

Inspection of Stepping Stones Pre-School

Rear of Exning CP, Oxford Street, Exning, NEWMARKET, Suffolk CB8 7EW

Inspection date: 13 September 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

Requires improvement

What is it like to attend this early years setting?

The provision is good

Children thoroughly enjoy their time at the warm and welcoming pre-school. They are happy, confident and positively engage with staff who know them well. Staff provide a calm and relaxed atmosphere that helps children to feel safe and secure. Children are eager to explore exciting and purposeful activities. For example, children explore the 'potion station'. They investigate a colourful array of flowers and water. Staff extend children's vocabulary as they introduce words, such as 'petal' and 'stem'.

Children confidently move around, both inside and outside. They have good opportunities to develop physical skills. Children share and take turns as they pedal tricycles and balance on ride-on toys. They show great excitement as they take supervised risks. For instance, children push ride-on vehicles to the top of the grassed hill and race down.

Children's behaviour is good. They follow the good examples set by staff who are positive role models. Children work collaboratively with their peers. For instance, children collect water from a tap, using a bucket, and work together to carry it back to the car wash. Children concentrate as they investigate how sponges absorb water. They observe carefully as they squeeze the sponges to create soapsuds.

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

- Parents comment positively about the pre-school. They highly praise staff's excellent communication methods. Parents praise the staff about the pre-school's rigorous settling-in sessions. They compliment how staff support their children's learning and development. For example, staff share ideas, resources and give suggestions, which enables parents to guide their children's learning at home.
- The highly committed manager creates a positive culture. All staff work well together as an effective team. They meet regularly to discuss children's learning and development. Together staff plan exciting activities that follow children's interests. The manager researches training ideas and ensures that staff have good opportunities for professional development.
- Children love to explore the outdoors, and they develop good physical skills. They use a variety of equipment at the well-resourced mud kitchen. For example, children show enjoyment as they use their hands to explore the large mud area. They use their imagination as they pretend to make a 'chocolate vinegar cake'.
- Staff support children with special educational needs and/or disabilities extremely well. They consult with parents and other professionals very well. Together they create detailed education health and care plans. This helps staff

meet the individual needs of children from the beginning.

- Partnership working is effective. The manager and staff work closely with local primary schools. They confidently share information about children's learning and development. Staff invite teachers to take part in a variety of activities. For example, they read stories, play games and share lunch with the children. This helps to support children's transitions for when they move to Reception.
- Children's independence is promoted to the highest level. They wash their own hands and learn the importance of good hygiene. Children pour their own drinks and help tidy away. Staff develop children's understanding of healthy and unhealthy foods. Children participate in meaningful learning experiences. In particular, they learn how to reuse water and discover alternative ways to recycle.
- Staff encourage children to explore the natural world. For instance, children harvest home-grown foods. They help prepare the foods and enjoy tasting them. Children love to explore the world around them. They investigate sycamore seeds and giggle as they watch them move through the air. Staff encourage children to learn and care for animals. Children learn about the local community. For example, staff organise visits to the local church, shop, duck pond and woodland.
- Staff provide many opportunities to develop children's communication and language skills. Children enjoy sharing stories and books, and they take part in rhymes and songs. Staff provide an outdoor library for parents to share stories with children at home. Children are confident and happily engage in conversation with staff. However, sometimes staff do not always extend children's language skills to the highest level.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

The manager follows robust safe recruitment and vetting procedures. She continues to check staff's ongoing suitability to ensure they are suitable to work with children. The manager and staff complete mandatory safeguarding training. They have a good understanding of their role and responsibility to protect children from harm. Staff know the possible indicators for child abuse and neglect. All staff demonstrate a good understanding of wider safeguarding issues, such as the risks to children of being exposed to extremist views. Staff know how to report any concerns they may have about a child to assure their welfare and safety.

What does the setting need to do to improve?

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

- help staff to enhance their teaching skills to consistently support children's communication and language skills.

Setting details

Unique reference number	251670
Local authority	Suffolk
Inspection number	10212817
Type of provision	Childcare on non-domestic premises
Registers	Early Years Register, Compulsory Childcare Register, Voluntary Childcare Register
Day care type	Full day care
Age range of children at time of inspection	2 to 4
Total number of places	55
Number of children on roll	52
Name of registered person	Stepping Stone Pre-School (Exning) Committee
Registered person unique reference number	RP908437
Telephone number	01638 600079
Date of previous inspection	7 October 2021

Information about this early years setting

Stepping Stones Pre-School registered in 1995. The pre-school employs eight members of childcare staff, including the manager. All staff hold appropriate early years qualifications at level 3 or above, including the manager who holds a qualification at level 6. The pre-school opens from Monday to Friday, 7.45am until 6pm, all year round, except for one week in the summer and one or two weeks in December. The pre-school provides funded early education for two-, three- and four-year-old children.

Information about this inspection

Inspector

Kerrie Osler

Inspection activities

- The inspector discussed any continued impact of the pandemic with the provider and has taken that into account in their evaluation of the provider.
- The manager took the inspector on a learning walk of the pre-school and explained the curriculum and learning intentions for children.
- The inspector had discussions with the staff and had meetings with the manager during the inspection.
- The manager and the inspector carried out a joint observation of an activity.
- The inspector spoke to some parents to gain their views and for them to feed back on their children's learning.
- Parents shared their views of the setting with the inspector.
- The inspector looked at various documentation, such as evidence of the suitability of the committee and staff members. She also reviewed staff's first-aid training certificates.

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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