

Inspection of Stepping Stones Pre-school

Melton Community Centre, Cross Street, KETTERING, Northamptonshire NN16 9DH

Inspection date: 11 July 2022

Overall effectiveness	Outstanding
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The quality of education	Outstanding
Behaviour and attitudes	Outstanding
Personal development	Outstanding
Leadership and management	Outstanding
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Outstanding

What is it like to attend this early years setting?

The provision is outstanding

Children are excited when they arrive to see what is on offer for them at pre-school. Staff provide a very warm welcome for all children. Staff swiftly notice children who are upset and provide sensitive reassurance and comfort, which results in children quickly settling to their play. Children have close friendships and play exceptionally well together. They confidently invite others to join their play and become fully engaged, cooperating with one another to build models with wooden bricks. Together they search in the box for suitable bricks to use as wheels and to build furniture for their 'car house'. This independent and cooperative play significantly promotes children's deeper thinking, and enables them to develop their creative ideas.

Relationships between children and staff are very positive and actively promote children's feelings of well-being. Staff teach children to successfully use small tools, such as hole punches and scissors. Children are eager to have a go and try using tools for themselves. They show great pride in their achievements as they press the hole punch and use it to make paper shapes for their caterpillar pictures. Staff show children how to use pegs to display their picture for everyone to see.

Staff keep children's interests at the heart of the curriculum, and always consider ways to extend and enhance children's learning. For example, children are fascinated by a story about a caterpillar. Staff extend their discussions to include other insects. Children develop their mathematical skills as they count the spots on ladybirds, and find out how many legs spiders have.

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

- The long established management team share the curriculum intent with staff extremely well. Staff know the children they care for and understand their individual next steps in learning. This results in all staff providing positive interactions and being effective in extending children's learning. The manager and deputy observe staff's practice regularly and provide ongoing feedback, to ensure staff's ongoing professional development.
- Staff recognise children who need additional support and carefully respond to their needs. For example, staff identify several children who struggle to regulate their feelings and emotions. Staff provided these children quiet time away from the main group. This enabled children to become calm and talk about their feelings. Gradually, this approach has been extended to all children as they have access to quiet dens, with books and sensory toys, in the main group room. Children are now confident to use these quiet spaces independently. Sensitive support from staff helps children learn how to recognise their emotions and understand different ways they can manage feelings.

- All children, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities and those who speak English as an additional language are learning to be confident communicators. Staff provide individualised support for children depending on their unique needs. For example, children have access to visual aids, such as picture cards, to support their understanding of daily routines. Visual aids and picture cards also help children to indicate items they want to play with, and supports them to tell staff how they are feeling. Staff ensure all children can access the activities and resources in a safe manner. For example, scissors and small tools are stored in transparent boxes where children can see them. This enables them to indicate to staff if they want to use them for their art and craft activities.
- Staff use rich language that builds on children's vocabulary and understanding. They introduce the names of sea creatures, including clown fish, seahorse and jellyfish as children complete a jigsaw puzzle. Children learn to use new words, such as left and right, as they listen to a lift the flap storybook. Staff show children how the flaps open on each page and say the corresponding word to help the younger children learn. Older children show complete delight and engagement as they enthusiastically repeat familiar rhyming sentences and correctly predict the sequence of the story.
- Children show continued persistence at tasks they find challenging. For example, children use a reference picture to complete complex puzzles. They keep trying, turning the pieces around to see where they might fit. Children show pride in their achievements as they complete the puzzle and staff offer them warm praise. At snack time, children learn how to use a knife safely to spread toppings on their toast. Dedicated staff spend time to help children who struggle.
- Staff work closely with parents to find out about children's experiences at home. They plan activities to help broaden these further. For example, children learn about nature and develop an understanding of how things grow as they spend time at the pre-school allotment. They grow peas and potatoes and discuss new seeds with staff. Children plant seeds themselves in small pots, and take them back to the pre-school to care for them, before returning the new seedlings to the allotment to replant. Children show awe and wonder as staff show them how to open pea pods and encourage them to taste what is inside. They eat the peas and take home the potatoes they have grown. Parents comment on how delighted their children are to help cook and eat them.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Staff supervise children closely during their activities. They are deployed effectively, and steps are taken to keep children safe. During arrival and departure times, staff supervise the main entrance doors to ensure children do not leave unattended. A privacy panel is in place on the window of the main door to prevent children being seen from the outside as they make their way to and from the toilet. Staff demonstrate a secure understanding of how to recognise signs and symptoms of abuse, and know how to record and report concerns. Regular discussions about

safeguarding at team meetings and refresher training ensure staff knowledge is up to date.

Setting details

Unique reference number	EY390463
Local authority	North Northamptonshire
Inspection number	10138487
Type of provision	Childcare on non-domestic premises
Registers	Early Years Register, Compulsory Childcare Register
Day care type	Full day care
Age range of children at time of inspection	2 to 4
Total number of places	40
Number of children on roll	57
Name of registered person	Black, Jacqueline Ann
Registered person unique reference number	RP511561
Telephone number	07523974286
Date of previous inspection	11 November 2014

Information about this early years setting

Stepping Stones Pre-school re-registered in 2009 and is managed as an unincorporated association. It is situated in Kettering, Northamptonshire. The pre-school employs eight members of childcare staff. Of these, seven hold appropriate early years qualifications between level 3 and 6, including one with early years teacher status. The pre-school opens from Monday to Friday during term time. Sessions are from 8.30am until 3pm. The pre-school provides funded early education for two-, three- and four-year-old children.

Information about this inspection

Inspector

Melanie Eastwell

Inspection activities

- This was the first routine inspection the setting received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. The inspector discussed the impact of the pandemic with the manager and has taken that into account in their evaluation of the pre-school.
- The inspector observed the quality of education during activities and assessed the impact this has on children's learning.
- The inspector completed a joint observation with the manager.
- The manager, deputy and inspector completed a learning walk together.
- The inspector held a meeting with the manager and the deputy. She looked at relevant documentation and evidence of the suitability of staff working in the pre-school.
- The inspector spoke with staff and children during the inspection.
- The inspector spoke to several parents during the inspection and took account of their views.

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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