

Inspection of Stepping-Stones Pre-School & Holiday Care C.I.C

Monksmead School, Hillside Avenue, Borehamwood WD6 1HL

Inspection date: 12 December 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	Not applicable

What is it like to attend this early years setting?

The provision is good

Staff and leaders create a warm and stimulating environment that sparks children's curiosity and interest. They arrive happy at the setting, settle very well and are eager to discover and explore. Children have plenty of meaningful opportunities to choose what they would like to access indoors or in the garden, with help from nurturing and supportive staff. For example, in the garden, children have a great time exploring the water tray, filling containers then pouring water through spinning wheels. As they observe how the wheels move, staff encourage children to think what happens next. This supports children's critical thinking and problem-solving skills.

Knowledgeable staff offer inspiring scope for children to explore a wide array of tools and resources to further develop their fine motor skills. For example, children enjoy exploring the play dough activity where they have to create their own gingerbread man. Staff demonstrate effectively how to use the cutters and shapes and children follow instructions successfully. Children apply pressure on the rolling pin to stretch the dough to strengthen their hand muscles. Furthermore, they engage in discussions about their favourite colours and shapes. This also supports children's imagination and understanding of the world.

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

- Staff and leaders offer inclusive practice. They take children's interests and abilities into consideration when planning exciting and stimulating activities. For example, children with special educational needs and/or disabilities and children who speak English as additional language enjoy engaging in an activity where surprise resources are revealed to them. Staff use simple and clear language to guide children's attention and focus. As a result, children concentrate and persevere with this activity, and this supports their understanding, listening and attention skills.
- Staff are excellent role models for the children. For example, staff encourage younger children to build large structures with different shaped blocks to build on their hand-to-eye coordination and mathematical skills. Staff introduce new words and concepts, such as 'square' and 'rectangle'. However, at times, they do not use opportunities to encourage children requiring additional support to acquire and consolidate new vocabulary.
- Children follow the set routines very well. They behave well and are independent with dressing and undressing. Staff are always readily available to support children's emotional needs. As a result, children self-regulate and become resilient learners.
- Staff create meaningful opportunities for children to explore a wide array of books to develop a passion for literature and support their early-reading skills.

Children concentrate intently when listening to their favourite story about feelings and emotions. They talk about what makes them happy and what makes them sad, to build on their communication and language. Furthermore, children work hard to recognise the initial sound in their name, to develop their literacy skills.

- Children laugh and giggle with excitement when joining in with a music and movement session. They sing confidently and move around the room to the beat of the music. Children confidently walk slowly, gallop and skip, to build on their gross motor skills, balance and coordination.
- Staff have good knowledge and understanding of children's development and what they need to learn next. However, on occasions, staff do not identify when children need more challenge to extend their learning further, particularly younger children or those who require extra support.
- Leaders have a clear vision for their setting. They reflect on their practice and strive to deliver high-quality care and education for all children. Leaders find inspiration and motivation in new and authentic approaches to children's learning. They form positive working relationships with other professionals to benefit children's learning and development.
- Partnership working with parents is generally strong and effective. Parents praise the inspirational activities their children explore daily and the progress they make in their learning. However, some parents feel less aware of the learning staff are promoting with their children.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Staff and leaders have robust knowledge and understanding of safeguarding. This includes aspects such as female genital mutilation and county lines. Staff and leaders understand the importance of following the correct procedures to report any concerns to relevant professionals, to protect children from harm. They complete regular training to keep their safeguarding knowledge current. Policies and procedures are effective and reviewed regularly. They are implemented accordingly and shared with parents. Staff and leaders carry out regular risk assessments to assure children's safety and welfare.

What does the setting need to do to improve?

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

- reflect and enhance the quality of teaching to ensure children are suitably challenged in their learning
- provide opportunities for children to learn a wider range of new words to extend their vocabulary, particularly for younger children and those who require extra support

- strengthen the communication about children's learning with parents.

Setting details

Unique reference number	2655501
Local authority	Hertfordshire
Inspection number	10308747
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	1 to 4
Total number of places	25
Number of children on roll	43
Name of registered person	Stepping-Stones Pre-School & Holiday Care CIC
Registered person unique reference number	2655499
Telephone number	0208 953 2310
Date of previous inspection	Not applicable

Information about this early years setting

Stepping Stones Pre-school and Holiday Care CIC registered in 2021. The pre-school employs eight members of childcare staff. Of these, four hold appropriate early years qualifications at level 3. The preschool opens Monday to Friday. Sessions are from 9am to 12pm and 12pm to 3pm with breakfast club between 7.30am and 9am and after school club between 3pm and 6pm during term time. In addition, the preschool offers a holiday club sessions during school holidays. The pre-school receives funding for the provision of early education for two-, three- and four-year-old children.

Information about this inspection

Inspector
Anca Sandu

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 provider and has taken that into account in their evaluation of the setting.
- The inspector and manager completed a learning walk together. They discussed how the curriculum is organised and what they want children to learn.
- The inspector observed the quality of teaching and education, both outdoors and indoors, and assessed the impact this has on children's learning.
- The inspector spoke with staff at appropriate times throughout the inspection.
- Children spoke with the inspector about the activities they were doing.
- The inspector carried out a joint observation with the manager.
- The inspector held a meeting with the manager and the nominated individual. She looked at relevant documentation and reviewed evidence of the suitability of staff working at the setting.

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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