

Inspection of Stepping Stones Day Nursery & Preschool

46 Chase Road, Southend-On-Sea, Essex SS1 2RE

Inspection date: 6 April 2022

Overall effectiveness	Good
The quality of education	Good
Behaviour and attitudes	Good
Personal development	Good
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 are happy, settle quickly and enjoy their time at the nursery. They are curious and motivated to learn. Children explore fun, interesting resources, which include lots of loose parts, such as wooden shapes, planks, tyres, dressing-up clothes and donated costume jewellery. They independently move and combine these resources during their play. Children behave well and have good social skills. They freely share, take turns and listen carefully to their friend's ideas. Children confidently share their ideas and thoughts with staff.

Children make good progress in relation to their starting points. They enjoy using natural resources, such as flowers, plants and leaves, in their mud kitchen. Children work with staff to use some of the flower petals to make 'perfume', which they use as fragrance spray around the room. Outside, children use their good imaginative skills, for example, to create homes for large dinosaurs. They persevere when their initial ideas do not work out. Staff use questions, such as 'how can you make the house higher?' to help children rethink their ideas. Children try again and balance the plank on small traffic style cones, which creates enough height to give the dinosaur a home. They declare that the dinosaur is happy and that they did good 'teamwork'.

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

- Overall, children enjoy exploring resources for themselves. For example, babies find fascination in banging a shiny bead chain onto a metal plate. They smile as they make different sounds and quickly learn to create the noise again. However, sometimes, staff do not notice when babies are already enjoying an activity and take them away to do something else, such as painting. This means that babies are unable to finish their independent explorations that help to support their learning and development.
- Children enjoy listening to stories read to them by staff, who also encourage children to use books as a source of information. They place reference and picture books alongside resources to help extend children's learning further. However, the range of books available in the book area does not fully reflect the different ages and stages of the children in the room.
- Parent partnerships are good. Staff make effective use of an online app to help ensure that parents know how their children are at nursery. Children's achievements and their progress is updated daily. Parents also send any messages directly to staff, which helps them to adapt children's care to meet any changes to their individual routines. Parental comments in written testimonials show they are confident that their children are happy, enjoy being at nursery and are making good levels of progress.
- The manager and deputy manager follow robust recruitment procedures to

ensure that staff are suitable to work with children. Ongoing supervision, training and support helps them to identify and target areas for additional training. This helps staff to deliver an educational programme which is ambitious and inspires children to learn.

- Staff are beginning to develop relationships with teachers at local schools. They encourage teachers to visit and ensure that assessments are ready for when children move on to the next stage in their learning. Staff involve other professionals, such as the special educational needs coordinator, where they have concerns about a child's learning or development. This helps to close the gaps in learning for children with special educational needs and/or disabilities.
- Babies enjoy a range of activities which encourage them to develop their physical skills. For example, they explore a small wooden frame with both feet firmly on the carpet until they gain enough confidence to start to climb. Staff closely supervise the babies. This helps them learn to take risks and keep themselves safe.
- Older children confidently prepare their own snacks. They use child safe tools to peel carrots and cut strips of pepper. Children discuss the importance of drinking water to help keep themselves healthy. They remind staff that they must brush their teeth when they wake up to stop their 'breath stinking'. This helps children to develop a good awareness of how to lead a healthy lifestyle.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Staff regularly update their knowledge and understanding of child protection and safeguarding matters. They complete online training courses, that help them to quickly identify any signs or symptoms that may indicate a child is at risk of harm or abuse. Staff know what to do in the event they have any concerns about a child. They know the local reporting arrangements to follow. They continually risk assess the environment to help keep children safe.

What does the setting need to do to improve?

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

- improve staff's confidence in recognising when to allow children and babies time to finish an activity of their choosing
- develop the range of books to more accurately capture all children's interests.

Setting details

Unique reference number	2561039
Local authority	Southend-on-Sea
Inspection number	10233380
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	0 to 4
Total number of places	39
Number of children on roll	39
Name of registered person	Stepping Stones Day Nursery & Preschool Ltd
Registered person unique reference number	2561038
Telephone number	07905104431
Date of previous inspection	Not applicable

Information about this early years setting

Stepping Stones Day Nursery & Preschool registered in 2019. The nursery is in Southend on Sea and employs 11 members of staff. Of these, eight hold appropriate early years qualifications, including two members of staff who hold level 6 qualifications. The nursery opens from Monday to Friday, all year round from 7.30am to 6.30pm. The nursery provides funded early education for two-, three- and four-year-old children.

Information about this inspection

Inspector

Sue Buckingham

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 all areas of the provision and discussed the safety and suitability of the premises.
- The manager and the inspector completed a learning walk together and discussed the nursery's curriculum and what it is that staff want their children to learn.
- Children spoke to the inspector during the inspection.
- The inspector observed the quality of education being provided, indoors and outdoors, and assessed the impact that this is having on children's learning.
- The manager provided the inspector with written testimonials from parents, which the inspector took into account.
- The inspector looked at relevant documentation, including evidence of the suitability of staff working in the nursery.

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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