

Inspection of Stepping Stones Playgroup (Wells)

STOBERRY PARK SCHOOL NORTH ROAD, WELLS, SOMERSET BA5 2TJ

Inspection date: 19 April 2024

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 are keen to enter this friendly playgroup and settle to play quickly. Staff are very caring and sensitive to children's needs. Children interact easily with staff and give them spontaneous hugs and smiles. Staff provide a broad, well-considered curriculum that supports children's interests and learning and helps them make good progress overall. For example, children begin to recognise colours when playing a magnetic fishing game. They become absorbed in this game and tell a visitor about the colours of the cardboard cut out fish they try to catch with the magnetic rod. Children develop good creative skills and use their imaginations well in their play. They like sticking and cutting materials to create pictures relating to familiar nursery rhymes. They make a display of these, such as an 'Incy Wincy Spider' or a 'Hickory Dickory Dock' clock. Children learn about the world and show an interest in space when looking at books about stars and planets. They help to make a spaceship with shiny paper and plan how they could travel to their pretend planet called Makiss.

Children like doing the actions for their favourite songs. For example, they pretend to be sleeping bunnies, lions and dogs before enthusiastically jumping up to roar, hop or run across the floor. Children show kindness and concern for their friends when they are upset. They recognise when they need to tidy up their toys. They willingly help staff to carry the toy boxes and put these away.

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

- The manager and staff work together effectively as a team. The manager supports staff well in their roles and encourages their professional development. For example, staff have completed training that helps them identify possible triggers and reasons for any unwanted behaviour children display, and how they can promote more positive actions.
- Children develop good personal care routines and gain awareness of keeping fit and healthy. They know they need to wash their hands before a cooking activity or after they sneeze. They have fun developing their physical skills and excitedly join in with an 'Easter Bunny hop' around the school field. They feel how fast their hearts are beating and learn this is because they have been exercising.
- Staff give a clear focus to supporting any children with special educational needs and/or disabilities and promote inclusion very well. They have raised their awareness of how to identify any specific additional needs a child may have, and how they can provide appropriate activities to support all children's learning.
- Parents and staff form positive partnerships. Staff encourage parent's involvement with their children's learning very well and keep them informed about the planned activities. Parents comment that staff are very supportive and 'truly amazing' in how they help their children. However, although staff have

good contact with parents, they do not liaise fully with some other providers children attend. For example, to ensure staff at each setting are aware of children's next steps of development and provide a more consistent approach for their care and learning needs.

- Staff promote children's language and literacy skills very well. Children develop a wide vocabulary. They eagerly describe their ideas and smile cheekily as they tell staff there are '588 children' present that day. Children like listening to stories, such as about a 'superhero potato'. Younger children begin to recognise rhyming words and older children start sounding out the initial letters of their names. They confidently write recognisable letter and number shapes.
- Children develop good social skills and like learning about their community. For example, they go on outings with staff and visit nearby historical places, such as a Bishop's palace. They sometimes go to the local library and post office.
- Staff monitor children's progress and plan activities to support what they know and can do. Children learn well through this approach overall. For example, they develop their early mathematical awareness with their friends, such as when they stand in height order and talk about who is the tallest or shortest. Children begin to recognise numbers of personal significance and excitedly tell a visitor they are four years old. However, occasionally staff do not always implement planned activities as effectively as possible to ensure all the identified learning intentions are met consistently well.
- Staff use praise and encouragement effectively to help children develop good self-esteem. Children show great pride when showing staff their drawings and tell them about the pictures of their family.

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:

- strengthen the implementation of planned activities to help children achieve what staff want them to learn and support their next steps of development consistently well
- improve systems of sharing information with other providers children attend to provide a more consistent approach for their care and learning needs.

Setting details

Unique reference number	143013
Local authority	Somerset
Inspection number	10335394
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	18
Number of children on roll	26
Name of registered person	Stepping Stones Playgroup (Wells) Committee
Registered person unique reference number	RP907255
Telephone number	01749 677 011
Date of previous inspection	14 June 2018

Information about this early years setting

Stepping Stones Playgroup (Wells) registered in 1992. It operates from a portacabin situated in the grounds of Stoberry Park School in Wells, Somerset. The playgroup employs four members of childcare staff, all of whom hold a relevant early years qualification. They also employ an administrator. The playgroup is open from Monday to Friday from 8.30am until 3pm, during school term time only. It provides funded early education for children aged two, three and four years.

Information about this inspection

Inspector
Mary Daniel

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 inspector discussed the curriculum with the manager and what staff want children to learn.
- The inspector observed children's interactions in play indoors and outdoors and had discussions with staff about children's learning and next steps of development.
- The inspector viewed a sample of documentation, such as first-aid certificates for staff and nursery policies.
- The inspector completed a joint observation of an activity with the manager and discussed the quality of education provided.
- The inspector took into account the written and spoken views of parents.

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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