

Inspection of Stepping Stones Day Nursery

Stepping Stones Day Nursery, 83 North Street, Okehampton, Devon EX20 1BD

Inspection date: 28 April 2022

Overall effectiveness

Outstanding

The quality of education

Outstanding

Behaviour and attitudes

Outstanding

Personal development

Outstanding

Leadership and management

Outstanding

Overall effectiveness at previous inspection

Good

What is it like to attend this early years setting?

The provision is outstanding

Children are extremely emotionally secure and happy in this exceptional nursery. They form strong attachments with staff who know their interests and needs well. The well-being of children and staff is a priority for managers as they recognise the impact this has on each child's potential development. Children are remarkably independent, inquisitive and confident learners. Staff create a highly stimulating environment that promotes curiosity and imagination. For example, the children and staff discover slow worms in the garden. They learn about their habitat and how to protect them. Children's interest in bugs leads to questions about their appearance. Staff thoughtfully provide magnifying glasses for the children to explore different bugs and books to find out their names.

Behaviour is exceptional. Children develop and reinforce their own rules. They play cooperatively together. For example, a group of pre-school children make up a game rolling wheels to see who can go the furthest. They agree on what to do and take turns without adult support. Children are extremely well prepared and excited about their transition to school. Strong links with local schools enable this to be highly effective.

Parents speak extremely positively about the support the staff and managers provide for their children. Parents no longer enter the building as they did before the COVID-19 pandemic. Comprehensive online communication is in place to keep parents up to date with progress and information. Key workers ensure they greet parents and children at the beginning and end of the day.

All children, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, make exceptional progress from their starting points. Staff identify needs at the earliest point and adapt learning opportunities to ensure children reach their full potential.

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

- The managers and staff have high aspirations for each and every child. They work tirelessly to enhance the environment and ensure staff access high-quality training. Staff plan an ambitious curriculum from the children's interests and adapt as new interests or questions emerge. Children are also given exciting new experiences to widen their knowledge and understanding. For example, they learn a nursery rhyme in Welsh for St David's Day. They discover a giant footprint in the earth and work together to establish who it may belong to, triggering imagination and creativity.
- Children develop incredible independence and self-help skills as the managers and staff have an exceptional understanding of how children develop and learn. Each classroom commendably builds on children's skills and knowledge as they

progress through the nursery. Babies follow their home routines. Children in the adjoining room start to experience more opportunities to develop their independence, such as sitting for snack as a group, using utensils and making choices. Older children independently follow toilet and handwashing routines, learn to recognise their names and vote on a favourite story.

- Children confidently talk about what they know. For example, they explain how they have made a vehicle out of boxes. They articulate why they have added certain features. Staff are tremendously skilful in introducing new vocabulary to develop children's speech and language. Additional activities are in place to enhance children's speech and language, particularly for those whose development was impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Children develop a love of books as staff expertly design activities around treasured stories and rhymes. Cosy spaces and dens for sharing books are found across the nursery, inside and out. Children are absorbed while staff skilfully bring stories to life. Children retell the stories in their play and to their friends.
- Children effectively learn about numbers, shapes and measures as staff create an environment to promote mathematical language through play. For example, tally charts are used to record how many skittles are knocked over while bowling. Shape is discussed as children build models. Children eagerly consider what number comes next when singing action rhymes.
- Parents commend managers and staff for the immense support their children receive. They welcome the regular communications and updates. Parents talk about how their children are eager to attend and are making wonderful progress with their independence, playing, talking and listening.
- Children learn to make healthy choices throughout their day. They relish the snacks and meals that staff prepare for them. Food preferences and dietary needs are fully implemented. Children independently access water as they need it. Staff regularly check children's well-being and flexibly schedule sleep times into the daily routines. Physical skills and play in the fresh air are strongly promoted, and children learn to challenge themselves to develop their skills. For example, babies pull themselves up to cruise the furniture while older children swing on the new activity bars.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

The managers and staff have an exemplary awareness of their responsibilities to keep children safe. They have an excellent understanding of the procedures to follow if children are at risk of harm. All staff receive annual training in safeguarding children, including what to do if they have concerns about their colleagues. All staff are trained in paediatric first aid. There are robust systems in place for the safe recruitment and induction of new staff. Staff provide vigilant supervision of children and encourage them to extend their skills safely with awareness of others.

Setting details

Unique reference number	EY478044
Local authority	Devon
Inspection number	10237616
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	74
Number of children on roll	117
Name of registered person	Stepping Stones Day Nursery (SW) Ltd
Registered person unique reference number	RP533722
Telephone number	01837 55111
Date of previous inspection	15 September 2016

Information about this early years setting

Stepping Stones Day Nursery has been operating since 1998 and re-registered in 2014. It is privately owned and operates from a purpose-built building in Okehampton, Devon. The nursery is open from 7.45am to 6pm from Monday to Friday for 50 weeks of the year, closing for Christmas and bank holidays. There are 25 members of staff employed to work with the children. The owner/manager holds early years professional status and all staff are suitably qualified. The nursery receives early education funding to provide places for children aged two, three and four years.

Information about this inspection

Inspector
Dilys Vincent

Inspection activities

- This was the first routine inspection the pre-school received since the COVID-19 pandemic. The inspector discussed the impact of the pandemic with the provider and has taken that into account in their evaluation of the nursery.
- The manager led the inspector on a learning walk around the nursery and discussed the early years curriculum.
- The inspector observed activities and the quality of education being provided, indoors and outdoors, and assessed the impact on children's development.
- The manager and the inspector carried out a joint observation. The inspector spoke with a range of staff and managers.
- The inspector spoke with several parents and children and took account of their views.
- A range of documentation was considered, including certificates, policies and safeguarding checks.

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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