

Inspection of Stepping Stones Pre-School

Daven Primary School, New Street, Congleton, Cheshire CW12 3AH

Inspection date: 22 December 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

Staff are nurturing and help children to feel safe and emotionally secure in this welcoming pre-school. They take time to find out personal information about children when they first start, which helps them to settle with ease. Staff support children to build on what they already know and can do and have high expectations for their progress. For example, children confidently recall aspects of previous learning, such as how to use scissors correctly when cutting paper for their Christmas collages. Staff give an abundance of praise when children persevere at challenges. Children beam with pride and are confident and eager to learn.

Children delight in their opportunities for outdoor play and demonstrate good physical dexterity as they kick balls and practise scoring goals. Staff support children to use their small-muscle skills to squeeze oranges in the outdoor kitchen. Children enjoy exploring the secure outdoor area and laugh infectiously as they play hide and seek with their friends. Staff's interactions with children are carefully considered. They give clear and consistent behavioural messages and model good manners and expected behaviours very well. Children become deeply engrossed in their play and are thoughtful and caring towards their friends.

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

- Leaders are committed to providing a high standard of care and education for children in the local community. The pre-school prides itself on being an inclusive setting which welcomes children of all abilities. All children, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, are provided with tailored support and individual plans to ensure that they make good progress.
- Staff are highly skilled at identifying children who may need extra support and use targeted interventions, supported by external professionals, to close any gaps in children's learning. The manager acts with integrity in using the funding the pre-school receives. She also offers extra sessions for the children who need them the most. This helps to ensure that even the most disadvantaged children make the best possible progress.
- Children access a broad curriculum that helps to ensure that they embed skills across all areas of learning. Staff follow children's interests and provide plenty of opportunities for children to develop their small-muscle skills in readiness for future writing. Children benefit from excellent links with the local primary school and are supported through regular visits. As a result, transitions are smooth and children are fully prepared for their next stage of learning.
- Staff place a strong emphasis on supporting children's communication and language skills, in the knowledge that these underpin all other areas of learning. They read with enthusiasm and children delight in the interactive way that story times are delivered. Children are encouraged to make choices and decisions

about their play. They choose the books they read and the songs they sing. Staff listen well and respect children's choices. This helps to ensure that children make good progress in their communication and language development.

- Children demonstrate a secure understanding of the daily routines. For instance, during a well-organised snack time, children know to tidy up, wash their hands and sit at the table. They choose and chop their own fruits and pour their own milk or water. Staff support children to become increasingly independent. As a result, children are becoming well equipped in managing their personal needs.
- Leaders place a strong emphasis on staff's well-being and provide targeted training. They recognise that this has a big impact on children's learning and development. Self-evaluation is reflective and accurately identifies areas for improvement. A regular programme of supervision and training also helps staff to develop their practice and knowledge.
- At times, staff are quick to answer questions for the children instead of allowing them time to think and respond. This does not help to support children to develop their conversational skills. As a result, interactions with children are not always of a consistently high quality.
- Partnership working is a strength of the pre-school. The well-established links with various external professionals help to ensure that all children receive the relevant support and intervention to help them make good progress. Parents speak highly about the pre-school and comment on the significant progress their children make.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

The manager has instilled a positive safeguarding culture throughout the pre-school. All staff know the signs and symptoms of abuse and neglect. They are fully aware of their responsibilities to record and report any safeguarding concerns swiftly. Staff teach children about potential risks. For example, they explain why they should not swing on their chairs or get up from the table while eating. They also teach children how to use scissors and knives effectively. This allows children to manage their own risks and learn to keep themselves safe. Robust recruitment arrangements ensure that all staff are suitable to work with children.

What does the setting need to do to improve?

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

- strengthen staff's understanding of the types of questions to use with children and give children time to think and respond.

Setting details

Unique reference number	305341
Local authority	Cheshire East
Inspection number	10307843
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	2 to 4
Total number of places	44
Number of children on roll	36
Name of registered person	Stepping Stones Pre-School Committee
Registered person unique reference number	RP524277
Telephone number	01260 297924
Date of previous inspection	13 March 2018

Information about this early years setting

Stepping Stones Pre-School registered in 1994 and is situated in Congleton, Cheshire. The pre-school employs eight members of childcare staff. Of these, one holds an appropriate early years qualification at level 4, six hold qualifications at level 3, and one holds a qualification at level 2. The pre-school is open from Monday to Friday, term time only. 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

Marianne McDowell

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 manager and has taken that into account in their evaluation of the pre-school.
- The inspector had a learning walk with the manager of all areas of the pre-school and discussed the early years curriculum and the expectations for children's learning.
- The inspector observed the quality of education being provided, indoors and outdoors, and assessed the impact on children's learning.
- The inspector spoke with parents, children and staff at appropriate times during the inspection and took account of their views.
- The inspector carried out a joint observation with the manager and discussed the impact of teaching on children's learning.
- The inspector looked at a sample of relevant records and documentation, including evidence of staff's suitability and training.

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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