

Inspection of Stepping Stones Childcare (Cornwall)

12-14 Wesley Place, Mt Charles, St Austell, Cornwall PL25 4QA

Inspection date:

26 September 2023

Overall effectiveness

Good

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 feel safe and content. They happily wave goodbye to their parents and find their friends on arrival. They settle quickly, and staff play with them. Staff engage them in interesting conversations. For example, they talk about what they had for breakfast. Children share that their 'mummy and daddy drink tea and coffee with sugar'. Staff extend this well and ask the children questions, such as 'how many sugars do they have?' Children listen and engage in back-and-forth conversations with staff.

Staff deliver an interesting and well-targeted curriculum. For example, staff follow the children's interest in teeth and help them to learn about healthy lifestyles and oral health. They read relevant books together and plan activities where children clean teeth that are printed on laminated sheets. Staff talk to the children about what they are doing and its impact. Children practise unscrewing the lid from some toothpaste and putting it back on. Children learn skills they can use at home.

There is an effective communication and language curriculum in place. Staff use a range of strategies to help support children's speech. For example, when staff ask a question, they pause and wait for children to respond. When appropriate, staff introduce new words to expand children's vocabulary. For example, children enjoy playing with dinosaurs and want to feed them. Staff suggest that the triceratops may like to eat 'dandelions' or 'dock leaves'. Children copy these words and repeat them in their play.

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

- Staff support children with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) effectively. They use a range of strategies to help children with SEND make progress. For example, when communicating with children, staff show them an object for reference to help their understanding. Staff provide sensory activities to calm and relax children, such as watching and catching bubbles.
- Staff develop children's knowledge of mathematical concepts effectively. Children look at sea animals in the water tray. Staff ask the children, 'how many octopuses are there?' Staff hold up their fingers and count slowly with the children. Other children empty and fill buckets with sand. Staff talk to them about how heavy they are. Children lift the buckets and see which ones are heavy or light.
- Children respond positively to staff and develop good listening skills. Staff ring a triangle, and the children immediately stop when they hear it and look up. Staff show them a visual timer to inform them how much time they have left before the next activity. This helps to prepare them for what is coming next and gives them time to finish what they are doing.

- Children develop independence skills effectively. They know the rules and routines of the setting. At snack time, children find their name card and place it on the table. They wash their hands and collect their cup and plate. Children strengthen their finger dexterity. They use wooden tongs to pick up cucumber and carrot sticks for their snack. Staff show children how to use them, which supports their independence. Children persevere and succeed. This boosts their self-esteem and confidence.
- Children like to be outside. They make cupcakes with sand and feed the fish with staff. Other children run around. However, not all children engage in sustained, high-quality play when outdoors. For example, some children move and flit between activities and do not gain as much as they could from the experiences on offer. At times, staff miss opportunities to focus and challenge these children to extend their learning and development further.
- Parents comment that their children have grown in confidence since attending. Staff inform parents what activities their children have done during the day. However, staff do not consistently share children's next steps of development with parents so they can continue to support their learning at home.
- Leaders place high importance on the coaching, mentoring and professional development of the team. Staff attend a wide range of training to improve their practice. Recent literacy training has had a positive impact. Staff have incorporated these ideas and help children to understand how to write letters and that writing has a purpose. Leaders liaise with local schools. This supports the transition when children move on to their next stage of education.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Staff know the signs and symptoms of possible abuse or neglect. They know which agencies to contact should they have a concern about a child's welfare. Staff know what to do in the event of an allegation made against a colleague. Risk assessments are effective. Staff risk assess new garden equipment. They make daily checks before children use it to ensure it is safe, removing any potential hazards. Staff help children to manage their own safety. For example, children learn about road safety during walks in the local area. Staff teach children rules to follow when crossing the road, such as 'stop, look and listen'.

What does the setting need to do to improve?

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

- develop ways to engage all children in sustained, high-quality play when outside, to extend their learning and development further
- build on partnerships with parents and share children's next steps of development so that parents can continue to support their learning at home.

Setting details

Unique reference number	EY489995
Local authority	Cornwall
Inspection number	10260892
Type of provision	Childcare on non-domestic premises
Registers	Early Years Register, Compulsory Childcare Register, Voluntary Childcare Register
Day care type	Sessional day care
Age range of children at time of inspection	2 to 3
Total number of places	30
Number of children on roll	24
Name of registered person	Stepping Stones Childcare (Cornwall) CIO
Registered person unique reference number	RP534601
Telephone number	01726 74493
Date of previous inspection	10 October 2022

Information about this early years setting

Stepping Stones Childcare (Cornwall), Mount Charles, in St Austell, Cornwall re-registered in 2015. It is one of two settings run by Stepping Stones and is a charitable incorporated organisation run by trustees. The setting is open on weekdays, during term time, from 8.20am to 3.20pm. The setting receives funding for the provision of free early education for children aged two, three and four years. There are 11 members of staff. Of these, one member of staff holds a qualification at level 5 and one has a level 4. Five members of staff have a level 3 qualification, one holds an early years degree, one a level 2 qualification, and two members of staff are unqualified.

Information about this inspection

Inspector

Jemma Honey

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 inspector viewed the provision and discussed the safety and suitability of the premises.
- The deputy manager joined the inspector on a learning walk and talked about their curriculum and what they want their children to learn.
- Children communicated with the inspector during the inspection.
- The inspector talked to staff at appropriate times during the inspection and took account of their views.
- 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 deputy manager.
- The inspector spoke to several parents during the inspection and took account of their views.
- The manager showed the inspector documentation to demonstrate the suitability of staff.

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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