

Inspection of Stepping Stones Pre-School

William Barnes Primary School, Bridge Street, STURMINSTER NEWTON, Dorset
DT10 1BZ

Inspection date: 15 November 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

Children quickly settle on arrival and are happy and eager to engage in the activities. The new role-play area has had a positive effect, especially on young children new to the setting. They build friendships, feel secure, manage their emotions and act out familiar experiences. Older children also manage dressing-up clothes, which supports their independence and physical skills effectively.

The curriculum has a beneficial impact on children's learning and development. There is a strong emphasis in supporting children's prime areas of development, which underpins all other learning. For example, staff help children who are nonverbal to hear language and develop their skills. They recast mispronounced words and add vocabulary. Staff sensitively help children to challenge their physical development. For example, they encourage them with praise and clear instructions to climb the small wall, using the foot and hand holds to reach the top. Children are then confident to try again. Every day, children take part in activities with dough, which strengthens their arms and hands, ready for writing. Staff know the children well and plan an exciting environment, using children's interests to motivate their learning. For example, children enjoy stacking wooden blocks; they work together, take turns, and carefully balance the blocks higher. This leads to staff helping children to measure themselves and see the difference in their sizes.

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

- Staff monitor children's development successfully. The special educational needs coordinator ensures that children and families receive the support and experiences they need to narrow any gaps in children's development. For example, funding pays for extra staff to enable those who need it most to have one-to-one and small-group support. Parents confirm how well they work in partnership with staff, and comment that their children have grown in confidence, social skills and language development.
- Children enjoy books individually and in a whole group. They eagerly anticipate what happens next in their favourite stories. Staff pause and children fill-in the well-known words. Staff gradually build up the time older children need to sit, listen and pay attention, preparing them well for school. However, on occasions, routines interrupt group activities and noise levels rise; children then find it harder to listen and concentrate.
- Children are confident and willing to have a go at new skills. Staff support them well in making good choices. Overall, children behave well and build positive relationships. Staff provide good support to help children manage their emotions and be kind to their friends. However, sometimes staff are quick to solve problems for older children and do not encourage them to consider how they might resolve them for themselves.

- Staff ensure an inclusive setting. They provide good support for children to gain a positive awareness of people's differences. They value diverse ways of speaking and ensure children who have English as an additional language have good opportunities to use their home language. Children learn to respect each other and understand about British values, such as democracy. For example, they vote on which books they want staff to read.
- Children become increasingly independent in their self-care skills. Children develop good hygienic practices and learn the importance of caring for their teeth. They enjoy nutritional snacks and managers are implementing new ways of ensuring healthy packed lunches. All children help themselves to regular drinks to keep hydrated. They have daily opportunities to be outdoors and active, and they understand the importance of exercise.
- The manager and deputy provide good role models for staff. They work directly with the children using all routines and activities as a learning opportunity. For example, at snack time, the deputy engages children in discussions about healthy eating and extends their mathematical vocabulary. She skilfully enables children to be as independent as possible, through positive encouragement.
- Staff work well as a team. They confirm the good support, supervision and training they receive from managers to extend their knowledge and skills. The manager recognises the staffs' strengths and uses this successfully for them to learn from each other. They constantly reflect on their practice and evaluate what went well and how they can develop. This ensures they maintain their good quality provision and continuously strive to improve.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

The managers and staff all attend regular safeguarding training to ensure they have a strong knowledge of the signs to be aware of if children are at risk of harm. They know the procedures to follow to ensure children receive the help they need. Staff have a good understanding of who to go to outside of the organisation, should they have a concern about a colleague. They understand the importance of recognising if children and families are at risk of radicalisation or extremism. The managers follow good recruitment procedures and ensure that staff receive an effective induction. This helps to make sure that staff understand their responsibilities and keep children safe.

What does the setting need to do to improve?

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

- improve the organisation of routines so that children can always listen and concentrate in group activities
- help older children to consider ways of solving problems for themselves.

Setting details

Unique reference number	EY395220
Local authority	Dorset
Inspection number	10307884
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	20
Number of children on roll	33
Name of registered person	Stepping Stones Playgroup Committee
Registered person unique reference number	RP519805
Telephone number	07778336928
Date of previous inspection	8 March 2018

Information about this early years setting

Stepping Stones Pre-School registered in its current premises in 2009. The pre-school operates from William Barnes Primary School in Sturminster Newton, North Dorset. The pre-school is open Monday to Friday during term time only, from 8.45am to 3.15pm. A team of nine staff work with the children. The manager holds early years professional status. Seven staff hold an appropriate early years qualification at level 3 and one at level 2. The pre-school receives funding to provide early education for children aged two, three and four years.

Information about this inspection

Inspector

Elaine Douglas

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, deputy and inspector completed a learning walk together and discussed the early years curriculum.
- The inspector talked to the staff, parents, and children during the inspection and took account of their views.
- The manager and inspector conducted a joint observation on an adult-led activity and discussed the quality of teaching and learning.
- The inspector observed the quality of education, indoors and outdoors, and assessed the impact this was having on children's learning.
- The chair of committee, manager, deputy and inspector held a leadership and management meeting and the inspector checked relevant 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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