

# Stepping Stones Pre School

Inspection report for early years provision

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**Unique reference number**

EY421842

**Inspection date**

29/09/2011

**Inspector**

Jenny Kane

**Setting address**

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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 has been registered since February 2011. It is managed by a committee, made up of parents. The pre-school operates from a self contained building in the grounds of Maresfield Bonners School in the High Street area of Maresfield. Children have access to a secure enclosed outdoor play area. It is open Monday to Friday from 9:00am to 3:00pm during term time only. The group serves the local area and wider area. Links with the school have been established.

The pre-school is registered on the Early Years Register and the compulsory and voluntary parts of the Childcare Register. A maximum of 26 children may attend the pre-school at any one time. The group does not provide overnight care. There are currently 26 children aged from two to four years on roll, some in part-time places. The pre-school provides funded early education for three and four year olds. They support children with special educational needs and/or disabilities and children who speak English as an additional language.

The pre-school employs six members of staff. Of these, five hold appropriate early years qualifications and the manager has achieved Early Years Professional Status. They receive support from the local authority's early years advisor and are members of The Pre-school Learning Alliance.

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

Overall the quality of the provision is outstanding.

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All children regardless of their background or level of ability are making excellent progress in the Early Years Foundation Stage. This is because all staff are highly skilled, qualified, experienced and have an excellent understanding of children's individual needs. Systems and resources to support inclusion for all children are fully developed and the outstanding partnerships with other professionals ensures children and their families receive a highly professional service. Robust monitoring and very good quality procedures ensure children are fully protected and safeguarded. Leadership is strong, all staff are very clear about their aims, self-evaluation is used by the team to identify the strengths of the provision and this ensures excellent outcomes for children.

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

To further improve the high quality early years provision the registered person should consider:

- developing further the sharing of the children's learning journeys with parents/carers.

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

Children benefit from the staff's clear understanding of child protection issues; they have attended training and clearly understand their responsibilities. The comprehensive policy is shared with parents so they fully understand the setting's role in safeguarding all children in their care. The procedures for recruitment, vetting and ongoing staff support are rigorous. The staff benefit from the support of an administrator which enables the manager to spend the majority of her time working with the children and alongside her staff. Staff are vigilant about children's safety and share the tasks of risk assessment. These are very effective in reducing and eliminating hazards. As a result, children learn how to keep themselves and their environment safe. The pre-school is very well organised, resources are of excellent quality and children thrive in this highly conducive learning environment. Consequently children move about freely, make decisions and choices about what they play with and where. Many of the play materials reflect diversity and positive images and help children's understanding of the wider world. The staff have taken effective steps to become as sustainable as possible and children are involved in recycling, composting and environmental projects.

Equality and diversity are promoted very well, staff are highly committed to inclusion and any children who have specific learning requirements are very well supported due to the exceptional liaison with other providers and professionals. The senior staff have been very proactive in establishing these relationships, which include all the schools which they feed into. The close links with the on-site school ensure that transition to reception class is smooth. Partnerships with parents and carers are excellent. They are fully involved in decision making within the group, contribute their views and ideas and some are on the committee. All mandatory records, documents, policies and procedures are of high quality, well presented, and shared with parents. Parents receive a wealth of information, share their knowledge about their children's starting points and work closely with their child's key person. The 'learning journey' development folders and the contact books ensure continuity and a shared approach to children's learning. Children benefit greatly from this because it enables all adults to contribute to their individual development and progress. The management are very keen to establish parents' views and opinions. They do this regularly through newsletters, questionnaires, consultations and ongoing discussions. Parents are extremely happy with the pre-school and express very positive comments about the service. They particularly like the friendliness of the staff, the wonderful environment, the sharing of information and communication and feel they can readily share their views. Some parents willingly give their time to help with activities and sharing their skills.

All staff share the drive, enthusiasm and high aims of the manager and teamwork is excellent. They demonstrate a high commitment to their self-development and training both individually and collectively. Staff make full use of training, in-house discussions and meetings to update their skills and are proactive in sharing new

knowledge and ideas. Between them they have a wealth of experiences, qualifications and complimentary skills. The steps taken by the committee, manager and the staff to self-evaluate all areas of the provision are rigorous, clear and achievable. Everyone is involved in the process including parents. As a team, commitment to continuous improvement is exceptional and they demonstrate a clear ability to build on their existing strengths.

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

All children make outstanding progress in their learning and development and this is due to the input from staff who are skilled at motivating children, instinctively know how to extend children's learning and plan a curriculum that provides excellent opportunities to develop their skills for the future. Having established children's starting points they successfully provide activities which are interesting, stimulating and linked to children's individual needs and interests. Assessments of the children by their key persons are based on regular observations which are transferred into children's learning journey folders. These enable staff to plan children's future learning and establish their next steps. The sharing of these means parents are able to support their children's learning at home.

Children are settled, happy and really enjoy their time in the pre-school. At the beginning of the session children sit in the small room and discuss what they plan to do. This develops their independence and decision making skills. Children enjoy positive relationships with their peers, they share and cooperate well during play and demonstrate a clear sense of belonging. Because they are happy in their surroundings, engaged in activities and fully included in what they do, children's behaviour is excellent.

Children are developing very good communication skills and staff are highly successful in encouraging conversations and word recognition. When children arrive they self-register by finding their name card. They have access to a very good range of books, there is a good selection of mark-making resources and staff use Maketon signing and picture signs to help all children feel secure and included. Around the play areas there are many visual images to reinforce number, colour, size and shape. There are many opportunities to children to use problem solving and counting, at snack time, in the garden and when measuring porridge for the three bear's breakfast in the home corner. Children benefit from access to computers and a good range of gadgets and toys to work out how things work. A group of children have great fun listening to their voices on the little voice recorders. Others enjoy using the digital camera and discussing the images when they are downloaded onto the computer. Children develop their imaginations as they play and explore their environment. They make their own art, enjoy junk modelling and a range of craft activities and have access to a wealth of sensory materials and natural objects. They make up scenarios in the tent in the garden taking outside various props to enrich the game.

Children have developed a clear understanding about staying safe and healthy.

They do this through practising fire drills, being aware of others, remembering basic rules and staying safe while having fun. Children know why they wear sun hats and cream when outside, they show a clear understanding about fresh air and exercise for a healthy lifestyle and older children 'buddy up' with younger children at times during play. There are many opportunities for children to be active indoors, in the garden areas and on walks in the community. Children can play outside in all weathers because they have wet suits and covered play areas providing protection from sun and rain. One group of children have a marvellous time on a walk to look at houses in the village. This links with the topic on 'where we live'. As well as encouraging a good awareness of their environment, this trip enabled children to take photographs of what they saw and on return they enthusiastically talk about how many spiders they have seen. Following this they take themselves off to wash their hands and have a snack. Children enjoy a snack bar system, choosing when they partake in food and drink. Staff have a very good understanding of nutrition and work to their healthy eating policy by encouraging parents to provide a healthy packed lunch, which is stored safely until lunch time. Mealtimes are a social occasion, children display good table manners, help to clear up and talk about their favourite foods and which are healthy. Children help themselves to drinks during play and this prevents dehydration.

## 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>	1
The capacity of the provision to maintain continuous improvement	1

### 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>	1
The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	1
The effectiveness with which the setting deploys resources	1
The effectiveness with which the setting promotes equality and diversity	1
The effectiveness of safeguarding	1
The effectiveness of the setting's self-evaluation, including the steps taken to promote improvement	1
The effectiveness of partnerships	1
The effectiveness of the setting's engagement with parents and carers	1

### 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>	1
The extent to which children achieve and enjoy their learning	1
The extent to which children feel safe	1
The extent to which children adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which children make a positive contribution	1
The extent to which children develop skills for the future	1

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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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