussion instruments outside. They are praised for having good manners and for their achievements. They learn about other cultures and festivals, such as Diwali or Chinese New Year. They make diva lamps, taste Indian and Chinese food and make a dragon.

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