

Stepping Stones Pre-School

Sports & Leisure Centre, Camel Road, Littleport, ELY, Cambridgeshire, CB6 1EW

Inspection date

Previous inspection date

04/07/2013

Not Applicable

The quality and standards of the early years provision

This inspection:

2

Previous inspection:

Not Applicable

How well the early years provision meets the needs of the range of children who attend	2
The contribution of the early years provision to the well-being of children	2
The effectiveness of the leadership and management of the early years provision	2

The quality and standards of the early years provision

This provision is good

- Staff provide plenty of stimulating activities to capture children's interest. Consequently, children are always busy learning new skills and making good progress in their all-round development.
- The key person system is very effective and ensures that all children develop strong emotional bonds with everyone at the pre-school. As a result, children soon develop a good level of confidence and feel secure in the setting.
- The management team have high expectations and demonstrate a strong drive for improvement. Staff are especially well supported to improve their knowledge and skills, which in turn benefits all children in the pre-school.
- There is good support for children learning English as an additional language and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities. Staff have strong links with other professionals, and therefore support for children is coordinated and effective in meeting their needs.

It is not yet outstanding because

- There is scope to enrich children's understanding of the world by further developing the outside space and including more natural resources.

Information about this inspection

Inspections of registered early years provision are:

- scheduled at least once in every inspection cycle – the current cycle ends on 31 July 2016
- scheduled more frequently where Ofsted identifies a need to do so, for example where provision was previously judged inadequate
- brought forward in the inspection cycle where Ofsted has received information that suggests the provision may not be meeting the legal requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage or where assessment of the provision identifies a need for early inspection
- prioritised where we have received information that the provision is not meeting the requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage and which suggests children may not be safe
- scheduled at the completion of an investigation into failure to comply with the requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage.

Inspection activities

- The inspector observed activities in all areas of the nursery and outside spaces.
- The inspector held a meeting with the manager and spoke with children and staff at appropriate times throughout the inspection.
- The inspector and manager jointly observed a small group activity.
- The inspector took the views of parents and carers into account.
- The inspector looked at children's learning journals, planning documentation, evidence of suitability of practitioners working within the setting, the provider's self-evaluation form and a range of other documentation.

Inspector

Jacqueline Baker

Full Report

Information about the setting

Stepping Stones Pre-School opened in 2004 and is on the Early Years Register. In 2013, it relocated to purpose-built premises in the grounds of the Sports and Leisure Centre in Littleport, Cambridgeshire. The pre-school is run by a voluntary management committee made up of parents whose children attend the setting. All children have access to an enclosed outdoor play area.

Opening times are from 9.15am to 3.15pm Monday to Friday during school term times. There are currently 64 children on roll in the early years age group. The pre-school provides funded early education for two-, three- and four-year-olds. It supports children who speak English as an additional language and children with special educational needs and/or disabilities.

There are currently 10 members of staff. Of these, seven hold early years qualifications at level 3, and three hold level 2. The pre-school is a member of the Pre-school Learning Alliance.

What the setting needs to do to improve further

To further improve the quality of the early years provision the provider should:

- extend the range of activities and experiences offered to children in the areas of understanding the world by developing the outside areas so that children can investigate features, for example, a mound, paths, trees and natural surfaces, such as grass or pebbles.

Inspection judgements

How well the early years provision meets the needs of the range of children who attend

Children quickly become engrossed in the many stimulating activities at the pre-school. They show great enthusiasm as they join with friends to explore and have fun. Staff skilfully join children as they play, enhancing their learning by asking questions and encouraging them to solve problems for themselves. For example, staff prompt children to recreate a colour sequence when stacking wooden blocks. This helps children to be observant and to recognise patterns. Children's mathematical development is further enhanced during craft activities as they make and decorate different paper shapes to form bunting for their summer fete. Again, staff reaffirm children's learning as they repeat 'triangle', 'circle' or 'rectangle' in their discussions.

Children's communication development is given a high priority by staff. They are sensitive to each child's individual needs and use good strategies, such as simple gestures, to support their spoken words. This is particularly supportive for those who speak English as an additional language. Staff frequently engage children in interesting conversations and give children time to share their news and ideas. As a result, children are making good progress and becoming confident talkers, given their starting points. Children begin to develop their literacy skills in pre-school by choosing books and snuggling up with staff to hear their favourite stories. This means that children are beginning to appreciate reading as a pleasurable pastime and are building skills needed for future learning. The environment contains plenty of displays, notices and posters containing both pictures and text, which helps children with their early reading. During routines and activities, older children are able to recognise their own names on name cards. Opportunities to practise early writing skills are available throughout the pre-school, including on a white board in the garden. Staff ensure that children's work is celebrated and displayed, which successfully boosts their self-esteem.

Staff make careful and precise observations and use their skill and knowledge to assess children's learning. This means that staff are able to plan challenging and interesting activities to promote children's development in all seven areas. Children with special educational needs and/or disabilities receive well-targeted support to help them make expected levels of progress given their starting points and capabilities. Partnerships with parents and carers are especially strong and, as a result, staff have a good understanding of children's learning at home. Parents and carers contribute to a 'wow' board with details of children's activities and achievements. This means that staff are able to effectively extend children's learning in the pre-school and ensure they are fully aware of children's current interests.

The contribution of the early years provision to the well-being of children

A particular strength of the pre-school is the effective key person system. Strong partnerships are formed between staff, parents and carers and, consequently, staff have an excellent understanding of each child's background, preferences and care needs. Children demonstrate their sense of trust and affection for their key person by asking for help or seeking a cuddle for reassurance. Children behave well at pre-school because staff offer consistent and sensitive reminders about what is acceptable. Staff teach children the importance of sharing toys and taking turns. As a result, children generally play well together and form good friendships. Staff are vigilant to ensure children's safety, and support children to gain an understanding of how to keep themselves and others safe. When using the climbing frame, for example, children ensure they do not push or stand in each other's way.

The pre-school is well resourced and organised effectively to ensure children can freely access toys and resources. This enables children to gain good independence skills and encourages them to become active learners. Children help themselves to nutritious snacks and take part in creative activities to promote their understanding of good health. Children enjoy enhancing their physical skills and take full advantage of being able to freely access the outside areas. Here they ride scooters, play basketball and use the slide. The outside

area is well resourced and generally supports learning. However, there is scope to develop more opportunities to enhance children's understanding of the world and engage with natural resources.

Staff plan effective activities to help children in their move to other settings and school. The 'school drawer' contains books, jumpers and school bags from local schools. These everyday articles allow children to familiarise themselves with aspects of school life and so become reassured at this potentially stressful time. Staff arrange visits from teachers and trips to schools to further support children's transitions.

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

The management team demonstrate a high level of commitment and are inspired to drive forward improvements. Self-evaluation and well-targeted action plans are formulated in conjunction with staff, committee members, parents and children. As a result, the pre-school is well placed to make very positive progress. Monitoring of educational programmes and children's individual progress is thorough. This ensures children receive a broad range of challenging experiences and confirms they are making good progress towards their learning goals. Good recruitment procedures are in place including background checks to make sure only suitable staff are employed. An induction programme, mentor and regular meetings support staff further and help them to become familiar with working practices. The manager shows a great determination and passion for developing her staff's skills and knowledge. She has implemented a robust performance management system and uses this effectively to ensure that children benefit from current and insightful childcare practice. Staff readily attend training sessions and this is a great asset to the pre-school.

Staff have a good understanding of safeguarding procedures and know how to report any concerns they may have. Effective policies and procedures support their work and ensure children are secure and as safe as possible at pre-school. Partnerships with outside agencies, other providers and local schools are well established. As a result, there is a coordinated approach to children's care, well-being and development. Partnerships with parents and carers are especially strong. They describe the staff as being 'like second Mums' and readily explain how children have learned a great deal while at pre-school. Frequent newsletters, daily discussions and meetings all ensure parents and carers are fully informed of children's progress. Overall, staff at the pre-school provide a very positive and happy start for young children in their early years education.

What inspection judgements mean

Registered early years provision

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	Outstanding provision is highly effective in meeting the needs of all children exceptionally well. This ensures that children are very well prepared for the next stage of their learning.
Grade 2	Good	Good provision is effective in delivering provision that meets the needs of all children well. This ensures children are ready for the next stage of their learning.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	Satisfactory provision is performing less well than expectations in one or more of the key areas. It requires improvement in order to be good.
Grade 4	Inadequate	Provision that is inadequate requires significant improvement and/or enforcement action. The provision is failing to give children an acceptable standard of early years education and/or is not meeting the safeguarding and welfare requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage. It will be inspected again within 12 months of the date of this inspection.
Met		The provision has no children on roll. The inspection judgement is that the provider continues to meet the requirements for registration.
Not met		The provision has no children on roll. The inspection judgement is that the provider does not meet the requirements for registration.

Inspection

This inspection was carried out by Ofsted under sections 49 and 50 of the Childcare Act 2006 on the quality and standards of provision that is registered on the Early Years Register. The registered person must ensure that this provision complies with the statutory framework for children's learning, development and care, known as the Early Years Foundation Stage.

Setting details

Unique reference number	EY458227
Local authority	Cambridgeshire
Inspection number	900816
Type of provision	Sessional provision
Registration category	Childcare - Non-Domestic
Age range of children	2 - 5
Total number of places	26
Number of children on roll	64
Name of provider	Stepping Stones Pre-school Littleport Committee
Date of previous inspection	not applicable
Telephone number	01353 863463

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Type of provision

For the purposes of this inspection the following definitions apply:

Full-time provision is that which operates for more than three hours. These are usually known as nurseries, nursery schools and pre-schools and must deliver the Early Years Foundation Stage. They are registered on the Early Years Register and pay the higher fee for registration.

Sessional provision operates for more than two hours but does not exceed three hours in any one day. These are usually known as pre-schools, kindergartens or nursery schools

and must deliver the Early Years Foundation Stage. They are registered on the Early Years Register and pay the lower fee for registration.

Childminders care for one or more children where individual children attend for a period of more than two hours in any one day. They operate from domestic premises, which are usually the childminder's own home. They are registered on the Early Years Register and must deliver the Early Years Foundation Stage.

Out of school provision may be sessional or full-time provision and is delivered before or after school and/or in the summer holidays. They are registered on the Early Years Register and must deliver the Early Years Foundation Stage. Where children receive their Early Years Foundation Stage in school these providers do not have to deliver the learning and development requirements in full but should complement the experiences children receive in school.

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