

# SEND INFORMATION REPORT

## **STEPPING STONES**

Mortimer House, Valley House & Outreach Service

(For looked after young people and Day Pupils)

### OVERVIEW

**Stepping Stones provides an adapted national curriculum which is personalised and individualised leading to nationally accredited and recognised qualifications.**

Stepping Stones offers a unique, warm, safe and caring educational environment for children who may not thrive and achieve in an external setting at this point in their lives. We understand young people learn in very different ways, and a person centred approach enables success.

'Stepping Stones' is a learning environment situated in a beautiful period property in Tamworth, Staffordshire. Its atmosphere enhances opportunities that are conducive to learning. Staff can offer education in a holistic, informal way. We are dedicated to re-motivate, re-engage, inspire learning and build self-esteem through an initial 12 week assessment period before the longer term place is secured. Our next step is to review, reflect and progress the education pathway to success for the young person.

As a transition school, we are always forward thinking the longer term education journey for our young people. For new residents to Young Foundations, we offer the option of an additional nurture classroom at our site in Fillongley. For day pupils, a home tuition outreach service is available at request. These are just some of our interventions we offer to young people as a step before joining us at Mortimer House.

Stepping Stones allows practical and creative learning to take place with discreet underlining curriculum whilst broadening young people's learning experiences and improving their confidence.

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### IDENTIFICATION OF NEED

Stepping Stones identifies needs through meeting the young person, self-assessment, EHCP Plans, prior education reports, statements, meetings and information gathering with parents, carers, CAMHS, Education Psychologists, key workers and takes a multi-agency approach to be able to build education around the child. Head of Education is involved at referral stage and initial meeting with the young person to complete a learning journey to information gather and plan. This contact continues through the learning journey. Time is taken to build trust with the child and informal discussions are had to plan and build a timetable that embeds core curriculum in a holistic, fun way whilst using interests and strengths to personalise the learning. Assessments (Numeracy and Literacy) are planned and introduced at appropriate times to track base line progress. Young people's self-assessment of core subjects and Life Skills are assessed to track distance travelled. We have our own Educational Psychologist to whom we work in partnership to compliment our approach. We have excellent external links with Stakeholders, specialist SEN Teachers, enrichment opportunities, SENAR team, Schools, Colleges and off site provisions. A 12 week assessment period allows refresher, identification of needs and suitability for all.

## SCHOOL POLICIES

**Ofsted** - Our latest Ofsted report is available on our school website.

**Stepping Stones holds all statutory policies required by law. These are also available on our website at [www.youngfoundations.com](http://www.youngfoundations.com)**

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## EFFECTIVENESS OF PROVISION

**Stepping Stones submits a CENSUS annually to the Department of Education to show success and progress of each child. Stepping Stones provides a Self-Evaluation Survey annually and continually updates its School Development Plan. Young people are registered against OCN (Open College Network) qualifications and also have the opportunity to study Functional Skills**

This year we have celebrated 92% positive outcomes for young people attending our school for over 2 months and previously not in full time education. This current year (2019) has celebrated a total of 221 nationally recognised unit qualifications. We have also secured 95% positive outcomes of Functional Skills. Young people may also have the opportunity to work towards GCSEs if appropriate with prior agreement, however our aim is to be able to transition back into community schooling longer term where GCSEs can be accessed fully. This year we have added a target focussed intervention 'Closing the Gap' to maximise learning outcomes by reducing gaps in learning. This has been extremely successful in bridging learning to enable a young person to progress to the next level. This is delivered in a fun, creative way to allow confidence to grow. Governors are involved monthly at Operations Meetings to discuss the young people's progress and achievements. Quality Reports are produced and scrutinised monthly to allow robust governance. Governors attend our Annual Prom and take pride in all successes of our children. All timetables are personalised and currently young people are taught no more than 4:1. A Teaching Assistant is present in lessons to ensure safety, learning and all opportunities are maximised. Discussion with Head of Education at the time of placement with all interested parties will be taken into account to maximise support for the young person. Flexible learning packages are in place to allow time to establish, grow and re-engage or build confidence. We have been extremely successful in transition programmes and have many young people progress off site into full time in school/college following our intervention. PEP meetings (where applicable) are conducted termly in line with Government guidelines and progress tracked weekly through tutorials and at six weekly Assessment weeks. LAC reviews, MDT meetings, Educational Psychology strategy meetings and professionals meetings are attended to discuss presentations, progress, outcomes and destinations to date

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## WHY FUNCTIONAL SKILLS INSTEAD OF GCSEs?

Here at Stepping Stones we firmly believe in helping young people to achieve at every stage of their lives. Our focus is to equip all our young people with skills, qualifications and experiences to prepare them for their futures, careers and adulthood. With today's pressures surrounding GCSEs and the emphasis more than ever being on exams rather than coursework, a two year study programme with a final exam can, for some, be too daunting, too pressurised and may result in a young person not achieving positive results. As Stepping Stones is a transition school, our aim is to secure nationally recognised qualifications in the right environment, with low pressured approaches to ensure good outcomes and emotional well-being whilst preparing young people for their next step of their journey. Our Functional skills (Open Awards) exams can be taken at any point with minimum notice, allowing us to maximise periods of positivity, allowing the young person the best chance of securing the desired outcome.

- What Does the DfE say?
- What do individuals with an English or Maths Functional Skills qualification have to offer?
- With employers in mind, reformed English and maths qualifications have been designed to better equip individuals with the skills required to succeed in the workplace. Feedback from employers was taken on board by the Department for Education as part of their consultation on the proposed subject content. As part of this, they have introduced more of a focus on spelling, punctuation and grammar without dictionaries, using times tables and working with and without a calculator. These changes will empower learners to use English and maths more confidently in the workplace. Functional Skills often contextualise maths and English which helps learners apply these skills in real life work settings.
- Functional Skills level 2 qualifications are at the same level as a grade 4 or C and above at GCSE.
- Opening up job opportunities to individuals with a Functional Skills level 2 as well as GCSEs means that employers can widen their pool of applicants and increase their options
- <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/functional-skills-qualifications>
- A recent report by the Education and Training Foundation: Making maths and English work for all, described how the traditional learning approach leading to GCSEs can, for some students, present real problems – often leading to disappointing results.
- With just 7% of re-sits in English and maths obtaining the desired grades (after first failing to achieve them), simply re-treading the same educational steps is more often than not giving the same results.
- We have long been arguing there needs to be an alternative to GCSE, one that suits greater contextualisation in delivery and supports the type of practical application of English and maths needed in the work place.

MDT meetings , Educational Psychology strategy meetings and professionals meetings are attended to discuss presentations, progress, outcomes and destinations to date

## PROGRESSION

**Our main aims to help a young person aspire to reach their full potential. We build resilience, self belief and outcomes to achieve. Daily Hand-overs are given to Stepping Stones from our residential homes to link communication and allow daily planning and adapt change if necessary. My Day forms are completed to capture learning for each lesson.**

Outcomes and achievement, 'My Day' and enjoyment - this allows more personalisation and engagement. Hand-overs are then returned to the homes/parents/carers at the end of the school day. Senior staff attend PEPS (Personal Education Plan) meetings termly, LAC Reviews (Looked after child), EHCP Meetings (Education Health Care Plan) and regular meetings with parents/carers and external agencies to include external Schooling, Independent Reviewing Officer meetings etc. Head of Education also attends the monthly MDT meetings to make sure all staff are aware of current presentations and impact. Progress reports are submitted to all parties also. Every 6 weeks, Stepping Stones offers an Assessment Week to assess progression (holistically and educationally), celebrate successes, set/review targets and undertake tutorials. Many of our young people have progressed to positive destinations with the support of Stepping Stones. This has included, College, 6th Forms, external schooling and education provisions.

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## SCHOOL'S APPROACH TO TEACHING PUPILS WITH SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS

**Stepping Stones personalises each child's learning programme. A full Accessibility Plan is active and available on our website. Each timetable is drawn together to empower each child whilst addressing need.**

Specialist SEN teachers are resourced to deliver creative, holistic, personalised learning in a fun way. Head of Education frequently involved and overseeing delivery to make sure maximum opportunities to embed core curriculum are embraced. Each child is assessed and learning styles noted. Teaching is differentiated by using areas of interest for each child where possible. Current levels range from Entry 1 to Level 2. Units from the OCN are chosen based on areas of strength (to build confidence and engagement) and gaps in learning (to address weaker areas) for each child. New qualification offers are always being explored to maximise outcomes and achievement. All subjects are considered if a young person expresses a wish to learn one but always the core curriculum underpins everything we do. Trips and Enrichment are offered as part of the school day to embed life skills and Independence. This is learning in a practical way to embed subjects like PSHE, Maths, English and vocational subjects. Functional Skills are also offered to broaden offer and outcomes and enhance progression.

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## ACTIVITIES OUTSIDE THE CLASSROOM

**Young people are encouraged to participate in off-site activities. This may be visits to education activities, places of Worship, Sports activities, local community, Space Museum, Guide Dogs for the Blind, Garden Centres, Animal Re-homing Centres and many more.**

These experiences enhance life skills and give new opportunities to learn. Much learning embraces the local community to give a sense of community spirit and opportunity. All activities are adapted to make inclusive to all. Partnerships with local community projects to include helping the Homeless in Coventry add value to learning. To develop further, vocational internships/volunteering are now being offered where appropriate to stretch and challenge our learners further into the world of work whilst building self-esteem.

## OVERALL WELLBEING

**Regular tutorials are conducted and weekly feedback from the young person is completed to capture any issues and strengths etc. with their individual health Care Plan. A PCEP compiled to inform all staff and a 'One Page Profile' is available to all staff to recognise learning styles, triggers, strengths, ways to teach me and things to remember. Personal Risk Assessments are present for each child accompanied by their activity assessment.**

This has been completed in conjunction with the young person and prior information gained from EHCP, PEPs, parents/carers etc. Reward and Consequences are built into the daily reviews to show positivity and where a lesson may not have been as successful, the next part of the day moves on and a fresh start is made. To date, Stepping Stones has no exclusions for the past four years and works hard to adapt timetables, lessons and structure of day to suit need. Positive praise is used daily to reinforce progress. Key work sessions with young person's key worker and education can take place if worries are raised. As part of their tutorial, young people complete a weekly 'Health and Wellbeing' scoring system to allow staff to recognise areas of concern. This enables us to work on this area before it may escalate and input interventions to reduce anxieties.

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## WELLNESS - OUR THERAPEUTIC COMPLIMENTARY OFFER

**Wellness and Well being** - All sessions are bespoke to meet the health and well-being of the young person's needs, not only for that day, but to teach them lifelong coping skills for their future ambitions

**Mindfulness** - Using a number of different breathing techniques to help calm the nervous system and to teach young adults how to manage their anxiety's, mood and fear within difficult times and stressful situations. This is delivered through counting, humming, sound and strategic exercises which focus on realising stress from the body. The objective for the session is to set worries and concerns aside focusing on the present moment and to help find skills to look after their mental health and well-being

**Yoga** - Using a number of poses to release tension from the body challenging the young person to burn off excess energy, strengthening the body releasing tension and making the body strong and flexible. This is followed by deep relaxation techniques. Poses are unique to the young person, their abilities and how they are that day, some days they need to take things slowly and relax and restore the body. Poses are chosen specifically to help digestive and stomach issues usually from stress and medications, to relieve tension especially in the neck and shoulders, to help concentration and to balance the nervous system

**Sound Therapy** - Using gongs and singing bowls and a number of different instruments to help restore the body into a deep relaxed state. A time to log off and switch of from today's modern lifestyles. The vibrations can be felt through the body and by listening to the sound, it can help slow down an overactive mind. It helps destress, relax and restore the body which is essential to the students mental health and wellbeing.

### Written Feedback (Young Person)

*Before I felt very tense and my arms legs neck and shoulders felt very tight. After I felt much more relaxed and calm, I think the sounds and vibrations from the gong took away the stress and tension from my body*

### Written Feedback

*After the workout I felt more energised and happy. I found the sound bath very therapeutic and relaxing the rain stick was satisfying too*

*(Heidi – Pheonix Yoga)*

## SPECIALIST SERVICES AND EXPERTISE

**Teachers have extensive SEN teaching background for a range of ages and abilities. Specialist vocational teachers are resourced to deliver vocational subjects. Partnership working with Animal Sanctuary's, local community and charities allow for further experiences and independence to adulthood.**

On call Psychologists and Psychiatrists are available and Head of Education attends regular MDT meetings with the Clinicians to seek advice and updates to learning styles/approaches. An introduction of our own Consulting Educational Psychologist now informs our curriculum and practice allowing greater understanding, strategies and advice being given on each child which enhances learning and outcomes. Teachers/TAs are Mental Health and Learning Needs trained and regularly take part in external training with our Primary Mental Health Trust, SSCB to enhance knowledge and understanding. Clinician in house personalised training for all staff based around each child enhances understanding of the young person. All staff are trained in Foundations for Safer Care (Safe Hold). Head of Education has good links with CAMHS, Education Psychologists, Warwickshire SENAR provision, Tamworth, Warwickshire & Coventry SENAR provision, Flexible Learning team, local schools and colleges.

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## PREPARING FOR ADULTHOOD

**Preparing for Adulthood is essential at post 16, however this is often too late for our young people due to the missed opportunities afforded them as younger people.**

At Stepping Stones we believe that work to prepare the young person should start as soon as they begin their journey with us. The resilience and skills for the outside world is of paramount importance. At Stepping Stones we challenge young people to better themselves and to take a journey that they feel is empowering them to develop as a person. The progression they make is fundamental to the success they can achieve in adult life and that of impending independence. There are many topics that are covered, but most can be encapsulated under the following four areas:

- **Higher/further education**
  - **Independent living**
  - **Participating in Society**
  - **Healthy Lifestyles**
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## YOUNG PEOPLES VOICE

**Discussions take place weekly to capture thoughts, reflection on learning and ideas. Stepping Stones also holds weekly Student Voice sessions to allow young people to discuss their thoughts, ideas and values.**

Key worker sessions provide time also for feedback and advocacy between school and home. Schools Improvement Advisor visits termly to oversee the school, meet and gather student's thoughts, comments and feelings as part of our audit. A 'worry box' is promoted in school to allow a confidential way of communicating for young people who may not be able to express themselves or worries verbally. Young people have access to their comments, compliments and complaints leaflets to also record in confidence if they wish. Ofsted Care regulators will question, discuss and judge impact of our education along with their findings for care provision.

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## OVERALL WELLBEING - CLINICAL INPUT

**Stepping Stones School have the pleasure of working with our own specialised Educational Psychologist, Clinical Psychologist and Clinical Psychiatrist to enhance our working practice for the benefit of our young people through our teaching and delivery.**

Professional relationships between staff and young people are vital to build up rapport, trust and honesty. This is fundamental in building accurate packages to meet their needs. Young people in education are regularly assessed and reviewed through the units and outcomes studied, pastoral interviews and assessment packages to evaluate what they have learnt and progress made. We also hold regular meetings including Personal Education Plans, LAC reviews and Annual Reviews. Young people also receive end of year School reports and progress reviews.

Clinicians and care staff including the Home Manager are vital to our service in a variety of ways, from staff training to strategies that we can implement. The clinicians that we use in our service are dedicated to improve lives of young people through a personalised, holistic approach. This naturally blends into our service, values and ethos. We also have access when needed, to Warwickshire's Local Authority Clinicians to include Educational Psychologists, Speech and Language Team, Occupational Therapy, Social Workers and CAMHS.

We receive the Education and Health Care Plans from the Local Authority and plan our curriculum and timetable to incorporate the young person's needs and targets. We are currently planning and extending new curriculum's for the next academic year and a Physical Education rolling timetable is designed to address Physical Health and Well-being for the Young People. Our clinicians are fully supportive of these ideas and has worked with us to develop.

Working closely as a team with our Clinicians for advice allows us to discuss observations, gather advice, trial new approaches to allow the young person to flourish within education by being fully supported. It highlights potential triggers and allows de-escalation in a positive way so the young person feels understood.

Young people are able to access their Key Worker when returning to the home out of school hours, but if we feel that a key work session is needed and the young person is not engaging during lesson then we can request this as part of their timetable.

Because our clinicians may meet with our young people (LAC's) they are able to provide us with detailed clinician reports which help us tailor our curriculum, timetable and informs us of enhancing their access and study. It gives us a personalised overview of the young people we work with. Time is built into the young person's timetable to have access to our Clinical team weekly on a 1:1 basis to allow time for reflection and therapy (The same principles apply for our Day pupils but as they have their own external professional input, our Clinicians act in advisory capacity for staff). New strategies can be shared to benefit the young person. This builds on a partnership approach for all, and illustrates a whole system approach.

## OVERALL WELLBEING - CLINICAL INPUT (CONT)

We use clinicians for our staff training to build on continued professional development. This has had positive outcomes with staff being able to recognise further symptoms and triggers and then to understand and utilise tested strategies with our young people. Sharing of good practice is essential in our service to ensure that we are consistent in our approach with our young people. This also helps in building a fuller picture of the individual's needs to which we work with. Offering workable strategies for each child allows for a uniform approach through Care and Education. Young people where possible are involved with subject selection and building a broad and balanced curriculum, family participation is also important in making decisions in respect of their background and interests. This can inform forward planning in respect of strategies we can use and subject choices. Specially trained teaching staff are matched to specific subject areas depending on their skills set.

Our Clinicians have supported staff with online learning i.e.: MindEd/The Social Care Training Hub/PMHT to keep up to date with latest practice.

Clinicians also provide us with details of medication, understanding the possible side effects.

Our Head of Education attends Multi-Disciplinary meetings to make sure we share and are guided by new information to support each young person.

Stepping Stones offers a transition education service where we are able to re-engage and re-motivate young people back into education. Following on from Stepping Stones and before other provision maybe considered our clinicians are able to support with transitions to new education providers once the young person is ready. This includes meetings with schools, colleges, advice on risk management and training for external educationalists working with our young people. This is paramount with the emphasis on Mental Health within schools being supported.

Our Clinicians are a vital part of our Education Service. They give us an informative, personalised, young person approach to envy.

### **Further information on Stepping Stones School:**

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