

Stepping Stones

Inspection report for early years provision

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Inspector

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Type of setting

Childcare - Non-Domestic

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Introduction

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Description of the setting

Stepping Stones was first registered in 1997 and moved to the premises in September 2011. The pre-school operates from a recently refurbished village hall in Elberton, South Gloucestershire. Children have access to an enclosed outside play space. The pre-school is registered on the Early Years Register. It is open Monday and Wednesday 9.15am to 3.15pm and Thursday and Friday 9.15am to 12.15pm term time only. A maximum of 20 children may attend at any one time, none may be under two years. There are currently 15 children on roll. The pre-school employs four members of staff, of whom three work permanently with children. All permanent staff hold appropriate early years qualifications; of these, two staff hold a degree in early years education and of these, one is a qualified teacher. The setting gets funding for the provision of free early education.

The overall effectiveness of the early years provision

Overall the quality of the provision is good.

Children thoroughly enjoy their time and are making good progress in their learning and development in most areas and during most periods of the day. Excellent partnerships with parents and carers are firmly established; and the pre-school is pro-active in forging wider partnerships with other settings. Children enjoy a safe environment in which to play and their welfare is successfully promoted. There is a very clear commitment to the continuous improvement and development of the provision and this leads to good and improving outcomes for children.

What steps need to be taken to improve provision further?

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

- develop further the use of outside areas to enhance the good opportunities for children to freely explore, use their senses and be physically active and energetic across all areas of learning
- review the deployment of staff on Mondays to further support children's learning at lunch times.

The effectiveness of leadership and management of the early years provision

The staff have a secure awareness of safeguarding issues and arrangements for safeguarding children are robust. Comprehensive policies and procedures are in place. They are regularly reviewed and generally provide staff with clear information. The staff place a strong emphasis on the safety of children at all times. Thorough risk assessments and potential hazards to children are

successfully minimized. A particularly clear assessment of risk is undertaken for use of the woodland forest area; consequently children are offered safe challenges. All staff have been suitably vetted.

The well qualified and knowledgeable staff team works very well together. There is a shared high level of commitment to the continued development of good practice. Evaluative processes provide an accurate diagnosis of the strengths and weaknesses of the setting. Actions taken since moving to the new premises are well chosen to sustain and to build on the high quality of care and learning already achieved. For example, the new patio area, garden and use of the "Wednesday Woodland" forest area provide children with a good range of outdoor activities. A clear action plan is in place to enhance the opportunities for children to plant and dig; and to self-select from a wider range of resources, when taking their play outside.

Highly positive relationships are established with all parents and carers, including those from minority ethnic groups. There is an excellent two way exchange of information and this provides good continuity of care for all children. Parents report very positively indeed about all aspects of the provision. They particularly like the small group atmosphere and describe the staff as very caring, kind and welcoming. Children's ongoing progress is shared through access to a learning journal. A twice yearly summary report provides a clear focus for discussion. Parents and children are encouraged to add their comments to the learning journal. "Wow" statements also provide parents with extra opportunities to share information about home events and their child's interests.

The setting is highly committed to working in partnership with others who also provide care to the children that attend. Excellent communication with pre-schools is established and as a result children strongly benefit from continuity of care and learning. The pre-school also takes a lead role in forging effective working relationships with other settings. Equality, diversity and inclusion are very successfully promoted. Key workers have a good knowledge of children's backgrounds and needs. Effective steps are taken to ensure that all children are well-integrated and able to fully participate. This includes those with more complex needs. As a result the identified gaps in children's achievements are closed.

Resources are good, of consistent high quality and used well to achieve the planned goals in learning and development. The staff team are well organised and provide a stimulating environment both indoors and outside. However, children's learning is less well supported during the Monday midday period due to the change over of staff. Children remain safe and well supervised at all times.

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

Children strongly benefit from the warm interactions and sensitive support of the staff. All children show an exceptional sense of security and belonging. Those children new to the setting very quickly settle. All children go about their play in a

relaxed way. They develop excellent relationships at every level. Children play exceptionally well together and independently becoming active and inquisitive learners. In free flow activities they happily take turns and share resources such as at the sand tray. They seek out each other to play very cooperatively together. For instance during role play they work together to enact driving in a car, freely developing their own storyline to play out individually. Children develop a very good understanding of the wider world and their place in it through the setting's good links with the local community.

Children make good progress in their communication, literacy and numeracy skills. They have easy access to books. A varied range of mark making and creative activities are made available every session. They compare size and number with sorting sets and count spontaneously while hopping across numbered stepping stones. The staff ask open ended questions and gently prompt children to think and to express themselves. Children are sensitively supported to be confident and to talk in a large group such as at "show time". They have great fun singing and using sign language to action rhymes. All children strongly enjoy and achieve because they are provided with a rich range of activities and play opportunities that match their individual needs and abilities well. The staff team has a secure knowledge of the Early Years Foundation Stage. The system of observation and assessment of children's progress is secure and planning is based on children's interests. As a result children make good progress overall. They are well equipped with the skills they need in order to secure future learning.

The skilled staff team makes experiences meaningful for children. Recently on a forest visit children saw a robin and this was linked to a structured activity where children made bird feeders. Children are consistently asked which resources they wish to have brought out. They also self-select easily from low level-storage trays, exercising choice and take responsibility for their own learning in free-flow activities. All children are highly valued, treated as individuals and shown respect. As a result they have high levels of self esteem, learn to value each other and behave very well.

The garden and patio are relatively new areas of provision for the pre-school and sometimes the planning is less comprehensive than seen elsewhere in the pre-school and for "Woodland Wednesday". Children thoroughly enjoy the good range of activities provided for them in the garden. However, children's learning is not maximised in this area of their play currently.

Children show an excellent understanding of safety issues. They show maturity and take responsibility for their own and others' safety. For example they very safely negotiate the stepping stone logs in the garden. They take turns and patiently walk alongside each other to offer a supportive hand. The woodland forest sessions provide them with excellent opportunities to consider safety issues and how to handle controlled risk in the natural environment.

Children are well supported to follow good personal hygiene routines. At snack time they pour their own drinks and safely cut their own fruit. As a result they develop their independence skills well. They show a good understanding of healthy eating. Children get plenty of fresh air and exercise every day and so learn about

healthy lifestyles.

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	1
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	1
The extent to which children adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which children make a positive contribution	1
The extent to which children develop skills for the future	2

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