

Inspection of Stepping Stones Pre-School

Lynsted Little Hall, Lynsted CP School, Lynsted Lane, Kent ME9 0RL

Inspection date: 20 January 2022

Overall effectiveness	Good
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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 tenderly welcomed into the pre-school. Their hands are held as they are guided through to a variety of exciting activities set out ready for them, such as water play and dinosaur worlds. Children, including those who are new, all settle quickly. The small staff team know all children well and they create a family feel to the pre-school. Children develop warm, caring relationships with staff and form good friendships with each other. For example, they share toys with their friends as they play and giggle together, playing hide and seek.

Children take part in a wide range of activities to encourage physical development and strengthening muscles, such as play dough disco, wake up and shake up and dancing with scarfs, pretending to be super heroes. Staff are highly skilled in planning a challenging curriculum for each child to support their individual needs. They are able to bring all areas of learning into each activity and are good at making links across the curriculum to deepen children's understanding of key concepts. For example, they delight in making pretend drinks, while counting, talking about full and empty and safety in the home.

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

- Managers and staff provide an ambitious curriculum for all children, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities. Staff plan small, attainable targets and give lots of praise for achievements. Funding is used to ensure children with additional needs can fully access the activities on offer. This builds children's confidence and allows them to make good progress.
- Staff have a good understanding of early communication and language needs and work well to support children. They use signing, picture and photo cards and now and next cards, enabling all children to make the progress they are capable of.
- Staff design a curriculum that builds on what children already know and uses their interests to inform planning. For example, they used children's love of ice as a base to investigate how volcanos can explode. While this allows children to develop a deeper understanding of new knowledge and ignites a love of learning, sometimes, the beginning of an activity can be less well presented. This means children are not always fully focused and ready to take on board all the learning on offer.
- Staff are good role models, who provide consistent guidance and strategies. They use techniques such as distraction, discussion and negotiation, to help children manage their own behaviour and build friendships with each other. For example, children are supported with turn taking in games and this allows them to play beautifully alongside each other for long periods of time.
- Staff support children to understand their own emotions and provide a safe

space for them when needed. Leaders and staff attend specific training to develop their understanding of how to support emotional well-being. This allows children to feel safe, happy and secure.

- Children practise their independence skills frequently and grow in confidence. For example, staff actively encourage them to put on their own coats, go to the toilet themselves and open their own lunch packets. This promotes children's self-esteem and perseverance.
- Staff provide a rich set of experiences to promote children's understanding of the world around them, such as exploring space, nature, seasons and imaginative play. Children learn about some celebrations from different cultures. However, staff do not purposefully explore and plan ways in which they can successfully embrace the heritage and cultural backgrounds of the children attending. This does not fully support all children's awareness of similarities and differences.
- The manager has a clear vision for the curriculum and she successfully shares this with her staff. She seeks appropriate training that enhances learning and development, to address the current specific needs of the children. This supports children's development in all areas.
- The manager and staff maintain effective partnerships with parents. Parents report highly about the quality of education and care that the pre-school provides, particularly in relation to settling children, supporting those with additional needs and the fast progress their children make. They comment that they felt fully supported during the COVID-19 pandemic and benefitted from frequent contact and resource packs being sent home.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Staff have a clear understanding of child protection and the wider aspects of safeguarding. All staff complete regular training and additional training is sought to ensure the safety, inclusivity and well-being of all children and staff. Staff understand the importance of making prompt referrals, should they have any concerns about a child, and are fully aware of their local procedures to follow. This supports children's and their families' well-being. Staff undertake effective risk assessments of the pre-school environment, which helps to reduce and minimise any potential hazards.

What does the setting need to do to improve?

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

- strengthen the presentation of activities to children, to enable them to always be fully engaged from the start and ensure that their learning is not disturbed
- improve staff understanding of how to embrace children's cultural backgrounds

and how to plan more effectively for this.

Setting details

Unique reference number	127646
Local authority	Kent
Inspection number	10128687
Type of provision	Childcare on non-domestic premises
Registers	Early Years Register
Day care type	Sessional day care
Age range of children at time of inspection	2 to 4
Total number of places	
Number of children on roll	29
Name of registered person	Stepping Stones Pre-School Committee
Registered person unique reference number	RP901858
Telephone number	01795 522 736
Date of previous inspection	15 March 2016

Information about this early years setting

Stepping Stones Pre-School re-registered in 1999. It operates from two rooms in a modular building, in the grounds of Lynsted and Norton School, near Sittingbourne, Kent. The nursery is open Monday to Friday, from 8am to 4pm, during term time only. The provider receives funding to provide free early education for children aged two, three and four years. The pre-school employs four staff; of whom all, including the manager, hold appropriate early years qualifications to level 3.

Information about this inspection

Inspector

Nina Harvey

Inspection activities

- This was the first routine inspection the provider received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. The inspector discussed the impact of the pandemic with the provider and has taken that into account in their evaluation of the provider.
- Leaders and the inspectors completed a learning walk together and discussed the curriculum.
- The inspector carried out joint observations with the leader, spoke with staff, interacted with children and viewed appropriate documentation.
- Parents shared their views about the setting with the inspector.

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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