

Stepping Stones Nursery School

Wittersham Primary School, The Street, Tenterden, TN30 7EA

Inspection date	20/03/2014
Previous inspection date	Not Applicable

The quality and standards of the early years provision	This inspection:	
	Previous inspection:	
		1
How well the early years provision meets the needs of the range of children who attend		1
The contribution of the early years provision to the well-being of children		1
The effectiveness of the leadership and management of the early years provision		1

The quality and standards of the early years provision

This provision is outstanding

- The provider demonstrates excellent leadership skills to motivate staff and support their professional development.
- Children show considerable motivation to want to learn and take part in activities.
- The staff are extremely able at providing individual support for children, establishing a strong sense of emotional wellbeing.
- The child-centred and welcoming environment indoors and outside provides children with experiences that supports their learning exceptionally well.

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 voluntary and compulsory parts of the Childcare Register. This report includes a judgment about compliance with the requirements of that register.

Inspection activities

- The inspector observed activities in the play room and the outside area.
- The inspector held a meeting with the owner/manager of the nursery and completed a joint observation in the nursery.
- The inspector looked at some children's records, including their learning assessments.
- The inspector spoke to parents during the inspection.
- The inspector checked evidence of safeguarding practices, staff recruitment, ongoing professional development and self-evaluation processes.

Inspector

Sue Taylor

Full report

Information about the setting

Stepping Stones Nursery School is privately run and first registered in 2002 in Smallhythe and re-registered in 2013 in the current setting. The nursery is situated in the village of Wittersham, near Tenterden, in Kent. It operates from one large room in a separate building within the Wittersham Primary School grounds. Children have access to an outdoor play area. It is open each weekday from 8.30am to 3pm, during school term times.

This nursery is registered on the Early Years Register and the compulsory and voluntary parts of the Childcare Register. There are currently 29 children aged from two years on roll who are all in the early years age range. The nursery supports children with special educational needs and/or disabilities.

There are seven members of staff, six of whom hold recognised childcare qualifications. One member of staff has achieved Early Years Professional Status, one member of staff is qualified to level 4, two staff are qualified to level 3 and two staff are qualified to level 2. The nursery receives funding to provide free early education for some two-year-olds, and all three- and four-year-olds.

What the setting needs to do to improve further

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

- consider ways to clearly show in children's learning records how staff are reviewing and using feedback from all parents about how they are supporting children's learning at home.

Inspection judgements

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

The staff know the children extremely well as individuals and effectively promote their learning and development. Each child's key person makes excellent use of the observations made as children play to assess their individual stage of development across the areas of learning. Staff routinely assess and track children's progress to ensure they continue to make very good progress. The extensive knowledge that all staff have means that any learning gaps are quickly narrowed with some focused planning. The key person easily identifies appropriate next steps for each of their key children and the planning reflects these extremely well. The staff routinely share the next steps with parents so they can support their child's learning at home. Feedback about children's achievements at home tends to be verbal. While staff always use this detail in their assessments, it is not always clear where parent contributions are noted, in order for staff other than key staff

to be aware of these. The children's learning records are readily available for parents, or children, to look at and take home, so they are fully aware of the progress their child is making. Parents speak extremely positively about the support their child receives. The excellent systems in place mean that staff are able to produce the progress checks for two-year-old children, providing parents with a copy. These checks include useful detail on children's personal, social, emotional and physical progress, as well as their communication and language development.

The staff are consistently enthusiastic about the activities and this quickly engages the children, motivating them to join in. Children show great concentration and listening skills as staff read stories and this supports their school readiness. There are a broad variety of writing and mark-making materials that children can use indoors and outside. This means children can easily develop their pre-writing skills, throughout the play environment.

Children benefit immensely from being able to choose outdoor or indoor learning. The staff make excellent use of the outdoor area for children to take part in interesting experiences and learning. Children happily share resources as they imaginatively explore the mud or sand. They independently create their physical challenges with crates and other resources. Children are gaining the skills they need for going to school. The staff's effective support and guidance means children become very confident and are keen to interact with each other or staff. Children learn to play cooperatively with others and gain independence skills, such as taking themselves to the toilet or pouring a drink at snack time. The staff are excellent at developing children's communication and language skills. They ask skilful questions of children that encourage them to answer more than yes or no. The staff clearly value children's ideas and thoughts during the activities.

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

Children benefit considerably from the close relationships they develop with their key person and all staff members. The key person system is extremely effective in providing emotional support to the children. Discussions and information gathering from parents or others ensure that staff have an excellent understanding of a child's individual care and development needs. There are highly effective systems in place to ensure that the staff routinely evaluate and support children's well-being. As a result, the key person will carefully assess any child who is not as settled as they were, and if necessary, devise an individual support plan. This means that all staff, as well as the key person, are extremely well-informed about how to support the child during the session.

To support the move to the new premises, the manager made models of both settings and used these to explain the move. Children were able to play out their thoughts and feelings as they played with the models. As a result, children's emotional security at the nursery remains very strong. This helps prepare children exceptionally well for the move to school. Children have visits so they gain a familiarity with the environment and they talk about going to school with their key person, helping to lessen any worries.

Children confidently learn to do their coats up and put boots on for outdoor play. They

spend good levels of time at activities of their own choosing as well as being very keen to join in with adult planned activities. The staff manage children's behaviour particularly well. Children happily wait their turn and share resources when necessary. The excellent support that the staff show the children means that children, in turn, will quickly go to comfort an upset friend or get them a tissue. Children clearly understand when children are not behaving as they should and trust the staff to deal with this. The staggered snack time means children can finish their game or activity first. The staff teach children well about the importance of a healthy lifestyles and how to care for themselves. For example, a fun physical activity gives young children the skill to wipe their own bottom. The staff enable the children to use tools, such as scissors or hammer and nails. This supports their awareness of how to keep themselves and others safe.

The nursery environment is highly stimulating, very child-centred and welcoming and the staff team are very nurturing. There is an excellent range of quality resources both indoors and outside for children to use. The resources indoors are at low level, on open shelves or in small boxes that children can easily carry. This effectively helps the children to make independent choices and decisions about what they want to do and where they want to play. Staff promote children's curiosity and confidence extremely well. They are constantly engaging with the children as they play or take part in planned activities, but they also know when to let them explore on their own.

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

Children's welfare is exceptionally well promoted because the manager has a comprehensive awareness of the safeguarding and welfare requirements. All staff have a secure knowledge about possible child protection issues and of the processes to follow should they have concerns about children's welfare. They complete safeguarding training and there are very clear written procedures in place. Staff ensure the premises are secure and safe for children to use. They complete daily visual checks to maintain the safety and suitability of the premises, toys and equipment. There are well-documented systems in place, such as for accidents and complaints. There is a robust recruitment process and rigorous checks are in place to help ensure staff suitability. The thorough induction process helps new staff be confident about following the nursery practices. There is significant ongoing support for staff with training, regular supervision sessions and annual appraisals. The manager routinely monitors staff practice to ensure they continue to provide exemplary support to children as they learn and develop.

The learning and development requirements are being met extremely well. Staff carefully monitor educational programmes, for both individuals and groups of children. For example, recent monitoring revealed that boys were making less progress in literacy learning than girls. As a result, staff were able to develop activity plans effectively to ensure boys make consistently excellent progress in literacy. For example, by using a superhero theme, all children are keen to engage in 'writing' as they make up their own story, to produce a book. The current monitoring shows that they are now progressing well. The special needs coordinator works alongside staff, parents and other professionals

to create individual education plans for those children who need a little extra support.

Discussions and questionnaires help gain the views and ideas of parents. The manager uses these views and those of the staff and children for the highly reflective self-evaluation of the nursery. This ensures everyone is thoroughly engaged in improving outcomes for children. There are development plans in place, such as continuing to enrich the outside area with planting for the spring. In addition, enhancing the evaluation of the environment to ensure it always meets children's learning needs. There are extremely strong relationships with parents. Parents engage well with staff and they routinely share information about their children, so there is an effective two-way communication. There are secure established partnerships with others, such as social services and other professionals. This helps the staff to meet children's individual needs well and fully supports effective partnership working. The manager is fully aware of the benefits of communicating effectively with other early years settings where they share care. The manager and staff team are extremely motivated and enthusiastic about the nursery. There is an outstanding capacity to sustain the level of excellent practice.

The Childcare Register

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

The requirements for the voluntary 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	EY468982
Local authority	Kent
Inspection number	935451
Type of provision	Full-time provision
Registration category	Childcare - Non-Domestic
Age range of children	2 - 8
Total number of places	20
Number of children on roll	29
Name of provider	Stepping Stones Nursery Ltd
Date of previous inspection	not applicable
Telephone number	01797270329

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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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