

Inspection of Early Steps Pre-School

South Beach Residents' Association, Fulmar Drive, Blyth, Northumberland NE24 3RJ

Inspection date: 16 February 2023

Overall effectiveness	Good
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The quality of education	Good
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Behaviour and attitudes	Good
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Personal development	Good
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Leadership and management	Good
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Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Good
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What is it like to attend this early years setting?

The provision is good

Children benefit from an ambitious curriculum that helps them to develop their independence. They make regular choices in their play and learn to do things for themselves. Children show an excellent awareness of the setting's routine. They arrive in the morning, eager to start their day, hang their coats and bags on the correct peg and put away their snack and lunch boxes. They learn to self-register and sit on the carpet area ready for their greeting time.

Children are confident and demonstrate good levels of self-esteem. They proudly show their artwork to others and show their good early literacy skills when drawing pictures using large chinks and paper in the outdoor area. They spend time combining real flowers, soil, stones and other materials together and pretend to make vanilla cakes. They re-enact real life scenarios during pretend play. For example, staff sit in a pretend hairdressing chair while children use accessories and brushes to style their hair. This demonstrates children's good imaginative skills.

Children benefit from physical play. They learn to move their bodies in different ways and show that they can stop and start when instructed. They climb on outdoor apparatus, such as large slides, and walk steadily over balancing beams. They jump through hoops and learn to throw and catch beanbags.

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

- The manager and her staff team are very caring in their approach. They continually model positive behaviours, and kneel down to children's level to talk to them in a sensitive and calm manner. They offer reassurance if children are upset and explain that it is important to share and take turns. Children behave well. They are kind to one another and form strong friendships. For instance, they seek each other out to share their experiences and invite others into their games. This shows children's good social skills.
- Children are excellent communicators. They join in with discussions and show a love of storybooks. Children listen attentively as staff read their favourite stories. They join in excitedly with repeated words and phrases as well as with familiar songs and rhymes. Staff talk to children as they play and ask well-timed questions. They give children time to think about their responses and engage them well in conversations. This helps to promote children's communication and language skills.
- Staff attend regular staff meetings and receive supervision sessions. The manager and deputy pre-school manager work alongside staff to offer support and are good role models. All staff are clear in their roles and responsibilities. However, staff do not receive more focused training to help enhance their skills and make further improvements in the teaching of the curriculum.

- Parents are complimentary about the care their children receive. They comment on the positive relationships their children form and talk positively about the storybooks they bring home to share. This helps to provide a consistent approach to children's learning. Parents talk about how staff support their children's learning, work closely with a range of professionals and help children to prepare well for future learning. They talk about how their children have developed since attending the setting. Parents feel involved in their children's learning and compliment staff on how approachable they are.
- The manager is aware of some of the strengths and weaknesses of the setting. However, she does not focus her evaluations on the overall quality of education to help to swiftly identify and address emerging weaknesses in practice.
- Children show a good understanding of how to lead a healthy lifestyle. They join in with songs and rhymes about learning to wash their hands and using the toilet. Children bring in healthy packed lunches and snacks from home. They talk about foods that are good for them and how to wash their hands to make sure they get rid of germs.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

The manager and staff demonstrate a good understanding of safeguarding practices. They understand the process to follow in the event of a concern about the welfare of a child. There is a safeguarding policy in place. This includes the safe use of mobile phones and cameras in the setting and the steps to follow in the event of an allegation against a member of staff. There is a designated lead for safeguarding who has completed in-depth training. This includes the impact of domestic violence on children and signs that a child and family could be exposed to extreme views or behaviours.

What does the setting need to do to improve?

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

- provide focused training to help to enhance staff's skills and make further improvements in the teaching of the curriculum
- strengthen ways of evaluating the overall quality of education to help to swiftly identify and address emerging weaknesses in practice.

Setting details

Unique reference number	301827
Local authority	Northumberland
Inspection number	10264846
Type of provision	Childcare on non-domestic premises
Registers	Early Years Register
Day care type	Sessional day care
Age range of children at time of inspection	2 to 4
Total number of places	48
Number of children on roll	54
Name of registered person	South Beach Residents Association Committee
Registered person unique reference number	RP911144
Telephone number	01670 367971
Date of previous inspection	28 June 2017

Information about this early years setting

Early Steps Pre-School registered in 1993 and operates from South Beach Community Centre in Blyth. The pre-school employs nine members of childcare staff. Of these, eight hold appropriate early years qualifications at level 3. The pre-school opens from Monday to Friday, term time only. Sessions are from 8.45am until 11.45am and from 12.30pm until 3.30pm. The setting receives funding to provide free early education for children aged three and four years.

Information about this inspection

Inspector
Emma Allison

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 manager joined the inspector on a learning walk and talked to the inspector about their curriculum and what they want children to learn.
- Children told the inspector about their friends and what they like to do when they are at pre-school.
- Staff spoke to the inspector during the inspection.
- The special educational needs coordinator spoke to the inspector about how they support children with special educational needs and/or disabilities.
- 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 inspector carried out a joint observation of a group activity with the manager.
- Parents shared their views of 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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