

Stepping Stones

Manor Infant School, Teachers Way, Holbury, Southampton, Hampshire, SO45 2QG



Inspection date

18 March 2015

Previous inspection date

21 January 2009

The quality and standards of the early years provision	This inspection:	Outstanding	1
	Previous inspection:	Good	2
How well the early years provision meets the needs of the range of children who attend		Outstanding	1
The contribution of the early years provision to the well-being of children		Outstanding	1
The effectiveness of the leadership and management of the early years provision		Outstanding	1
The setting meets legal requirements for early years settings			

Summary of key findings for parents

This provision is outstanding

- The strong leadership team effectively oversee the excellent systems for the safe and successful running of the pre-school. All those involved are committed to provide a fully inclusive service, and exemplary reflective evaluation brings about continuous improvements for children.
- The high number of staff present at all times and the effective organisation of the pre-school means children receive excellent support. Children with additional needs benefit greatly from the one-to-one support they receive.
- The very strong focus on improving the professional development of staff has an extremely positive effect on children's well-being and learning.
- A well-established key-person system helps children to form very secure attachments. This promotes children's well-being very effectively and provides a strong base for their learning. Children see photographs of their families, which helps them to settle.
- Staff provide an extremely interesting and stimulating environment that encourages children to be highly independent in their play and take a lead in their own learning.
- Staff forge highly effective partnerships with parents, external agencies and other providers, which ensure children's individual needs are met quickly, and they are extremely well prepared for the next stages in their learning.
- The highly skilled staff give a very high priority to supporting children's language development. As a result, all children, including those with communication difficulties and those learning English as an additional language, are developing excellent communication and language skills.
- Staff help children develop an excellent understanding of healthy lifestyles and foods that are good for them, through cooking activities and sharing recipes with parents.

What the setting needs to do to improve further

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

- enhance further the opportunities for children to learn positive attitudes about gender, and challenge negative attitudes and stereotypes in their role play.

Inspection activities

- The inspector observed staff and how they interact with children during play and learning activities, and viewed the play areas and resources.
- The inspector had discussions with staff and the chair of the committee, and with children and parents to gain their views of the pre-school.
- The inspector undertook a joint observation with the manager.
- The inspector sampled a range of documentation including children's records, staff suitability and safeguarding procedures.
- The inspector discussed the pre-school's self-evaluation and how the action plan is used to bring about continuous improvement.

Inspector

Jacqueline Munden

Inspection findings

How well the early years provision meets the needs of the range of children who attend. This is outstanding

Staff underpin the exceptional educational programmes through their high expectations of themselves and the children. They have an expert knowledge and understanding of how children learn. The sessions are an excellent balance of child-initiated and adult-led activities. Staff follow a national scheme exceptionally well to help them assess children's language and communication skills. They plan small-group times highly effectively to meet each child's individual learning needs. Children are eager to take part, showing they are interested. They remain focused as staff ask them to place an object on the slide and under the bed. This encourages children to take turns, build their vocabularies and to develop a good understanding of positional language. Children benefit greatly from the tailored support. Parents are fully included in this as staff suggest how they can extend their child's learning at home. As a result, all children make excellent progress given their starting points on entry. Staff use every opportunity during daily routines to promote children's learning. For example, at lunchtime, staff ask children if they would like their sandwiches cut into square or rectangle shapes, which promotes their mathematical skills.

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

Staff have a particular in-depth knowledge of each child, their home backgrounds, the professionals involved in their life, and their very specific needs. Staff forge excellent communication and build trust with parents who report they value their support greatly. All children display great confidence, develop high levels of self-esteem and independence, and are well prepared for school. They respond very well to the positive reinforcement and encouragement from staff who skilfully guide children towards playing cooperatively and controlling their emotions. Children benefit enormously from the time they spend outdoors, which is an extension of the indoor learning environment, and from the high levels of physical activity available to them. Superhero play is popular and embraced by staff who recognise it is a good way to extend children's language and help children to play safely alongside others. However, the range of resources to allow children to explore gender roles in a positive way in their imaginary role play activities is not extensive.

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

The management team has an extremely secure understanding of the requirements. All adults involved are clear how to deal with accidents and are confident in the procedures to follow to address any child protection concerns. Management ensure the ongoing suitability of staff and promote their professional development highly effectively. Therefore, staff are very well trained and have the skills to support all children including specific groups, such as the two-year-olds. Management follow very effective systems to monitor children's learning and quickly identify any particular needs.

Setting details

Unique reference number	EY297420
Local authority	Hampshire
Inspection number	833951
Type of provision	
Registration category	Childcare - Non-Domestic
Age range of children	2 - 8
Total number of places	24
Number of children on roll	66
Name of provider	Stepping Stones Pre-School (Hardley) Committee
Date of previous inspection	21 January 2009
Telephone number	023 8089 7025

Stepping Stones Pre-School registered in 2005. It is run by a voluntary management committee and operates from rooms in Manor Church of England Infant School, Holbury. The pre-school opens each weekday during school term times from 8.30am until 4pm. Children may stay for an optional lunch club between 11.30am and 12.30pm. The pre-school receives funding for the provision of free early education for children aged two, three and four years. There are 10 members of staff, including the manager who holds Early Years Professional Status and an early years qualified teacher. Of the remaining eight staff, one holds a foundation degree in early years and all others hold a relevant level 3 qualification. The pre-school also employs an administrator.

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