

Stepping Stones Pre-School

Meadway School, Dunsfold Road, Tilehurst, Reading, Berkshire, RG30 4NP

Inspection date

07/10/2013

Previous inspection date

29/11/2010

The quality and standards of the early years provision

This inspection:

4

Previous inspection:

3

How well the early years provision meets the needs of the range of children who attend 4

The contribution of the early years provision to the well-being of children 4

The effectiveness of the leadership and management of the early years provision 4

The quality and standards of the early years provision

This provision is inadequate

- The provider has not ensured that all staff have a secure understanding of the pre-school's safeguarding policy and procedures. Not all staff understand how to protect children's welfare or know how to act to follow necessary reporting procedures. This means that children's safety is not sufficiently promoted.
- Poor staff deployment and the lack of an effective key person system means that some children are not suitably supported in their play or helped to develop secure relationships, particularly when starting.
- Not all children are sufficiently engaged in activities. Some groups of children make limited progress because staff lack sufficient understanding of the children's individual needs and knowledge of how to help and motivate children to learn in preparation for school.
- Systems to mentor staff; to monitor and evaluate the provision and the staff team's knowledge and practice are poor, which results in key weaknesses not being either identified or addressed. Variable staff practice has a negative impact on children's progress.

It has the following strengths

- The staff provide a welcoming environment with a range of toys and appropriate resources that children enjoy. Children develop their physical skills when in the outdoor area.

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 rooms.
- The inspector held a meeting with management team and undertook a joint observation of activities with the manager.

The inspector spoke to members of the staff team about the progress of their key children and their understanding of the pre-school's safeguarding policies and procedures.
- The inspector looked at children's observation, tracking and assessment records, planning documentation, evidence of suitability of staff working with children in the pre-school and a range of other documentation.
- The inspector took into account the views of parents and carers.

Inspector

Tracy Bartholomew

Full Report

Information about the setting

Stepping Stones Pre-School is run by a voluntary committee and first opened in 1972. It registered with Ofsted in 2001. It operates from the premises of the closed Meadway School in Tilehurst, Reading. Children have access to an enclosed outdoor play area. The pre-school serves the needs of families in the surrounding area. It runs on Mondays to Fridays from 9.30am until 12.30 pm, with a lunch club on Tuesday to Thursday from 12.30pm until 1.30pm.

The pre-school is registered on the Early Years Register. The pre-school currently has 16 children attending in the early years age range. The pre-school is in receipt of funding for the provision of free early education for children aged three and four years. The pre-school supports children who learn English as an additional language. The pre-school employs six staff including the supervisor and manager. Of these, over half hold appropriate early years qualifications to at least level 3.

What the setting needs to do to improve further

To meet the requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage the provider must:

- ensure all staff have a secure awareness of their role to safeguard children through knowing how to follow the Local Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB) procedures, as reflected in the pre-school's safeguarding policy, and by checking their understanding is sufficient to implement these procedures following any training undertaken
- monitor the deployment of staff to ensure staff meet the needs of all children
- implement an effective key person system that ensures that every child's care is tailored to meet their individual needs, offers a settled relationship for the child and builds a relationship with their parents or carers, including knowledge about the home languages used by those children learning English as an additional language
- monitor the system to coach, mentor and support staff to ensure underperformance is tackled and addressed, through regular appraisal, and effective evaluation of the provision, in order to improve staff's knowledge and understanding of effective teaching and learning
- improve staff's knowledge of the learning and development requirements to ensure that each area of learning and development is implemented through planned, purposeful play and a mix of adult-led and child-initiated activities, with particular regard to the programmes for children's personal, social and emotional development, and for communication and language development.

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

- increase opportunities for children to gain useful literacy skills in preparation for their move to school, for example, through encouraging more use of books during sessions and when working with parents.

Inspection judgements

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

Children do not make sufficient progress in their learning as staff deployment is ineffective in meeting the individual needs of all children. Staff do not provide sufficient support and encouragement to children during their activities. For example, children sit at the dough table for almost an hour with no interaction from staff or encouragement to engage with

other children. This lack of staff support hampers children's personal, social and emotional development. Staff do not help children feel secure or to make positive relationships. Children do not make suitable progress in their learning as staff are not adequately planning or providing a range of activities that help all children make sufficient progress towards the next steps in their learning. This is because the quality of staff observations, assessments and tracking of children's progress varies across the staff team. In addition, not all staff are competent in their knowledge and understanding of the learning and development requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage. This means that when staff do support activities, they lack focus on how to help children's learning.

Planning to support children who are learning English as an additional language or who have differing needs, is ineffective. Staff lack the understanding of how to plan purposefully for these children. Although there are some words displayed in children's home language, for example, staff have not been trained in how to use these in order to help children feel settled and to meet their needs. This failure to meet children's specific individual needs means that this group of children are not making the same levels of progress as others.

The children have a range of activities and toys to play with as they wish, that adequately cover all areas of learning. However, due to the general lack of staff support, both indoors and outside, children are generally merely occupied by these because staff lack the understanding of how to move learning forward. Overall, there is a lack of motivating or challenging experiences to promote learning and enjoyment.

Some staff are more skilled than others and engage children in activities which support their understanding of early mathematics and some communication skills. For example, children involved at 'circle time' demonstrate their developing understanding of numbers as they sing songs, which promote early numeracy, such as subtracting numbers. Staff engage children through use of hand puppets during this activity, keeping their attention. Some activities help children learn to listen, such as when hearing their names called and responding appropriately, for registration. However, staff do not always value children's contributions or help them gain confidence to speak in front of others. For example, although staff ask the children to 'share their news' following the weekend, they cut children off. This hinders children's development in communication and language and does not help them feel valued.

Children may use a suitable range of books. These include both fact and fiction, so support children's developing knowledge of the world we live in and their imaginations. Books are available for children's use through the day but are displayed uninvitingly, so few children use them. Children may take books home at the end of the session but as children are unable to see the books on offer easily, this hinders their ability to choose a book of interest. In addition, when children do choose a book, sometimes they are informed by staff that the book is too big for their bag. These actions not only have a negative impact on children's self-confidence but prevent them from gaining a positive attitude to using and enjoying books. The idea of using book bags is a positive way of preparing children for school. Unfortunately, the lack of understanding by some staff of how to encourage their use and to value the children's choices has a negative impact, so

the useful resource is wasted.

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

The current key person system is ineffective because staff do not support children in developing secure attachments. This is because levels of individual support are poor. Although staff gather information from parents at settling-in visits, they do not use this information effectively to support children's progression within their overall development. They fail to realise children's needs or respond appropriately. Outside, for example, staff stand against a fence chatting to each other disregarding the children. This lack of attention does not provide children with a positive first experience of being away from their parents or help them feel secure in the care of others.

The pre-school is suitably resourced and, overall, there is an adequate selection of toys and equipment. Children have access to an outdoor play space, when staff take them outside to play. Resources are available throughout the two main play rooms, which enable children to make some independent choices of what they wish to do. For example, children can choose to play on the computer, in the 'sensory tent' or create pictures with paints. Children have suitable opportunities to develop their physical skills as they engage in physical play inside. For example, they climb the ladder of the climbing frame and slide down the slide. In the outside area, children use a large sand pit, ride-on toys and enjoy running and jumping. Children clearly enjoy being outside but the outdoor area is not used well enough to support children's all round learning because of poor staff deployment. As a result, children's learning is hampered.

Children are beginning to develop an understanding of healthy lifestyles, as all children are encouraged to wash their hands before meal times. They enjoy a range of fruit, sandwiches and drinks options at snack time. Staff work adequately in partnership with parents to ensure that dietary needs are catered for. Suitable arrangements are in place for escorting children to the toilet area, when necessary. Staff support children's developing understanding of acceptable behaviour. Children are generally praised by staff when appropriate and, as a result, are well behaved. Overall the premises adequately promote children's safety.

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

This inspection was brought forward because of concerns raised to Ofsted. This inspection has found that the management committee, as the provider, does not meet either the safeguarding and welfare requirements, or the learning and development requirements of the Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage. The provider has not ensured that all staff have a secure knowledge and understanding of their individual role to protect children. Not all staff have undertaken safeguarding training, as required. Most staff have undertaken some on-line safeguarding training; however, the provider has not checked that processes are in place to make sure staff have understood this training. Staff

do not have secure knowledge of the procedures to follow if they have a concern about a child. For example, some staff incorrectly state that they would inform the parents, which could put the children at further risk. Not all staff have an awareness of Local Safeguarding Children Board's procedures, which means they are unclear on how to report safeguarding concerns or to work in partnership with other agencies, if necessary. The management do not check staff's understanding following training. Consequently, children's welfare cannot be assured as staff are unable to safeguard children adequately which compromises children's well-being.

The provider follows suitable procedures for the recruitment and vetting of staff to check the suitability of those in regular contact with children to work with them. Some systems are in place to monitor staff, however these practices are weak. For example, the manager does not check that staff are deployed effectively to support children's individual needs. The provider fails to support and mentor staff as required. For example, staff are supposed to have biennial appraisals but records show that some staff have not had an appraisal for over six years. Due to the lack of monitoring, the leadership team is unaware of these inconsistencies and poor daily practice of staff. These weaknesses have a detrimental effect on children's care and learning overall.

Self-evaluation is not sufficiently rigorous and the identification of improvements at the play unit are weak. This lack of evaluation results in poor continuous improvement and impacts significantly on the quality of the educational programmes offered and, consequently, children's learning and development.

Partnerships with other professionals are suitably maintained. The pre-school staff work appropriately with local schools and childminders involved in children's care. There are some positive aspects to the partnership with parents, who comment that they are very happy with the information they receive.

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	EY275967
Local authority	Reading
Inspection number	937981
Type of provision	Sessional provision
Registration category	Childcare - Non-Domestic
Age range of children	2 - 4
Total number of places	30
Number of children on roll	16
Name of provider	Stepping Stones Pre-School Committee
Date of previous inspection	29/11/2010
Telephone number	07561506002

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance '*Complaints procedure: raising concerns and making complaints about Ofsted*', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk. If you would like Ofsted to send you a copy of the guidance, please telephone 0300 123 4234, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

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.

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, work-based learning and skills training, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for looked after children, safeguarding and child protection.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 4234, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may copy all or parts of this document for non-commercial educational purposes, as long as you give details of the source and date of publication and do not alter the information in any way.

To receive regular email alerts about new publications, including survey reports and school inspection reports, please visit our website and go to 'Subscribe'.

Piccadilly Gate
Store St
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 4234
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.ofsted.gov.uk

© Crown copyright 2012

