

# Inspection of Stepping Stones Preschool, Littleport

Camel Road, Littleport, Ely CB6 1EW

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Inspection date: 10 July 2024

|                                              |                |
|----------------------------------------------|----------------|
| <b>Overall effectiveness</b>                 | <b>Good</b>    |
| The quality of education                     | <b>Good</b>    |
| Behaviour and attitudes                      | <b>Good</b>    |
| Personal development                         | <b>Good</b>    |
| Leadership and management                    | <b>Good</b>    |
| Overall effectiveness at previous inspection | Not applicable |

## **What is it like to attend this early years setting?**

### **The provision is good**

The staff team creates an environment that enables children to flourish and build on the skills and knowledge they already have. Staff use children's interests effectively to create activities. As a result, children engage in activities for long periods. There is a clear focus on communication and language in the setting. Staff use their knowledge to enhance this. For example, staff talk to children all the time and support them to develop the art of conversation.

Children are curious learners. They embrace the activities set out for them and enjoy exploring anything new. At the discovery area, children explore different objects set into ice. They use hammers to try and smash them free, including petals and toy animals. Staff talk with children about how they made the ice.

Staff discuss the rules of the setting with children each morning. This gives children a good understanding of the expectations of them. Children behave well. They are kind to each other and successfully share toys with each other. In the forest school programme, staff talk regularly to children about how to keep themselves safe. Children are happy to explain the rules of the boundaries and how they know where they are allowed to go.

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

- The staff team has good knowledge of the children at the setting. When children first begin, staff spend time getting to know them. They work out what the children already know and create next steps to help them build on this knowledge. This information is shared effectively with parents through meetings and online journals.
- The manager has a clear ethos and curriculum for her setting. Staff complete regular training on how to develop children's communication and language and embed this into practice. Staff use new intervention methods to support children who have communication difficulties. They successfully ask children questions. However, they do not always allow them time to think of answers independently. Due to staff offering ideas too quickly, some children do not always create their own ideas, building on their thinking skills.
- Staff read stories to children throughout the session, adapting their voices and asking children questions about what they are reading. They use the pictures to help children predict what happens next in the story. This supports children to develop a love of books.
- The staff team is relatively new and the manager uses supervision sessions well. This enables staff to develop their own skills. However, at times, staff do not support each other effectively to meet the needs of all children. For example, at lunchtime some children need support, which staff are not always aware of.

- Access to the forest school builds on children's knowledge of the world around them. Each child is invited to join in and children demonstrate their excitement when it is their time to go. Staff use the forest school well to support their curriculum. Children take risks, make independent choices and build on their resilience. Children love creating dens. They push stakes into the ground and talk about how they are going to create their tents. When it begins to rain, children quickly run to the tent and inform staff, 'We are staying here, as it's fun in a tent in the rain.'
- Parents speak very highly of the setting. They praise the progress their children make. They speak of the access they have to information about their children's developmental progress. Parents say their children love coming to the setting and are always happy at drop-off and pick-up times.
- The manager and her team complete a wealth of training. They share information with each other during daily meetings and discuss ways of implementing what they have learned. This supports the setting to always be on a journey of development. Staff at the setting feel very well supported by the manager. They talk of her open-door policy and the confidence this gives them in their practice. The manager ensures the ongoing suitability of her staff team.

## 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:**

- support staff to consistently allow children sufficient time to think and respond to questions to help develop their thinking skills further
- strengthen staff deployment during busier times of the day so that children's needs are met more consistently during these periods.

## Setting details

|                                                    |                                           |
|----------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------|
| <b>Unique reference number</b>                     | 2672622                                   |
| <b>Local authority</b>                             | Cambridgeshire                            |
| <b>Inspection number</b>                           | 10350763                                  |
| <b>Type of provision</b>                           | Childcare on non-domestic premises        |
| <b>Registers</b>                                   | Early Years Register                      |
| <b>Day care type</b>                               | Sessional day care                        |
| <b>Age range of children at time of inspection</b> | 2 to 5                                    |
| <b>Total number of places</b>                      | 42                                        |
| <b>Number of children on roll</b>                  | 44                                        |
| <b>Name of registered person</b>                   | Stepping Stone Pre-School, Littleport CIO |
| <b>Registered person unique reference number</b>   | 2672624                                   |
| <b>Telephone number</b>                            | 01353 863687                              |
| <b>Date of previous inspection</b>                 | Not applicable                            |

## Information about this early years setting

Stepping Stones Preschool Littleport re-registered in 2022. The pre-school opens from Monday to Friday, 8.30am to 3.30pm, during term time only. The pre-school employs nine members of childcare staff. Of these, seven hold appropriate early years qualifications at level 3 and two members of staff hold appropriate early years qualifications at level 2. The pre-school provides funded early education for two-, three- and four-year-old children.

## Information about this inspection

### Inspector

Lisa Smith

## 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 and the inspector completed a learning walk together of all the areas of the setting and discussed the curriculum and what they want children to learn.
- The inspector observed the quality of education being provided, indoors and outdoors, and assessed the impact this was having on children's learning.
- The inspector carried out a joint observation of a group activity with the manager.
- The inspector spoke to parents during the inspection and took account of their views.
- The inspector looked at relevant documentation and reviewed evidence of suitability of the manager, her staff team and trustees.

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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