

Stepping Stones Playgroup's Annual Report for the Year 2022-2023.

The aims of Stepping Stones Playgroup

As all children are different and develop at different rates, Stepping Stones Playgroup aims to develop the whole child by: -

- Promoting emotional, social, physical, creative and intellectual development;
- Developing self-esteem, self-control and positive attitudes towards others;
- Developing language and communication skills to encourage sharing of thoughts and feelings; and
- Creating confident, eager, enthusiastic, independent, curious learners with a positive and problem-solving attitude to learning.

Most young children come to Stepping Stones Playgroup as active, experienced and enthusiastic learners. To build on the learning that has taken place in the home and its immediate environment, pre-school staff should provide children with a rich variety of challenging play activities and other experiences in a stimulating environment. The focus should be on enabling children to learn at their own pace, to have a breadth of learning experiences and gain a positive image of themselves as resilient learners able to cope with uncertainty, and to learn through trial and error.

Young children learn best when: -

- They feel happy and secure in a safe and stimulating environment that supports their well-being;
- Adults are sensitive and understanding in their interactions with the children while extending their learning and development;
- The pre-school curriculum is broad and balanced, builds on their needs, and provides time for sustained involvement in play;
- They have opportunities to investigate and engage in a wide range of activities that are enjoyable, motivating and challenging;
- The activities are based on previous learning and are carefully planned, with some flexibility;
- They have the opportunity to develop concentration and skills such as observing, making decisions and problem-solving; and
- Parents/guardians/carers and other professionals work together in partnership.

Public Benefit statement

To promote play-based learning environments for all children under statutory school age in Ballymoney and District without distinction by associating the statutory authorities, community and voluntary organisations and the inhabitants in a common effort to advance education, and in particular: to advance the education of the beneficiaries by the provision of safe and satisfying group play.

The direct benefits which flow from this purpose include improved learning outcomes, development, language skills, social integration and emotional well being for all children involved in the play school. Other benefits include improved relationships/partnerships with parents/carers of the children involved with the playgroup.

Our main source of income comes from the Department of Education.

At Stepping Stones Playgroup our objectives and planning our activities for the year the Management Committee have given careful consideration to the Charity Commission for Northern Ireland's guidance on public benefit to ensure that the activities have helped to achieve the charity's purpose and provide a benefit to the beneficiaries.