

Stepping Stones Play and Learn Group



Wilson Marriage Centre, Barrack Street, Colchester, Essex, CO1 2LR

Inspection date

4 November 2015

Previous inspection date

16 May 2011

The quality and standards of the early years provision	This inspection:	Requires improvement	3
	Previous inspection:	Outstanding	1
Effectiveness of the leadership and management		Requires improvement	3
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment		Outstanding	1
Personal development, behaviour and welfare		Requires improvement	3
Outcomes for children		Outstanding	1

Summary of key findings for parents

This provision requires improvement. It is not yet good because:

- The provider does not have robust systems in place to ensure that all committee members are suitable for their role. A legal requirement to make sure that all committee members have undergone suitability checks has not been met.
- Systems for identifying all areas for change, development and further improvement are not yet fully effective.

It has the following strengths

- The teaching skills of all staff are excellent and interactions with children are exceptional. Staff have extremely high expectations of all children, treating them all with respect and valuing the uniqueness of each child.
- The partnership work with parents and other professionals is highly effective. Parents receive consistent guidance and support. They are kept regularly informed of how well their children are progressing in their learning and development. The ethos around inclusion is exceptional.
- Children are extremely well prepared for their next stage in learning. The managers and staff work in close partnership with all schools to help ensure there is continuity in care and education as children move on.
- Performance management takes place through regular supervision and appraisal meetings. Robust observations of staff practice are effectively discussed and evaluated, which helps to ensure high-quality teaching is maintained at all times.

What the setting needs to do to improve further

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

	Due Date
■ improve recruitment practice to ensure that robust and rigorous procedures are followed to ensure the suitability of all people concerned with the leadership and management of the setting.	13/11/2015

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

- identify areas of development or improvement more precisely as part of the setting's continuous quality-improvement programme.

Inspection activities

- The inspector viewed the premises inside and outdoors, and observed interactions between managers, staff and children.
- The inspector held discussions with managers, the nominated person and a small selection of parents, taking all views into account.
- The inspector viewed a wide range of documents, including children's files and assessments, the setting's self-evaluation form, relevant policies and procedures, risk assessments and health and safety documentation.
- The inspector conducted a joint observation with the manager.
- The inspector checked evidence of the qualifications of staff and suitability checks for all managers, staff and committee members.

Inspector

Janice Caryl

Inspection findings

Effectiveness of the leadership and management requires improvement

Leadership and management require improvement because there has been an oversight in relation to ensuring that Ofsted have all the information they require. A legal requirement has been overlooked in relation to ensuring that required checks have been carried out by Ofsted for some committee members. However, in this case the impact on children is minimal and overall, the arrangements for safeguarding are effective. This is because all committee members hold a Disclosure and Barring Service check. Furthermore, they do not have unsupervised access to children. All staff demonstrate they know what they must do if concerned about a child's welfare. Other aspects of leadership and management are strong and this has an extremely positive impact on children's learning outcomes. Those in charge effectively monitor children's learning and development and involve staff, parents, committee members and children in this. However, arrangements for checking on other areas of practice are less robust. Staff are committed to attending training and working in partnership with others to help improve their skills even further.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment is outstanding

Staff are well qualified and very experienced. They are totally responsive to children's individual needs. Highly effective care, attention, emotional and educational support are provided to all children. Children sit and listen extremely well and thoroughly enjoy the interactive storytelling sessions. They develop their communication and language skills and develop their imagination, contributing to storylines throughout the session. Younger children and those in need of physical and sensory stimulation have use of a soft-play area and sensory room. Staff support older children to count and recognise numbers. Group work is differentiated to suit the needs of all children. For example, some children enjoy counting balls and recognising colours as they throw them into the bucket. Others concentrate well as they count spots on the dice and match the number to the digit.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare require improvement

The welfare of children is not totally secure because members of the committee have not all been thoroughly vetted through Ofsted. However, children's physical and emotional well-being is fostered extremely well. The atmosphere and ethos within the setting promotes positivity and a 'can do' approach. All staff support children effectively in developing their self-confidence and independence. Children listen and respond well, respect others and learn the difference between right and wrong. Children achieve a strong sense of belonging. They have their own key person who is attentive to their individual needs. Children have opportunities to develop their physical skills through daily exercise and enjoy using the stimulating outdoor area. They begin to learn about managing risks and how to keep themselves safe.

Outcomes for children are outstanding

All children are making excellent progress in relation to their starting points. Gaps in learning and development are closing swiftly for all children, including disabled children and those with special educational needs and funded children. Children are extremely well supported in acquiring the skills needed for moving on to school.

Setting details

Unique reference number	650140
Local authority	Essex
Inspection number	848094
Type of provision	Full-time provision
Day care type	Childcare - Non-Domestic
Age range of children	2 - 17
Total number of places	26
Number of children on roll	49
Name of provider	Stepping Stones Play & Learn Group (Colchester) Committee
Date of previous inspection	16 May 2011
Telephone number	01206 860467

Stepping Stones Play and Learn Group was registered in 1991. The nursery employs 18 members of childcare staff. Of these, 14 hold appropriate early years qualifications at level 3 or above, including one member of staff with Early Years Professional status. The nursery opens from Monday to Friday, term time only. Sessions are from 9.30am until 3pm. The nursery provides funded early education for two-, three- and four-year-old children. The nursery supports disabled children and those with special educational needs.

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.

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