

Inspection of Stepping Stones

Foxes Piece School, Newfield Road, Marlow, Buckinghamshire SL7 1JW

Inspection date: 13 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 Outstanding

What is it like to attend this early years setting?

The provision is good

Children enter the pre-school where kind and gentle staff greet them. They settle quickly, seek out their friends and engage in play. Staff implement a key-person system well and confidently identify children's next steps. Children are comfortable to approach their key person and do so with ease. They feel secure and safe, and they are happy while at the pre-school. Children behave well and positively interact with their peers. Staff remind children of the pre-school rules, and children listen and respond well to instructions. Staff are good role models, and children show respect for staff and their peers alike. This helps to support children's personal, social and emotional development well.

Staff have a particular focus on communication and language. For example, they use other ways to communicate with children other than spoken words, such as by using sign language. Children learn new words through conversations with staff and play with their peers. Those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are particularly supported well. Staff ensure that the environment supports their inclusion well. For example, they provide a quiet and enclosed sensory area, which allows children to take some time on their own to calm down if needed. All children make good progress.

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

- Staff plan the environment around children's next steps and interests effectively. For example, they offer a Christmas-themed activity to support their fine motor skills, which involves feeding reindeer food to a cardboard Rudolph with spoons. Children skilfully scoop up the food and pour it into the mouth of the reindeer. However, staff do not provide as many opportunities for children to develop their large-physical movement and skills, such as jumping, balancing, running and exercising out in the fresh air.
- Staff identify the development of children's social skills as an important area of focus. They provide resources and activities to encourage children to interact together. For example, a very welcoming home corner enables children to participate in role-play activities together. Older children are confident at talking to their friends and offering help to younger children. For instance, they show their friends where to put their dirty plates after snack time.
- Staff encourage children's independence skills and help them learn how to take care of themselves. For example, after children finish snack time, they clear the table themselves and throw away their rubbish. Staff are patient and calm with children. They are particularly sensitive when children are undergoing changes, such as toilet training. They work in close partnership with parents to achieve this goal. Children self-register on entering the pre-school. For example, they recognise their name and mark make to sign their name. Staff have high

expectations for behaviour, and children listen and act on instruction. They are confident, and they learn skills to prepare them for starting school.

- The manager supports staff well and ensures that they feel comfortable to approach her at any time. Staff say management always listen and try and accommodate their needs. They can access training and suggest further topics they feel will support them. For example, staff recognised learning sign language would help them support children with SEND and attended training to learn this. Staff attend regular meetings individually with the manager, as a room and as a whole team. They use these meetings to discuss planning, children's next steps and safeguarding concerns. However, on occasion, management fail to identify where staff could benefit from further skills and knowledge.
- Parents are complimentary about staff at the pre-school. They say how children settle quickly and are happy to attend. Parents state that staff support children with SEND effectively and are professional and nurturing. They explain that staff give regular feedback on the children's day and their progress in a variety of ways but particularly at pick up. Staff clearly have an effective partnership with parents, benefiting children's development.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Staff have a good knowledge of safeguarding and child protection, and they understand their role in this. They are aware of the signs of abuse, including female genital mutilation, neglect and radicalisation. Staff are aware of the process involved to report a concern within the pre-school and can identify the designated safeguarding lead. They are aware of the safeguarding procedures and know where to find more information, if needed. For example, there is a safeguarding noticeboard in the office. The manager has a confident knowledge of safer recruitment and ensures that all suitability checks are complete for new staff before they start work at the pre-school.

What does the setting need to do to improve?

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

- focus professional development more precisely on gaining further skills and knowledge to enhance the support for children's learning
- provide more opportunities for children to develop their physical skills, particularly during outside play.

Setting details

Unique reference number	EY316669
Local authority	Buckinghamshire
Inspection number	10305325
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 4
Total number of places	60
Number of children on roll	43
Name of registered person	Carlton, Lisa
Registered person unique reference number	RP904399
Telephone number	01628 298363
Date of previous inspection	19 February 2018

Information about this early years setting

Stepping Stones registered in 2005. The pre-school employs 11 members of childcare staff. Of these, eight hold appropriate early years qualifications to level 4. The pre-school opens from Monday to Friday, during school term time. Sessions are from 9am to 3pm. The pre-school provides funded early education for two-, three- and four-year-old children.

Information about this inspection

Inspector

Lynne Murray

Inspection activities

- This was the first routine inspection the pre-school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. The inspector discussed the impact of the pandemic with the pre-school and has taken that into account in their evaluation of the pre-school.
- The manager joined the inspector on a learning walk and talked to the inspector about the pre-school curriculum and what she wants children to learn.
- The inspector spoke to children to find out about their time at the pre-school.
- The inspector talked to staff at appropriate times during the inspection and took account of their views.
- The inspector observed the interactions between staff and children.
- The manager and the inspector carried out a joint observation of an activity.
- The inspector read several emails from parents during the inspection and took account of their views.
- The deputy 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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