

Inspection of Stepping Stones Pre-School

Rear of Exning CP, Oxford Street, Exning, NEWMARKET, Suffolk CB8 7EW

Inspection date: 7 October 2021

Overall effectiveness

Requires improvement

The quality of education

Good

Behaviour and attitudes

Good

Personal development

Good

Leadership and management

Requires improvement

Overall effectiveness at previous inspection

Outstanding

What is it like to attend this early years setting?

The provision requires improvement

Children enjoy their time at the pre-school. Although there is a breach of statutory requirements, this does not adversely affect children's safety. Children attending this pre-school have excellent opportunities to experience and explore the awe and wonder of the world around them. Staff ensure that the activities that children join in with help them to develop new knowledge and skills. Children have many experiences that they may not get in their home lives, such as learning about the bees which are located on the school field. They also learn life skills as they participate in forest schools. Children delight in making a giant 'share soup' together. They use their imagination as they grate a dandelion flower as a 'cheese' topping before they divide the soup out among themselves and the staff. As the children pretend to taste their soup, staff encourage them to talk about what flavours there may be. The children contribute their suggestions, such as 'garlic', 'onion', 'cheese' and 'definitely grass!'.

Children learn new vocabulary and use it as they play. For example, staff plan play opportunities in response to children's interest in a traditional story. Children learn the language of construction as they use the trowels and buckets. They build with real bricks and their pretend cement to make a 'brick house'.

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

- The pre-school committee has not notified Ofsted of all of the adults associated with the provision to allow full checks and decisions regarding their suitability to be made. However, the risks posed to children are minimised because these people do not have direct contact with children. These adults do not have access to confidential information. However, it is a breach of the requirements that the pre-school must meet.
- Despite the weakness identified in leadership and management, the majority of the pre-school's activities are carried out to the highest level. Many are exemplary, for example staff help children to develop a strong social conscience. Children help to make hampers for disadvantaged members of the community. The manager is dedicated and ensures that children and families who need help receive it at the times they need it most. She spends additional funding wisely to ensure that those children entitled to it are fully included in all aspects of pre-school life. Extensive work has also been carried out to support families during the COVID-19 (coronavirus) restrictions and beyond.
- Children with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) receive highly skilled interventions. Staff work in extremely close partnership with parents and other professionals, to ensure that each child has a highly individualised plan of care. Staff develop specialist knowledge and use purposefully sourced equipment to help children during planned one-to-one time to support their

strong progress.

- The manager and the staff team have an ambitious curriculum in place. In the main part, this gives children strong opportunities to learn. For example, the staff skilfully execute plans to help children learn about where food comes from and successfully help children to try new foods. Children experience caring for animals. They gain strong communication and language skills.
- Children engage deeply in their chosen activities. For example, together with staff they focus on making their own 'perfume' using the garden herbs and flowers. However, at times when children move from one activity to another, staff do not always give enough time and support to those children who are still learning to follow the setting's routines. This means that children do not always have the help that they need to make these moves confidently.
- Parents recognise the high value of the pre-school in their children's lives. A variety of strategies involve parents in their children's learning. These include a teddy bear called 'Travelling Ted' who goes home with children so that they can share their experience in a shared scrapbook.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

The staff and the manager are vigilant to notice any changes in children's behaviour and well-being. They get to know families well and offer bespoke interventions according to each families' needs, proactively working with other agencies when needed. They know how to refer concerns about a child's well-being and/or safety. All staff complete relevant training that helps them to know and understand safeguarding issues. Staff know the procedures to follow if they have concerns about the behaviour of another adult working with children.

What does the setting need to do to improve?

To meet the requirements of the early years foundation stage, the provider must:

	Due date
provide Ofsted with information about those who make up the management committee to enable necessary suitability checks to be carried out.	11/11/2021

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

- review the approaches staff use at times of transitions between activities to fully support children's learning and well-being at these times.

Setting details

Unique reference number	251670
Local authority	Suffolk
Inspection number	10113218
Type of provision	Childcare on non-domestic premises
Registers	Early Years Register, Compulsory Childcare Register, Voluntary Childcare Register
Day care type	Full day care
Age range of children at time of inspection	2 to 5
Total number of places	32
Number of children on roll	58
Name of registered person	Stepping Stone Pre-School (Exning) Committee
Registered person unique reference number	RP908437
Telephone number	01638 600079
Date of previous inspection	21 March 2016

Information about this early years setting

Stepping Stones Pre-School registered in 1995. The pre-school employs eight members of childcare staff, including the manager. All staff hold appropriate early years qualifications at level 3 or above, including the manager who holds a level 6 qualification. The pre-school opens from Monday to Friday, 7.30am until 6pm, all year round except for one week in the summer and one or two weeks in December. The pre-school provides funded early education for two-, three- and four-year-old children. It supports children with SEND and those who speak English as an additional language.

Information about this inspection

Inspector

Kate Hipperson

Inspection activities

- This was the first routine inspection the provider received since the COVID-19 (coronavirus) pandemic began. The inspector discussed the impact of the pandemic with leaders and managers and has taken that into account in their evaluation of the playgroup.
- Children spoke to the inspector about their activities. The inspector observed the quality of interactions between staff and children and evaluated the impact that these had on children's learning and development.
- The manager, who is also the nominated individual for the committee, met with the inspector and discussed their curriculum for children, what they aim for children to learn and remember, and how this is implemented.
- The inspector looked at evidence of the suitability of the committee and staff members. First-aid training certificates were viewed.
- The inspector and the manager carried out a joint observation of a planned activity.
- The inspector spoke with a small number of parents and considered their views about the pre-school. Written feedback sent in for the inspection and parent questionnaires were also viewed.

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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