

Stepping Stones Pre-School



William Barnes Primary School, Bridge Street, Sturminster Newton, Dorset, DT10 1BZ

Inspection date	8 March 2018
Previous inspection date	25 March 2015

The quality and standards of the early years provision	This inspection:	Good	2
	Previous inspection:	Good	2
Effectiveness of the leadership and management		Good	2
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment		Good	2
Personal development, behaviour and welfare		Outstanding	1
Outcomes for children		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents

This provision is good

- The manager and deputy work directly with the children and provide high-quality teaching. For example, when older children recognised a picture of an anaconda snake, the deputy encouraged an extensive discussion. Children talked about why they would not find one today, where they live and how they could travel to get there.
- Through effective partnerships with the school, staff have implemented more ways to support children's language and communication skills to prepare them better for school. They now provide books for parents to enjoy with their children at home.
- Children have extremely high self-esteem. Staff highly value children's opinions and support them extremely well to listen to each other. For example, children expertly negotiate ways to share resources and vote on activities. They maturely accept that the majority wins and know that they will get their choice later.
- Staff seek good information on children's starting points from parents and other providers. Staff know the children well through their observations and ongoing discussions with parents, and use the information effectively to plan challenging activities. All children make good progress in their learning and development.

It is not yet outstanding because:

- The manager does not consistently enable staff to learn from each other's strengths, skills and knowledge, to extend the quality of teaching even further.
- Staff do not always help children make predictions and test their own ideas further.

What the setting needs to do to improve further

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

- provide greater opportunities for staff to share their skills, knowledge and best practice, to enhance the quality of teaching even further
- help children to make predictions and test their ideas further.

Inspection activities

- The inspector observed activities and the quality of teaching indoors and outdoors.
- The inspector spoke with staff, children and parents, and took account of the provider's improvement plans.
- The inspector held a meeting with the manager and deputy, and carried out a joint observation.
- The inspector checked safeguarding information and the safety of the premises.
- The inspector sampled documentation, including policies and procedures, children's development records and planning.

Inspector

Elaine Douglas

Inspection findings

Effectiveness of the leadership and management is good

Safeguarding is effective. The manager and staff know what to be aware of to safeguard children, and follow good procedures if they have any concerns a child may be at risk of harm. The management team regularly evaluates its practice, seeking parents' and children's views. It is currently focusing on reorganising the indoor environment to have more defined areas of learning. Through training, staff have introduced daily activities to strengthen children's hands and grip, to support their writing skills. They have positive partnerships with parents and ensure they exchange good information so that parents can support their children's learning at home. The manager monitors children's overall development well. She identifies where individual or groups of children may need additional support and ensures they receive it quickly to catch up.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment is good

Staff plan well to build on what children already know and can do. They plan good small-group activities according to children's individual needs. For example, they challenged the most able children to recognise rhyming words and make their own suggestions, and children learning English as an additional language had individual support using songs. Staff consistently help children to develop their mathematical skills. For example, when young children described something as heavy, staff provided scales so they could see how heavy. Staff joined in with a children's shopping game and encouraged their counting and understanding of money. Staff provide good support to help children to learn about cause and effect, such as when they saw how wind blew the windmills. Staff helped them to notice that the wind blew the windmills harder than they could for themselves.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare are outstanding

Children's behaviour is exemplary. Staff consistently acknowledge children's feelings and reinforce rules throughout, so children respond extremely well. Children have an excellent understanding of safe and healthy practices. They skilfully negotiate space outside and independently go indoors for drinks of water, exclaiming they get hot and thirsty from being 'super-fast'. Staff involve children in risk assessing the premises, so they gain a highly knowledgeable understanding of how to keep themselves safe. For example, they decided the climbing-frame steps were 'too slippy' and checked later in the morning to see if they had improved before using them. Staff expertly plan the outdoor environment to help children to become excited and engrossed in their learning. For instance, children looked under logs for bugs and found pictures of them in books. They kept records of what they found. Staff very skilfully used finding a slug to help children notice the displayed pictures, to engage them in discussing how many legs different species have.

Outcomes for children are good

Children develop good skills that prepare them well for their next stage of learning and school. They are all confident communicators and develop good physical skills. Children are inquisitive and actively engage in activities. Since their last inspection, staff ensure children manage age-appropriate tasks and become highly independent in their self-care.

Setting details

Unique reference number	EY395220
Local authority	Dorset
Inspection number	1093933
Type of provision	Sessional provision
Day care type	Childcare - Non-Domestic
Registers	Early Years Register, Compulsory Childcare Register, Voluntary Childcare Register
Age range of children	2 - 4
Total number of places	20
Number of children on roll	43
Name of registered person	Stepping Stones Playgroup Committee
Registered person unique reference number	RP519805
Date of previous inspection	25 March 2015
Telephone number	07778336928

Stepping Stones Pre-School registered in 1993 and moved to its current premises in 2009. The pre-school operates from William Barnes Primary School in Sturminster Newton, North Dorset. The pre-school is open Monday to Friday during term time only, from 8.45am to 3.15pm. A team of seven staff work with the children. The manager has an early years degree and five staff hold an early years qualification at level 3. One member of staff holds a qualification at level 2 and is working towards a level 3. The pre-school receives funding to provide free early education for children aged two, three and four years.

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