

Stepping Stones Pre-School York

Hurst Hall, 1 Border Road, Strensall, York, North Yorkshire, YO32 5SR

Inspection date

12/02/2014

Previous inspection date

06/01/2010

The quality and standards of the early years provision

This inspection:

2

Previous inspection:

2

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 recognise the different play, learning and development needs of children who attend the pre-school. They plan and provide a varied range of age-appropriate activities, which shows their good understanding of child development.
- A well-embedded key person system is in place. This helps children to feel safe and secure.
- Good partnership working involves parents, external agencies and children's centre helping to support children and their families effectively. The pre-school has good relationships with teachers and providers of other settings children attend to ensure they are kept well-informed.
- Effective safeguarding arrangements are in place, including the checking of the suitability of staff to work with children.

It is not yet outstanding because

- Older children have fewer opportunities for them to recognise their last name in written format, in order to extend their literacy skills.
- There is scope to enhance opportunities for parents to continue their child's learning at home.
- Children are not always given sufficient time when alerted to a change in the routine to complete their play so that they can tidy up after themselves and be well-prepared for the next activity.

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.

The provision is also registered on the compulsory part of the Childcare Register. This report includes a judgment about compliance with the requirements of that register.

Inspection activities

- The inspector conducted a tour of all of the areas children use, in the pre-school and outdoors, accompanied by the manager.
- The inspector spoke with children, staff, parents, the manager and the chairperson of the pre-school committee.
- The inspector observed staff and children during a varied range of indoor and outdoor activities.
- A joint observation and discussion about the effectiveness of an adult-led group activity for children was carried out by the inspector and the manager.
- The inspector held a meeting with the manager and deputy manager and provided feedback to both at the end of the inspection.
- The inspector looked at a range of documents, including evidence of the suitability of staff to work with children, the self-evaluation record, a sample of children's files, policies, procedures and other records.

Inspector

Jackie Phillips

Full report

Information about the setting

Stepping Stones Pre-School York registered in August 2000 on the Early Years Register and the compulsory part of the Childcare Register. The pre-school is managed by a voluntary committee and operates from a purpose built community centre, which is part of the Strensall Army Camp, in the village of Strensall near to York. Children use the main hall and other associated facilities within the centre. There is an enclosed outside play area. The pre-school serves children from both the army camp and the local area.

There are currently 83 children on roll, all of whom are in the early years age range. The pre-school supports children with special educational needs and/or disabilities. It provides funded early education for two-, three- and four-year-old children. The pre-school is open from 8.30am to 12noon and 12.30pm to 4pm, Monday to Friday, term time only.

There are nine staff employed at the pre-school. The manager holds an appropriate qualification at level 4 and seven staff hold appropriate qualifications at level 3. The pre-school is a member of the Pre-school Learning Alliance and the Strensall Early Years partnership.

What the setting needs to do to improve further

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

- extend the literacy challenges for older children by creating more opportunities for them to recognise their last name, in order to enhance their reading skills
- strengthen the secure partnership with parents, in order to help them more effectively continue their child's learning at home
- enhance the way in which children are alerted to a change in the routine by providing them with more time to bring their play to a closure and take responsibility for tidy away after themselves.

Inspection judgements

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

Staff recognise the very different play, learning and development needs of the range of children who attend the pre-school. For example, they plan and use a range of successful ways to meet the age range differences of children between two to four years of age. This shows their good understanding of child development and their appreciation that children

of varying ages and abilities have very different needs. Staff meet this challenge very well. For instance, they organise children into small groups according to age and ability. They provide an interesting programme of learning that takes place through a good balance of activities between those children choose for themselves and those led or guided by an adult. There are good opportunities for children to play and learn by being part of a larger group or by working much more closely with an adult. This includes children with special educational needs and/or disabilities, who may need additional support in their learning. Staff know children very well and use this knowledge to ensure all children are learning in ways that are meaningful and personal. For example, staff plan activities in response to children's individual interests and learning goals. Additional support through use of outside agencies or staff working very closely with parents to meet children's individual needs ensures no child gets left behind. As a result, the quality of teaching and children's learning is good.

Secure and friendly relationships with parents are in place based on frequent and effective information sharing. There are many ways in which parents are kept well-informed about the activities their children are involved in. This includes, for example, daily conversations, newsletters, use of photographs and displays and access to their child's individual development files. However, there is room to enhance opportunities for ways in which parents can continue their child's learning at home. Staff observe children and make regular assessments of their progress across the seven areas of learning. They encourage parents to exchange information that they use to form initial assessments of the stage children are at as they join the pre-school. This helps them to assess each child's 'starting points' on which to base their understanding of need and initiate target setting to support each child to make progress.

The programme for children's learning is varied, interesting and challenging. The planned range of activities motivates children to be busy, well-occupied and actively engaged in their learning. They learn about a wide range of cultural and traditional events and festivals that take place throughout the year. This helps them to understand about the diverse world in which they live. Children's experiences are enriched by visitors to the pre-school that includes, for example, the fire brigade, hens eggs they see hatched into chicks and soldiers they see around the army camp. Trips in the community are organised, such as a Christmas party held at a nearby farm and special events are celebrated that include a nativity concert and a graduation ceremony for older children, who leave the pre-school to attend 'big school'. At each morning or afternoon session the range of toys, resources and activities supports children to learn either independently or as being part of a group. Children acquire, practise, repeat and refine a large number of skills they will need for their future learning. For example, they learn how to use a wide selection of tools, operate everyday information and communication technology equipment, how to manage their personal care needs independently and how to form relationships and work alongside others. This means children are encouraged, inspired and well supported to develop in confidence and independence to be prepared and ready for school. The oldest children are particularly confident at linking sounds to letters, naming and sounding letters of the alphabet, blending sounds and matching words that rhyme. This helps with their reading and gets them off to a good start at school. Teachers have shared with staff their admiration for children who accomplish these skills at the pre-school well in advance of starting school. Older children though have fewer opportunities for them to recognise their

last name in written format, in order to enhance their already secure literacy skills.

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

A large majority of parents and children attend the twice weekly Tiny Steps group that is overseen by staff members from the pre-school. Parents stay and play with their children, meet staff and familiarise themselves with the building. Children who attend the Tiny Steps group transfer to the pre-school at the age of two and settle quickly and easily because they are familiar with the environment and staff and have been gradually introduced into the pre-school. This supports children's emotional well-being and helps them to settle quickly and easily and separate from their parents with confidence. A well-embedded key person system is in place that supports children to feel safe and secure. A 'buddy' key person system is also established so that in the event a child's special person being absent a second adult, equally special, is there to ensure they continue to feel safe and ensure their individual needs are well met. Staff show children respect by gently shaking a tambourine to gain their attention to alert them to a change in the routine. For instance, they shake the tambourine when it is time for children to split up into their smaller groups, which takes place each session. However, this good practice provides children with less time to complete their play activity so that they can, for example, tidy up after themselves and be well-prepared for the next activity.

The environment for children is safe, welcoming and attractive. A divider is used effectively to separate the large play room, such as in preparation for group times. A 'friendship castle' is provided to encourage two children at a time to use this cosy space. This encourages friendships to be formed and is a quiet, comfortable area, less daunting for some children to use to help them feel safe and secure. Children learn about safety through taking part in the evacuation procedure so they know what to do in an emergency and through discussions as they play. For example, when cutting cellophane paper they are reminded not to cut their fingers that are hiding underneath. The majority of children use the toilets independently and understand about regular hand washing as part of the routine. When they seek help to blow their nose, staff remind them to wash their hands. Children listen well and go straight to the bathroom to carry out the task confidently. Displays around the pre-school are attractive and include contributions from children. A 'helpful hearts' display is used to recognise children's achievements when they are, for instance, kind, thoughtful, helpful and cooperative. This helps them to learn how to behave well and appreciate the pleasurable experience of being kind to others.

Children use the outdoors regularly. They have a good variety of tools and equipment to use, including those to develop their physical skills. An allotment is provided where children grow a number of fruits and vegetables, including strawberries, raspberries, marrows, peas and beans. They are encouraged to take care of the plants to help them to grow and then harvest the fruits and vegetables of their labour for tasting. Children take part in cooking activities, such as making jam tarts. They are invited to have a packed lunch provided by parents at the end of or beginning of their designated session. This helps them to manage the contents of their boxes and take part in a lovely social occasion with their carers and friends. Good attention is given to help children learn through their

senses. They are encouraged to investigate and explore what they can do with materials, such as, sand, water and mud.

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

The pre-school is safe and secure. During times when parents and their children are arriving at and departing from the playgroup, staff are extremely vigilant to ensure that any unauthorised person is not able to enter the premises or any child able to leave unsupervised. Effective safeguarding arrangements are in place, including the checking of the suitability of staff to work with children. When children are undressed or have their clothing or nappies changed in the bathroom, staff inform other colleagues who wait and observe close by to ensure children are safe and protected. All staff attend safeguarding training so they understand the action to take and whom to contact if they have any concerns about a child's welfare or well-being. Appropriate written safeguarding policies, procedures and guidance are in place to keep children safe. This includes a safeguarding policy, complaints procedure, safe recruitment procedures and risk assessment routines. This helps to ensure a safe environment for children to play and reduces risks and hazards. The manager is fully aware of the requirement to notify Ofsted of any changes that affect the provision. The safeguarding and welfare and learning and development requirements of the Statutory framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage are understood by all staff and are fully met.

The pre-school has in place a varied range of written policies and procedures, which are shared well with staff and parents and are regularly updated to ensure that they remain effective. The well-established and well-qualified staff team have good access to support from the manager and her deputy who regularly work alongside them to supervise, monitor and assess their working practice. The manager reviews and monitors the provision for children and has a clear vision for future improvement. She seeks the opinions of her team, parents and children who contribute towards setting targets and priorities for further development and improvement. For example, outdoor experiences for children are an area identified for further development. This includes the enhancement of the outdoor play area provision and developing a 'forest schools' approach to outdoor learning.

Good relationships with parents, external agencies and other providers help support children and families effectively. Parents spoken to during the inspection are highly satisfied with the pre-school. In particular, they feel they are kept well-informed and updated about their child's progress and learning. There are effective links with the local children's centre made so that support, help and guidance can be quickly accessed for a family if necessary. Teachers and providers of other settings children attend are kept well-informed and secure links are made through the pre-schools commitment to be part of a wider, local partnership group. There are informal opportunities for staff and parents to meet. This includes a 'Valentines' disco organised by the pre-school's committee group to support increased socialisation and relationship building between staff and parents and boost fund raising for the benefit of the pre-school. Issues raised at the previous

inspection have been well-addressed, resulting in regular reviewing of policies and procedures to ensure they remain effective and stronger relationships with other early years providers in the community established. The vision for future improvement of the pre-school is clear based on consultations held between staff, parents and children.

The Childcare Register

The requirements for the compulsory part of the Childcare Register are **Met**

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	321529
Local authority	York
Inspection number	951460
Type of provision	
Registration category	Childcare - Non-Domestic
Age range of children	0 - 8
Total number of places	34
Number of children on roll	83
Name of provider	Strensall Station Playgroup Committee
Date of previous inspection	06/01/2010
Telephone number	01904 442 826

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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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Piccadilly Gate
Store St
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 4234
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