

Stepping Stones Preschool

Avonway Community Centre, 36 Shaftesbury Street, FORDINGBRIDGE, Hampshire, SP6 1JF

Inspection date	17/12/2013
Previous inspection date	16/05/2013

The quality and standards of the early years provision	This inspection:	3
	Previous inspection:	4
How well the early years provision meets the needs of the range of children who attend		3
The contribution of the early years provision to the well-being of children		3
The effectiveness of the leadership and management of the early years provision		3

The quality and standards of the early years provision

This provision requires improvement

- Children are happy and settled in a safe and welcoming environment.
- Overall, staff provide a good range of play equipment and resources which children select independently.
- Staff enable children to learn and develop confidence as they explore the natural environment through Forest School sessions.
- Staff promote positive relationships with parents and other professionals.

It is not yet good because

- The provider failed to provide the required information to Ofsted about changes in the committee which is a breach of requirements.
- The assessment system is not effective in consistently monitoring children's learning and development.
- Staff interaction is not consistent to ensure that children make good progress in all areas of learning.
- Staff do not always provide opportunities for children to practise independence skills or skills for writing in play and meaningful situations.

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 children's activities inside and outside.
- The inspector carried out a joint observation with the provider.
- The inspector sampled documentation, which included children's progress records.
- The inspector talked with the provider, staff and children.
- The inspector took into account parents' views obtained in person.

Inspector

Brenda Flewitt

Full report

Information about the setting

Stepping Stones Pre-school registered in 1997. It operates from dedicated rooms within the community centre in Fordingbridge, Hampshire. There is an enclosed area available for outdoor play. The pre-school is open five days a week during school term times. Sessions run from 9am until 1pm, four days a week, with an extended day provided on Wednesdays until 4pm. This includes a lunch club from 12 noon until 1pm. From January 2014, the pre-school is extending Monday sessions to 4pm.

The pre-school is registered on the Early Years Register. The pre-school receives funding for the provision of free nursery education for children aged three and four years. There are currently 29 children on roll. The pre-school supports children with special educational needs and/or disabilities.

There are six members of staff working with the children. This includes five who are qualified to level 3, one of whom is working towards a level 5 early years qualification. The staff team are supported by two admin staff.

What the setting needs to do to improve further

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

- improve the assessment system to enable staff to clearly identify children's level of achievement, plan next steps in their learning and monitor children's progress
- ensure staff are consistent in their interaction with children to provide a rich language environment to challenge children's thinking, and extend their vocabulary and understanding.

Inspection judgements

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

Staff work hard to provide a welcoming environment in which children learn through play. They arrange the room into various areas of play and learning before the children arrive each day. Staff provide a good range of toys and resources inside which they arrange effectively so that children can select independently. For example, they have labelled the low-level storage units with words and pictures. This enables all children to know what is available and to make choices in what they play with. Staff are aware of the Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage learning and development requirements. However, practice with regard to interaction and the assessment system is inconsistent. Key persons seek some information from parents about children's interests and

development when they start to attend. Staff complete observations of children's play and achievements, which they record using annotated photographs in individual files. They link these to the relevant areas of learning but do not frequently assess their stage of development in order to plan activities that challenge them. As children's next steps in their learning are only identified on a termly basis, some children are not being challenged sufficiently to ensure they make good progress. Staff are aware of their responsibility to complete progress checks for children aged between two and three years.

Staff provide a friendly environment where they talk with children to encourage children's communication skills. Some children are confident in using language to organise their play or to talk about events in their lives. Staff plan small group times with games and activities that promote children's recall and confidence. However, staff are not consistent in modelling language or providing challenge during children's play so that children develop a wider vocabulary and an understanding of various concepts. For example, as children manoeuvre wheeled vehicles outside, staff miss opportunities to talk about position, size or distance. Children use their imaginations well as they act out real life and imaginary situations. For example, children use model animals and equipment to set up a farmyard. Staff have improved the equipment in the role play area to include real resources. They have extended role play by setting up a shop and vet's surgery in a different part of the room. This encourages children to move resources around to extend their own play and learning. Although staff provide a range of mark-making materials such as pens, pencils and chinks, they are not always available in the role play areas or outside, so that children can practise skills for writing in meaningful situations. Staff provide a good range of books, arranged to encourage children to select favourite stories for themselves. Staff have introduced 'story of the week', which means that children hear the same story on consecutive days. This encourages them to join in with familiar phrases and act out the story through role play. Book bags with visual aids help improve children's concentration and involvement. Staff lend books to children to share with their families. All this helps to promote children's keen interest in books and stories.

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

Children are happy and settled. They make good relationships with adults and one another. Staff encourage children's sense of belonging by displaying photographs of them enjoying activities with their friends within the setting. Staff seek information from parents about children's interests and families when children start attending. This enables them to provide appropriate resources to encourage children's involvement and initiate conversations to help them feel secure. Staff have good links with schools that children go on to attend. Arrangements to visit the school and meet their prospective teachers, help children know what to expect in a new situation.

Children know what staff expect of them through familiar routines, such as hand washing before snack time. Children learn to take turns as they play board games or use large equipment for physical play. Staff encourage children to help pack away toys, which encourages them to care for equipment. Staff regularly praise children for their efforts and achievements, which helps boost their self-esteem and confidence. Staff encourage

children to be aware of their own safety. When children attend Forest School sessions they learn about taking risks in the natural environment as they develop their curiosity and explore using their senses. These experiences also help less confident children to investigate resources and express their ideas.

Children practise good routines for personal hygiene and develop increasing independence as they use toilet and hand washing facilities. They make choices from healthy options at snack time, choosing from selections such as fresh fruit, vegetables, cheese and biscuits. However, staff prepare the food in advance which means children are not practising skills for the future, such as peeling or chopping foods. Staff provide daily opportunities for children to have fresh air and exercise. Children develop skills in moving and steering wheeled vehicles, which promote their physical development. Some use outdoor role play equipment to act out what they know, such as using tools to make repairs. However, the quality of staff interaction during outside activities does not always provide good quality learning experiences for all children. They do not always use children's spontaneous play to provide challenge to extend children's knowledge, vocabulary and skills.

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

Leadership and management require improvement. The provider failed to supply Ofsted with the required information about changes in the management committee. This is a breach of requirements, however, on this occasion Ofsted do not intend to take any action. Without the required details Ofsted are unable to complete suitability checks. The committee members do not have contact with the children, therefore there is no immediate risk to children's safety and welfare. Overall, staff implement clear policies and procedures to promote children's safety and welfare. They know how to recognise signs and symptoms that would cause concern and understand their responsibility in following correct procedures to protect children from harm. There is clear information available for them to use for reference. Staff complete risk assessments and daily checks in order to provide a safe environment for children to play. Staff complete the required records clearly, which they store confidentially.

Staff promote positive partnerships with parents. They provide useful information about the pre-school by way of written policies, displays and regular newsletters. Key persons make themselves available to exchange information on a daily basis through conversation. They have recently introduced home-link books, following a suggestion from a parent, to enhance the communication with a written record. This helps staff to meet children's individual needs. Parents have the opportunity to have a say in their child's pre-school by being on the committee. Parents say that their children are happy at the pre-school and settle quickly. They are aware of the records that staff complete with regard to their child's progress. Staff liaise with other practitioners and other connected professionals to share information about children's welfare and development. This contributes to consistency in children's care and learning.

The provider and managers have some methods in place to monitor staff effectiveness.

Annual appraisals and peer observations help to identify areas for development, but are not always successful in recognising inconsistency in practice. The tracking system for staff to monitor children's progress is not completed consistently or understood by all staff and management. Therefore it is not effective in identifying gaps in children's learning. The provider has successfully addressed the actions and recommendations set at the last inspection, which means they have made good improvement in some areas of children's care and learning. Staff welcome ideas from early years advisors, which helps to improve the learning environment and children's involvement in self-chosen activities.

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	Requires improvement	The provision is not giving children a good standard of early years education and/or there are minor breaches of the safeguarding and welfare requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage. It will be monitored and inspected within twelve months of the date of this inspection.
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 monitored and inspected again within six 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	511673
Local authority	Hampshire
Inspection number	938484
Type of provision	
Registration category	Childcare - Non-Domestic
Age range of children	2 - 5
Total number of places	32
Number of children on roll	29
Name of provider	Stepping Stones Pre School Committee
Date of previous inspection	16/05/2013
Telephone number	01425653517

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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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