

Inspection of Stepping Stones

Lansdowne Cp School, Gladstone Drive, SITTINGBOURNE, Kent ME10 3BH

Inspection date: 17 March 2022

Overall effectiveness	Good
The quality of education	Good
Behaviour and attitudes	Outstanding
Personal development	Outstanding
Leadership and management	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Not applicable

What is it like to attend this early years setting?

The provision is good

Children arrive happy at the nursery, with a positive attitude to learning. They have access to a well-planned curriculum which keeps them motivated to learn. Children immediately settle into their chosen activities. For example, they share books, make up stories and put on a performance for others to watch. Staff use a range of highly effective strategies to support children's speech and language development, including children who speak English as an additional language. When talking and reading stories to children, staff use signing, picture cards and translation pens to support all children's communication and language skills. Furthermore, staff help children to learn about other people and cultures around the world.

Children's behaviour is excellent. They are friendly and extremely caring and considerate towards each other. Children form strong attachments with their key person. This helps them to feel safe and secure. Children learn to follow the rules of the setting and explain why these are necessary. For example, they confidently understand that they must not cross the yellow line by the gate to keep themselves safe.

Children enjoy the time they spend outdoors. They are fascinated by the world around them and notice new things happening in their environment. For example, they relish watching construction diggers nearby, and ask questions to satisfy their curiosity. Children learn the names of the machines and what they are used for. This helps to broaden children's knowledge and extend their vocabulary.

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

- The manager is aware of the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on children's well-being. She quickly put in place strategies to support children with this. For example, staff use their knowledge gained from relevant training to implement different activities to support children's emotional well-being. Children take part in Yoga sessions, which helps to build their self-esteem.
- Staff encourage children to be extremely independent and develop exceptional self-care skills. They ask children to choose when they would like something to eat and drink. Children confidently manage tasks for themselves, such as opening food wrappers. They are highly skilful in managing their personal needs such as toileting, handwashing and putting on their own coats. Children have an exceptional knowledge of personal hygiene. They know why it is important to use hand sanitiser throughout the day, which is readily available to children.
- Staff feel very well supported by their manager. They talk highly of the team and how they are valued in their role. The manager completes regular supervision sessions with staff to discuss their performance and identify further training opportunities, to increase their knowledge and skills.

- Overall, children take part in thought-provoking activities that develop their knowledge of changes over time. For example, they learn how ice turns to water and experiment with dissolvable objects. However, at times, staff do not use these opportunities to ask further questions and challenge all children's thinking, to maximise their learning even further.
- Parents are complimentary about the nursery. They comment on how caring and supportive the staff are. They say that their children make excellent progress because of the opportunities and interactions staff provide.
- Children's emotional needs are supported superbly from the start. The manager implements a settling-in process which is personalised to meet the children's individual needs. Parents provide a wealth of information to help staff build a full picture of children's development and skills before they start. Staff use this information exceptionally well to support children's well-being when starting at the nursery.
- Staff provide wonderful opportunities for physical play. Children carefully balance on crates and planks. They have great fun riding bikes and navigate well as they move safely around the garden with their friends.
- Staff work hard to promote continuity in children's care and learning. For example, they work alongside parents and other professionals to create target plans for children. This helps children to make good progress in relation to their starting points.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

All staff have a secure understanding of their roles and responsibilities to safeguard children. They know the signs and symptoms that may indicate a child is at risk of harm, and the procedure to follow to raise a concern about a child's welfare. This includes the wider aspects of safeguarding matters, such as those who may be exposed to extreme views. The manager and staff carry out thorough risk assessments to check the indoor and outdoor areas. This helps to minimise potential hazards and maintain a safe environment. The manager carries out robust checks to help ensure that staff are suitable for their roles.

What does the setting need to do to improve?

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

- increase the opportunities to maximise children's learning to the highest level.

Setting details

Unique reference number	2537124
Local authority	Kent
Inspection number	10231365
Type of provision	Childcare on non-domestic premises
Registers	Early Years Register
Day care type	Full day care
Age range of children at time of inspection	2 to 4
Total number of places	28
Number of children on roll	45
Name of registered person	JRS Early Years Limited
Registered person unique reference number	2537123
Telephone number	01795410499
Date of previous inspection	Not applicable

Information about this early years setting

Stepping Stones registered in 2019 and is based in Sittingbourne, Kent. The nursery employs eight members of staff. Of these, four hold appropriate early years qualifications at level 3. The manager has a relevant level 6 qualification. The nursery opens Monday to Friday, from 8.45am to 3.15pm, term time only. The nursery provides funded early education places for two-, three- and four-year-old children.

Information about this inspection

Inspector

Nicky Chambers

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.
- The inspector viewed the nursery and discussed the safety and suitability of the premises.
- The manager and the inspector completed a learning walk together of all areas of the nursery and discussed the early years curriculum.
- Children spoke to the inspector about their time at the nursery.
- The inspector spoke to the manager and staff at appropriate times during the inspection and took account of their views.
- The inspector observed the quality of education being provided indoors and outdoors, and assessed the impact that this was having on children's learning.
- The manager and the inspector carried out a joint observation.
- Parents shared their views on 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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