

# Inspection of Stepping Stones Pre-School

Bedford Road Lower School, Hillgrounds Road, Kempston, Bedford MK42 8QH

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Inspection date: 19 October 2023

**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 Good

## **What is it like to attend this early years setting?**

### **The provision is good**

From the moment children enter the inviting and well-equipped room, children are ready to learn and play. They enthusiastically look around before choosing an activity or area that interests them. Staff carefully set the room out with familiar resources they know children enjoy, helping to enhance children's self-motivation to experiment and explore. For example, children dip apples cut in half and small pumpkins into paint to create their own artwork. Staff ask children open questions, helping them to predict what might happen when they mix the autumnal colours of the paint together. Children are not rushed when they describe what they see and feel, helping them to gain confidence while they use increasingly complex sentences.

The youngest children watch, copy and learn from their older friends. Staff ensure that their own interactions allow children to build on what they already know and understand at a pace and level suitable for their general stage of development. This contributes to the good progress that all children make. Staff provide dedicated group times for children that complement their level of concentration and stage of learning. For example, while the youngest children go to a quiet area to focus on their communication and language skills, older children are encouraged to recall what they remember about a story. Staff base questions on the story, encouraging children to think about the world around them. This helps children to consolidate what they already know and understand.

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

- The manager and her strong team work very well together. They meet every morning to help plan adult-led activities. Staff use their skills and judgement to spontaneously adapt the activities to suit the numbers of children attending each session. Through this, children learn in a memorable way.
- Key persons build good relationships with parents. As a result, parents feel able to talk to staff about any concerns they might have about their children's learning and development. In addition, staff are keen to support the families as much as they can. This includes support for aspects such as guiding parents through the school application process and, when necessary, signposting families to other agencies and professionals. This helps to support children's well-being at home and in pre-school.
- Children with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are well supported. Specialist staff work with professionals from outside agencies, helping to ensure that strategies and plans put in place to support children are effective. This helps children to make good progress.
- Children behave well in the pre-school. They recognise the music played when it is time to tidy away the toys and equipment, enthusiastically helping staff in the

task. Staff gently remind children to share and to take turns, reassuring younger children that they will have a turn very soon. This helps children to begin to regulate their emotions and reactions towards others.

- Staff are keen to extend their own knowledge and understanding to help enhance their teaching skills. When a member of staff attends a training course or workshop, they share new ideas and what they have learned with the whole team. This contributes to the consistently good quality of education children receive.
- On enrolment, staff gather information from parents about their child's likes and interests, medical needs, allergies and information about the family. This contributes to staff's ability to ensure that children are kept safe and well in the pre-school. However, staff do not always gather sufficiently detailed information about what children already know and understand. As a result, they do not plan how to support children's focused learning right from the start.
- Children have many opportunities to join adult-led activities and to lead their own learning through their self-chosen play. They welcome the friendly staff to join them. Staff ask children questions to help identify what children remember. For example, they check to find out if children know what we use spices for when children sniff the fragrant play dough. There are times, however, when staff need further information to help them to support children's precise learning needs effectively. Without easy access to this information, staff sometimes miss opportunities to extend children's knowledge and understanding even further.

## Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Staff follow the clear procedures leaders have put in place to help ensure that any concerns about children are recorded and reported in a timely manner. The manager ensures that all staff regularly refresh and update their knowledge and understanding about safeguarding through undertaking the relevant training. This contributes to staff's continued understanding of their responsibilities to help keep children safe. Management committee members and the manager carry out checks to help ensure that all adults involved in the pre-school are suitable for their roles.

## What does the setting need to do to improve?

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

- gather even more information from parents to help identify what children need to know and understand next right from the start
- review and find more ways to share children's precise learning needs effectively so that all staff can build on children's experiences and knowledge in a well-informed and focused way during self-chosen play and exploration.

## Setting details

<b>Unique reference number</b>	EY356433
<b>Local authority</b>	Bedford
<b>Inspection number</b>	10301002
<b>Type of provision</b>	Childcare on non-domestic premises
<b>Registers</b>	Early Years Register
<b>Day care type</b>	Sessional day care
<b>Age range of children at time of inspection</b>	2 to 4
<b>Total number of places</b>	24
<b>Number of children on roll</b>	31
<b>Name of registered person</b>	Stepping Stones Pre-School Committee
<b>Registered person unique reference number</b>	RP518986
<b>Telephone number</b>	01234 400114
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	12 January 2018

## Information about this early years setting

Stepping Stones Pre-School registered in 2007. The pre-school opens Monday to Friday, during term time only. Sessions are from 9am until midday and from midday to 3pm. The pre-school provides funded early education for two-, three- and four-year-old children and receives funding for children with SEND. The pre-school employs seven staff, six of whom hold appropriate early years qualifications at level 3 and above. The pre-school is situated on the site of Bedford Road Lower School and Daisy Hill Children's Centre. The pre-school is run by a management committee.

## Information about this inspection

### Inspector

Katrina Rodden

## 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 manager and has taken this into account in her evaluation of the provider.
- The manager and deputy manager carried out a learning walk with the inspector. The inspector assessed the quality of education.
- The inspector observed activities in the pre-school and garden. She spoke to staff and children at appropriate times throughout the inspection.
- The inspector carried out a joint observation with the deputy manager. They discussed the quality of teaching they saw.
- Relevant documents, such as the evidence of suitability checks, certificates and children's joining information, were viewed by the inspector.
- The inspector spoke to a small number of parents and took their views into consideration in her assessment of the provision.

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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