

# Inspection of Stepping Stones

c/o J H Godwin, Melbourne Road, Blacon, CHESTER CH1 5JG

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Inspection date:

6 November 2019

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## **Overall effectiveness**

**Good**

The quality of education

**Good**

Behaviour and attitudes

**Good**

Personal development

**Good**

Leadership and management

**Good**

Overall effectiveness at previous inspection

Outstanding

## What is it like to attend this early years setting?

### The provision is good

Children are happy and settled in all areas of the provision. Staff have high expectations for children to reach their full potential and build self worth. The curriculum is well balanced and thoughtfully designed to give all children the best start in life. Role play provides children with opportunities to rehearse real-life roles and gain ideas about what they can be in the future. On the whole, staff provide activities based on children's interests and abilities to encourage their ongoing development.

Children are helped to develop their speaking skills as staff model words and phrases. Young children enthusiastically repeat 'pop' and 'again' as they chase bubbles around the room. They are active learners and enjoy taking part in self-chosen activities, as well as those that are adult-directed. Pre-school children relish in opportunities to develop creativity as they explore colours and patterns. They enthusiastically recreate representations of the firework displays they have seen with paint and coloured icings. Younger children enjoy making marks on a large cardboard house that they made from a packing box. They proudly ascribe meaning to the marks they make. Children generally behave well and staff help them to understand expectations. When they struggle to regulate their behaviour, staff support them and help them to resolve their feelings.

## What does the early years setting do well and what does it need to do better?

- Leaders and managers are committed to providing high-quality provision. They understand the social issues in the community and this drives the ambition to make a difference to the lives of children and their families. The manager is aware of the importance of providing an enabling environment that influences the development of good communication skills. She recognises the impact these skills have on children's readiness for school. As a result, staff prioritise children's language development from the outset. They attend training and implement the knowledge they gain to enhance their teaching practice. They narrate young children's play and encourage children to develop language skills through sharing a wide variety of stories, rhymes and songs. Children are keen to join in with familiar phrases and eagerly provide ideas for the missing words in incomplete sentences.
- Additional funding for disadvantaged children is used effectively to help them to achieve as well as others. Staff source and introduce resources that promote children's interests and enthusiasm for learning. Children's progress is monitored effectively by the manager so that interventions can be put into place swiftly to help close any identified gaps. An example of this is the introduction of 'finger gym' activities. These encourage pre-school children to build strong, flexible fingers and promote better hand-to-eye coordination to develop the skills

needed for writing.

- Children's listening and social skills are promoted effectively through innovative, focused teaching strategies. Young children are encouraged to concentrate and follow instruction with the help of a soft toy prop who explains the listening rules prior to a turn-taking game.
- Key staff work very effectively with parents, health professionals, specialist teachers and other agencies to ensure that children with special educational needs and/or disabilities benefit from well-targeted support. Children with profound learning difficulties and complex medical needs are successfully included in all aspects of the provision. Through the use of specialist equipment, children gleefully join in activities, such as play dough, outdoor play and music and movement. Their communication is promoted as staff use signing.
- Children are encouraged to learn mathematical concepts, such as positional language. Some pre-school children relish the challenge of finding shapes that are hidden in, on or under items in the outdoor area. In a focused teaching activity, children are challenged to place items that interest them in, on or under a box. However, at times, staff do not provide clear enough explanations about concepts that are new, to ensure all children's full understanding.
- Staff work in partnership with parents so that they know about the languages that children speak at home and can support children in developing English. However, staff do not use what they know about children's different cultures and experiences to meaningfully increase all children's awareness of the traditions and lifestyles of others.
- Staff ensure that they obtain information from parents and other provisions children have attended so that they can build on what children know and can do. However, they are not as proactive in developing links with provisions that children attend on an ongoing basis, to support consistency in their experiences.

## Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Staff undertake regular child protection training and discuss examples of effective practice at team meetings. This has a positive impact on the knowledge that staff have about safeguarding procedures and their role in keeping children safe. Staff are aware of the action to take to report any concerns they have about the practice of adults caring for children. The manager assesses the risks associated with the individual health care needs of children effectively. Staff attend training to ensure that they can act in an emergency, to promote children's safety and well-being.

## What does the setting need to do to improve?

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

- provide further opportunities for children to gain a greater understanding of

diversity, for example the cultures, traditions and experiences of others which may be different to their own

- strengthen partnership working with other provisions that children attend, to help promote greater continuity in children's care and learning
- support staff to tailor the ways that they teach new concepts to children, so that they consistently build on what children already know and understand.

## Setting details

<b>Unique reference number</b>	305344
<b>Local authority</b>	Cheshire West and Chester
<b>Inspection number</b>	10109865
<b>Type of provision</b>	Childcare on non-domestic premises
<b>Registers</b>	Early Years Register, Compulsory Childcare Register, Voluntary Childcare Register
<b>Day care type</b>	Sessional day care
<b>Age range of children</b>	2 to 4
<b>Total number of places</b>	36
<b>Number of children on roll</b>	54
<b>Name of registered person</b>	Stepping Stones of Chester Committee
<b>Registered person unique reference number</b>	RP524131
<b>Telephone number</b>	01244372446
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	16 October 2014

## Information about this early years setting

Stepping Stones registered in 1982 and is situated in Blacon, Chester. The provision opens five days a week, from 8.50am to 2.50pm, during term time. There are 10 staff, nine of whom hold an appropriate early years qualification at level 3 or above. The provision provides funded education for two-, three- and four-year-old children.

## Information about this inspection

### Inspector

Dianne Andrews

### Inspection activities

- The inspector had a tour of the premises and discussed with the manager the organisation of provision to support children's care and learning.
- The inspector carried out two joint observations alongside the manager and discussed the findings with her.
- The views of parents were gathered through discussions held with them.
- The inspector spoke to children and staff at suitable times during the day and observed adult-led and child-initiated activities.
- Documentation to confirm the suitability of staff was examined.

We carried out this inspection 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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