Inspection of Stepping Stones

76 Marsden Street, Kirkham, PRESTON PR4 2TJ

Inspection date:	2 May 2024

Overall effectiveness	**Good**
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

Children develop a sense of belonging as they wear their Stepping Stones uniforms with pride. They feel secure and quickly form attachments with staff. Children enjoy their time at nursery and learn to make friends and to nurture their friendships. Staff promote children's self-esteem and encourage them to express their opinions. For instance, staff include children in discussions about plans for the garden. Children begin to learn that they have control over aspects of their world.

Staff work hard to help children to develop their independence skills. They learn to take care of their own belongings and the nursery environment. Children are keen to take on helpful tasks such as setting the table for lunch. Children begin to understand how to evaluate risk as they learn to climb and swing in the well-resourced outdoor area. This also supports children's physical development as they build strength and coordination. They learn to take care as they play with real china tea-sets, for example. Children understand staff's expectations of them. They behave well, demonstrating focus and engagement in their play. Children make good progress in their learning and development.

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

- Leaders have a clear vision for the setting and work hard to embed their ethos. Leaders reflect on practice and the learning environment to ensure that they facilitate children's learning as well as possible. Staff are included in evaluating the provision and are committed to their roles which benefits children's learning experience.
- Leaders fully support staff's professional development and source training to help staff enhance their skills. For instance, staff learn about supporting children to manage risk in their play and they share their knowledge with the team. This helps to keep staff's skills current and relevant, helping children to make good progress.
- Staff adapt their planning to focus on children's changing interests. For instance, they support children's interest in trains as they visit the local train station. Staff know children well and engage with parents to find out about children's prior experiences. This helps staff support children to make a swift start to their learning.
- Children with special educational needs and/or disabilities are well supported. Leaders work closely with other professionals to access appropriate support. Additional funding is spent thoughtfully to support children's needs. For instance, leaders offer additional sessions as families manage challenging periods in their home life. This helps all children to make progress from their starting points.
- Staff use a 'focus week' system to monitor and assess each child's learning, which works well overall. However, on occasion, children's next steps are not

fully focused on the areas where they need more support. Therefore, occasionally, children do not get the most from each activity as staff intend.

- Staff plan an environment rich in text which promotes a love of reading. For instance, children learn about reading for different purposes in the home corner and in the mud kitchen as they plan imaginary recipes. Staff engage children in interesting discussions relating to their play. This supports children's growing confidence in their communication skills.
- Staff plan lots of opportunities for children to strengthen the small muscles in their hands as they prepare for early writing. For example, young children competently thread very small beads onto sticks and strings. Consequently, children demonstrate increasing precision in their mark making.
- Staff support children's developing independence skills. For instance, they devise individual plans to support toilet training effectively. However, staff do not always consider all of the different ways to support children to manage their own self-care needs, such as wiping their own nose throughout the day. This means that certain aspects of children's understanding about health and hygiene are not consistently well supported.
- Staff teach children about differences and similarities between themselves and others. They learn to respect other people's beliefs. Staff help children to learn about their local area as they tend their community allotment. Children begin to develop a sense of their place in the world and learn about life in modern Britain,

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

There is an open and positive culture around safeguarding that puts children's interests first.

What does the setting need to do to improve?

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

- monitor children's next steps closely to ensure they are focused on what each child needs to learn next
- continue to embed hygiene routines even further to help children consistently learn to understand and manage their own self-care needs.

Setting details

Unique reference number	EY393726
Local authority	Lancashire
Inspection number	10335866
Type of provision	Childcare on non-domestic premises
Registers	Early Years Register
Day care type	Full day care
Age range of children at time of inspection	0 to 4
Total number of places	32
Number of children on roll	49
Name of registered person	Noblett, Estelle Louise
Registered person unique reference number	RP906328
Telephone number	01772683117
Date of previous inspection	29 June 2018

Information about this early years setting

Stepping Stones registered in 2009 and is located in Kirkham, Preston. The setting employs eight members of childcare staff, all of whom hold appropriate early years qualifications at level 2 or above. Leaders hold appropriate qualifications at levels 5 and 6. The setting is open from 7.45am to 5.45pm, 51 weeks of the year and provides funded early education for two-, three- and four-year-old children.

Information about this inspection

Inspector
Amy Johnson

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 provider and has taken that into account in their evaluation of the provider.
- The manager joined the inspector on a learning walk and talked to the inspector about their curriculum and what they want their children to learn.
- Children spoke to the inspector during the inspection.
- The inspector talked to staff at appropriate times during the inspection and took account of their views.
- The provider spoke with the inspector about the leadership and management of the setting.
- The provider and the inspector carried out joint observations of group activities.
- 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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