

Stepping Stones Playgroup

Wells Hall Primary School, Wells Hall Road, Great Cornard, SUDBURY, Suffolk, CO10 0NH

Inspection date	06/11/2014
Previous inspection date	30/04/2010

The quality and standards of the early years provision	This inspection:	
	Previous inspection:	
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

- All staff have a secure knowledge and understanding of the Early Years Foundation Stage and how children learn. Teaching strategies are effective, and well-planned purposeful activities that support children's individual needs, means that children make good progress.
- Children form close relationships with their key persons, who are extremely attentive to their needs. This means children make positive emotional attachments.
- Staff have established strong partnerships with parents, agencies and other early years professionals. As a result, information is shared and children settle quickly as they are offered continuity of care.
- Children are protected from harm as staff demonstrate a secure knowledge of their responsibilities with regard to safeguarding children and ensure children's safety is robustly maintained.

It is not yet outstanding because

- Children's mathematical development is not fully supported in the garden, as the outdoor learning environment does not reflect the mathematical potential of the indoor environment.
- Children's decision making and independence skills are not fully supported at snack time. This is because the routine does not enable them to consistently serve food and make decisions for themselves.

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 playroom and the outside learning environment.
- The inspector conducted a joint observation of children's activities with the manager.
- The inspector held a meeting with the manager, and spoke to children and staff at appropriate times during the inspection.
- The inspector looked at children's assessment records and planning documentation and some written policy documents.
- The inspector checked evidence of the suitability and qualifications of staff working with children, the providers self-evaluation form and improvement plans.
- The inspector took account of the views of parents and carers spoken to on the day.

Inspector

Lynn A Hartigan

Full report

Information about the setting

Stepping Stones Playgroup was registered in 1991 and is on the Early Years Register and the compulsory and voluntary parts of the Childcare register. It is situated within the grounds of Wells Hall Primary School in Great Cornard, Suffolk and is privately owned. The playgroup serves the local area. It operates from purpose built premises that are accessible to all children. There is an enclosed area available for outdoor play. The playgroup employs five members of childcare staff. Of these, all hold appropriate early years qualifications at level 2 and level 3. The playgroup opens Monday to Friday during school term. Sessions are from 8am until 3.30pm. Children attend for a variety of sessions. There are currently 49 children attending who are in the early years age group. The playgroup provides funded early education for two-, three- and four-year-old children. It supports a number of children who speak English as an additional language and children with special educational needs and/or disabilities. The playgroup receive support from the local authority.

What the setting needs to do to improve further

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

- develop the mathematical potential of the outdoor environment, for example, by providing opportunities for children to discover things about shape, distance, number and measures, through their physical activity
- develop children's independence further, for example, by allowing them to take part in the preparation and serving of snacks, which includes opportunities to pour their own drinks.

Inspection judgements

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

Children are provided with an exciting educational programme that includes a good balance of adult-led and child-initiated learning opportunities. Activities are stimulating and offer sufficient challenges. This is because all staff have a good understanding of the learning and development requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage, and use their knowledge effectively to support children's continuous progress. Quality resources are provided and are easily accessible, so that children can initiate their own games. The playroom is set out with the very young child in mind offering lots of opportunity for role play to act out real-life situations and to develop their creativity. Staff support children's interests and promote opportunities for effective learning. For example, activities are presented on low tables or in trays so that all children can use them comfortably. Children enjoy playing together in the shop. They use money to pay for real vegetables, that

prompt lots of conversation, questions and introduces new words into their vocabulary, such as, 'parsnips' and 'turnips'. Children are fascinated as they peel onions and smell the vegetables and compare the weight of the different vegetables. A variety of writing materials enable children to write shopping lists, and a cosy home corner is equipped with cookery books and props to extend their play as they make vegetable soup.

All staff support children well and interact effectively with them. They have high expectations for the children in their care based on accurate assessments of children's skills when starting at playgroup. Staff are very caring and know the children well. They are softly spoken and give children lots of eye contact, get down to their level to play and listen to what the children have to say. Children's language development is promoted to a high standard. Good use is made of visual prompts throughout the playgroup and signing also helps them to communicate. This includes support for children learning English as an additional language, as their home language is embraced within the playgroup. For example, staff ensure they have key words in place in the child's home language. Text is displayed in different languages, and children's popular stories are offered in dual languages. Children participate in interactive stories where they have to listen to instruction and learn new words. Staff are skilful in how they speak to children. They ask questions and children are offered time to think and respond. Parents are positively encouraged to be involved in their children's development. They are encouraged to share their child's progress at home, by contributing to the children's progress records. Observations and assessments, which includes the required progress check for children between the age of two and three years are accurately recorded. These are supported using samples of the children's work and photographs. Staff have established and continue to develop links with other agencies and professionals, to ensure a shared approach to care for children who attend more than one setting. This shared approach, along with observations, means that children receive timely interventions and consistent support. This also means that children with special educational needs and/or disabilities receive very good support to ensure they meet their full potential.

Children progress well and are effectively developing the skills they need for their future learning and eventual move to school. They cooperate together when sharing buckets of water and develop early writing skills using chunky brushes to make marks and patterns in the garden. They help one another tidy away toys at the end of the morning. Children use a quiet, comfortable space to enjoy stories and share books with their friends. They sit on cosy, child-sized sofas and cushions and select stories of their choice developing a real love of books. Children enjoy using a variety of resources to develop pre-writing skills. For example, children have fun when using clip boards and pens. They use these in the garden and indoors to draw pictures of their family and make good attempts at writing their names. Staff offer lots of praise for their efforts. Children's achievements are celebrated, for example, as their pictures, writing and art work are beautifully displayed within the setting. Children's mathematical development is supported as mathematical resources are readily available indoors. For example, they show sustained levels of concentration using bears to compare shape, colour and size. They enjoy singing favourite number songs. Number lines are displayed indoors, and water and sand play help children to understand about volume and capacity as they fill containers. However, children's mathematical understanding is not supported as well outdoors. This is because they have fewer opportunities to experience and discover things about number, shape, distance and

measure through their physical activity. This means that opportunities for learning are not maximised for those children who prefer outdoor activities.

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

Children are eager and keen to learn. They excitedly arrive at playgroup, settle quickly and happily leave their parents. This is as a result of an effective settling-in process. Information is provided for parents regarding the importance and role of the key person and details of the key groups are displayed. Information is exchanged with the key person before children attend to ensure staff know the children well. For example, parents complete documents detailing their child's individual needs, such as, the child's routines, likes and dislikes. This also promotes continuity and consistency in care. Children confidently approach staff for help, reassurance and cuddles as they have formed close attachments with them. Children are comfortable with visitors to the playgroup asking lots of questions about their visit and engaging them in their play. Children are effectively supported emotionally when it is time to move on to school. Teachers from the host school and other local primary schools are invited to visit children at playgroup, so that children can become familiar with them. The manager discusses, with parent's consent, children's progress and their unique needs in order to promote continuity in the child's learning. Activities are planned and focused to ensure children are emotionally prepared for their next stage of learning. For example, children attend special assemblies at school and use school uniform in role play.

Children benefit from a most welcoming, bright and clean learning environment. Children understand the clear boundaries and expectations that are reinforced by the staff who are positive role models. As a result, children's behaviour is good. Children receive plenty of praise and staff have a consistent approach to managing behaviour, so that children receive clear messages. Training is completed to refresh the staff's knowledge on strategies to manage behaviour positively and ensures that the behaviour management policy is consistently implemented.

Through everyday routines and play children are learning ways to keep themselves safe and healthy. For example, children enjoy fresh air and exercise daily as they make independent choices as to where they play. The outdoor environment offers many activities to support children's physical development. They have fun balancing and negotiating space using ride on toys. They run at speed, climb and demonstrate good control skills as they kick balls. Children are gently reminded not to run indoors and are encouraged to think why this might not be a good idea. They learn how to safely evacuate the building during fire drills so that they know what to do in the event of an emergency. Children are supported by staff to develop their independence skills. For example, children confidently take care of their personal needs. This is because they access the toilet independently. Children know to wash their hands and talk about germs. They independently choose when they want to eat snack and use signs to self-register. Healthy nutritious snacks are offered and snack time is regarded as a social occasion. However, opportunities are not maximised at this time to encourage independence. This is because snack is often prepared and served for them and children are not encouraged to pour their own drinks.

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

The manager and her team of staff are all fully aware of the requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage. Detailed policies and procedures are in place and promote children's safety, health and well-being. These are effectively implemented and regularly reviewed and updated. Since the last inspection, the manager has ensured all documentation regarding medical advice and treatment is now in place. All documentation relating to safeguarding supports the efficient running of the playgroup. Risk assessments are thorough and evaluated to ensure they are effective. All staff complete appropriate checks to ensure they are suitable to work with children. Staff are clear of their roles and are deployed effectively, ensuring children are supervised at all times and offering a good level of support. For example, staff move from indoors to outdoors according to where the children choose to play. Staff complete an effective induction programme following a robust recruitment process. All staff fully understand their responsibility to protect children from harm and give safeguarding high priority. They are fully supported by the manager and have completed safeguarding and first-aid training to ensure they know how to respond effectively to any incidents or accidents.

The manager has clear action plans in place that highlight areas to improve. Effective monitoring of staff performance and regular supervision meetings provide opportunities to discuss possible training needs, which is positively supported to enhance teaching practice. Staff morale is high as a result and they feel valued as they are able to discuss their own professional development. The manager monitors all aspects of playgroup practice. This includes the educational programme and the quality of observations and the assessment system. All staff contribute and monitor the planning process to ensure children's next steps in learning are fully considered and children make good progress in their development. As a result of accurate monitoring, any gaps in learning are quickly identified. Appropriate support is put in place to ensure individual groups of children or groups of children with special educational needs and/or disabilities are accurately tracked and fully supported.

Partnerships with parents are well established and very positive. They are closely involved with their children's learning and routinely encouraged to contribute to their learning records. Parents are warmly welcomed into the playgroup. Regular newsletters, notices and daily discussions ensure parents are kept updated about what is happening at playgroup. The recent introduction of sharing information safely on-line has proved very successful. Parents have daily opportunities to discuss children's progress but are also able to arrange more formal meetings if required. Parents speak very positively of all aspects of the playgroup. Comments include how the staff are friendly, supportive and approachable. They comment on how well their children settle, are happy and make good progress in a cosy and homely environment. As a result of recommendations made at the last inspection, partnerships with external agencies have improved and continue to develop. These contribute to meeting the children's needs. For example, the manager attends meetings at the local children's centre and hosts meetings with other local early years settings to discuss good practice. Relevant and useful information is shared informally with

the reception teachers at the host school. This means teachers are prepared, ready to support the children as they move to full-time education.

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. We re-inspect nurseries and pre-schools judged as requires improvement within 12 months of the date of 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		There were no children present at the time of the inspection. The inspection judgement is that the provider continues to meet the requirements for registration.
Not met		There were no children present at the time of the inspection. 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	EY400095
Local authority	Suffolk
Inspection number	874091
Type of provision	
Registration category	Childcare - Non-Domestic
Age range of children	0 - 17
Total number of places	26
Number of children on roll	49
Name of provider	Eileen Anne Lough
Date of previous inspection	30/04/2010
Telephone number	01787 370861

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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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