

Stepping Stones Play and Learn Group



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

Inspection date

16 March 2017

Previous inspection date

27 September 2016

The quality and standards of the early years provision	This inspection:	Outstanding	1
	Previous inspection:	Inadequate	4
Effectiveness of the leadership and management		Outstanding	1
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment		Outstanding	1
Personal development, behaviour and welfare		Outstanding	1
Outcomes for children		Outstanding	1

Summary of key findings for parents

This provision is outstanding

- Leaders drive improvements within the setting, and develop strong links with relevant agencies in the local community. All children who attend benefit from an exceptional provision and excellent links to external professional support such as therapists and health practitioners.
- Leaders and managers have high expectations of their staff and of what children can achieve. Children are supported extremely well by a stable, highly experienced and qualified staff team. Staff know their children very well and have developed particularly strong and positive relationships with them.
- The high staff ratio's enables staff to specifically focus on meeting each child's individual need and interest, as such children are extremely well prepared for the next steps in their learning.
- Children with special educational needs and/or disabilities are superbly supported by staff who have extensive specialist training and experience to expertly support them and their families.
- Educational programmes and activities are exceptionally well planned and adapted to ensure all children are included and gain the most from every session. Teaching is of consistent high quality. Excellent use is made of indoor and outdoor resources to extend children's learning and development.
- Partnership with parents is exceptional. Staff provide high levels of consistent support and develop very close working relationships with families. They support parents fully in a variety of ways, for example attending health appointments and meetings with other agencies. Parents provide high praise for the care and support staff provide.

What the setting needs to do to improve further

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

- continue to support staff to extend their professional development to build on and maintain the already excellent teaching practices.

Inspection activities

- The inspector observed the quality of teaching during indoor and outdoor play and assessed the difference that this made to children's learning.
- The inspector spoke with the manager and staff and looked at relevant paperwork including staff files, safeguarding documents and the settings self-evaluation form.
- The inspector looked at planning, assessment and evaluation documents, including children's learning journals, to assess how children's progress is monitored and supported.
- The inspector completed a joint observation with the manager.
- The inspector spoke to a small number of parents and took account of their views.

Inspector

Sharon Conaty

Inspection findings

Effectiveness of the leadership and management is outstanding

Leaders have made huge improvements since the last inspection to ensure arrangements for safeguarding are effective. Robust systems are now in place to ensure committee members, as well as staff, are vetted thoroughly and Ofsted are notified of leadership changes swiftly. Staff are extremely well supported by experienced and skilled managers who provide effective mentoring and supervision. A strong focus on continuous professional development is evident. Managers identify areas for improvement well and take effective measures to implement change. They are focussed on delivering high quality education and care to the children. Comprehensive assessment and planning is rigorously monitored and reviewed to ensure each child's individual needs are met thoroughly. As such, gaps in children's learning and development are closing.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment is outstanding

The staff team use their wealth of experience to provide exceptional teaching and learning for all children. The key person uses their knowledge about their children expertly. They provide a tailored plan of activities and opportunities to precisely meet the interest and needs of the children. Staff are inspirational and creative in providing activities that are accessible or adapted so that all children are included. For example, children have recently shown delight when finding bugs and worms in the garden, staff have developed this curiosity by extending many activities that have captured the children's imagination. This has included a bug hunt which helped develop and extend all areas of children's learning as they explored, helped each other, and used mathematical language and writing to record details of the bugs found. Staff are increasing opportunities to share ideas from each other's good practice as part of their plans for ongoing improvement.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare are outstanding

New children settle quickly. Many are familiar with the setting because they attend a tots group with their families before they start. This means children already know staff and their key person well. Staff actively prepare for children's arrival and begin assessments of what children can do alongside planning to support the next steps in their learning. Parents are exceptionally positive about the setting and cannot praise the staff highly enough. Children are developing independence and are encouraged to make choices. A range of communication techniques are used including signing and a picture recognition aid. Behaviour is managed positively and consistently by staff. Healthy snacks are provided alongside packed lunches. Mealtimes are a sociable and enabling time where children sit together and enjoy developing greater independence choosing and preparing their food.

Outcomes for children are outstanding

Children are confident, curious and eager to be active and involved in play and their learning. They develop positive relationships and learn how to work together, share and take turns. Early interventions and strong partnership working means all children make excellent progress, including children whose starting points are below expected levels. Children develop the skills needed for the next stage in their learning.

Setting details

Unique reference number	650140
Local authority	Essex
Inspection number	1082297
Type of provision	Full-time provision
Day care type	Childcare - Non-Domestic
Registers	Early Years Register, Compulsory Childcare Register, Voluntary Childcare Register
Age range of children	2 - 17
Total number of places	26
Number of children on roll	44
Name of registered person	Stepping Stones Play & Learn Group (Colchester) Committee
Registered person unique reference number	RP527783
Date of previous inspection	27 September 2016
Telephone number	01206 860467

Stepping Stones Play and Learn Group was registered in 1991. The nursery employs 17 staff of whom 14 are childcare staff. Of these, 10 hold appropriate early years qualifications at level 3 or above, including two members of staff with Early Years Professional status. The nursery opens from Monday to Friday, term time only. Sessions are from 9.30am until 3pm. An after school club runs between 3.30pm until 6 pm. The nursery provides funded early education for two-, three- and four-year-old children. The nursery supports children who have special educational needs and/or disabilities.

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