

Stepping Stones Nursery

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique reference number	EY263166
Inspection date	04/08/2009
Inspector	Susan Elaine Heap
Setting address	The Park, Off High Street, Uppermill, Oldham, Lancashire, OL3 6AP
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Type of setting	Childcare on non-domestic premises

Introduction

This inspection was carried out by Ofsted under Sections 49 and 50 of the Childcare Act 2006 on the quality and standards of the registered early years provision. 'Early years provision' refers to provision regulated by Ofsted for children from birth to 31 August following their fifth birthday (the early years age group). The registered person must ensure that this provision complies with the statutory framework for children's learning, development and welfare, known as the *Early Years Foundation Stage*.

The provider must provide a copy of this report to all parents with children at the setting where reasonably practicable. The provider must provide a copy of the report to any other person who asks for one, but may charge a fee for this service (The Childcare (Inspection) Regulations 2008 regulations 9 and 10).

Description of the setting

Stepping Stones Nursery is registered to a private individual. It opened in 2003 and operates from three rooms in a single storey building in the centre of Uppermill, Oldham. Children have access to an enclosed outdoor play area. It is open each weekday from 07.45 to 18.00 all year round.

The nursery is registered on the Early Years Register. A maximum of 39 children may attend the nursery at any one time. There are currently 32 children aged from birth to under five years on roll, some in part-time places.

There are eight members of staff, all of whom hold appropriate early years qualifications to at least NVQ level 2. The manager has a Foundation Degree in Early Years and Childhood Studies. The nursery provides funded early education for three and four-year-olds.

Overall effectiveness of the early years provision

Overall the quality of the provision is good. The staff team has a secure knowledge and understanding of each child's individual needs and the key worker system is effectively used. This means that inclusive practice is successfully promoted and children's welfare, safety and learning and development needs are met well. The staff team successfully plan activities to meet children's individual needs and interests and this is enhanced through close working partnerships with parents. Through continuous self-evaluation, areas for improvement are successfully identified which will have the most positive impact on the outcomes of the children. Although specific target dates for completion have not been clearly identified yet.

What steps need to be taken to improve provision further?

To further improve the early years provision the registered person should:

- clearly identify the settings strengths and priorities for development that will improve the quality of provision for all children
- develop resources and opportunities for children to begin to know about their own cultures and beliefs and those of other people
- continue to develop the observation and assessment systems by maintaining accurate records on all children's learning and progress.

The leadership and management of the early years provision

Children are cared for by an enthusiastic staff team who communicate effectively with each other on a daily basis and successfully prioritise the needs of the children in their care. Robust systems are in place to support staff in their daily practice, to ensure ongoing development and that staff feel valued, such as team

meetings, appraisals and weekly reflection meetings between the manager and her deputy. The provider and manager have taken effective action to deal with all the areas of improvement identified at the last inspection. These include improving the observation, assessment and planning systems, opportunities for children to develop their independence skills, show an interest in number problems and increase the availability of musical instruments. These have all improved children's learning and development. A key improvement has been the implementation of an effective key worker system which clearly supports inclusive practice and values each child as an individual.

The staff team fully understand their role with regard to safeguarding children and are fully aware of the procedures to follow should a concern arise. Comprehensive and detailed records, policies and procedures to promote the safe and efficient management of the setting and for promoting the safety and welfare of children, are in place.

Systems ensure children settle well and that their likes, dislikes and daily routines are known and catered for through discussions with parents and written documentation. Parents are welcome to view their child's development records at any time; their comments and input are valued and help to inform future planning for their child's next steps in learning. The introduction of two teddy bears and a book which go home with the children helps to promote discussion with the children and develop closer partnership working. For example, parents are invited to comment and share photographs of what they have done with the children at the weekend. Transitional arrangements are particularly good. For example, children, who do not attend during the long summer break, are given a book of photographs of the setting, the children and their key worker. This helps to maintain familiarity, continuity of care and gives reassurance to both children and their parents.

The quality and standards of the early years provision

Children benefit from being provided with an appetising variety of healthy nutritious meals and snacks which are freshly prepared on the premises. They clearly relish their food and happily eat vegetable curry and rice, often asking for second helpings. Children have access to fresh air daily in the outdoor environment, walking in the local community or playing on the field in the adjacent park. They enjoy developing their gross physical skills as they ride around on bikes or balance on scooters, and develop their manipulative skills through using a range of tools and equipment, such as scissors. Clear routines are implemented for hand washing before snacks and meals, and after using the toilet, which help children to develop their independence and personal care skills. Younger children greatly benefit from the effective key worker system which means that their personal care needs are met by a significant adult. This means that children are successfully able to build up secure and trusting relationships and continuity of care is established.

The premises are safe and secure and staff place great emphasis on children's safety. Risks are clearly assessed daily while ensuring that children learn about possible hazards and develop skills to keep themselves safe. For example, children

know that they must wear sun hats and sun cream to protect their skin when they go outside and to be careful when using scissors.

Planning for learning and development supports every child's learning through planned experiences and activities that cover all six areas of learning and follow on from children's interests. Observation and assessment systems successfully promote inclusive practice and meet each child's next steps in learning. Staff are knowledgeable about the children in their care and confidently talk about their likes and interests and how they are developing. As a result, children are making significant progress in all six areas of learning. However, not all children's learning journeys are up to date. Children benefit from a good range of resources which are stored mainly at their level, clearly identified with words and pictures. This enables children to develop their independence and follow their own interests and ideas. However, resources to support children's knowledge and understanding of all aspects of diversity are limited. Staff interact with the children at their level, talking and listening to them by extending their language and thinking, which maximises children's learning experiences. This is particularly beneficial for the youngest children which helps to develop their communication skills and their sense of security and belonging.

Children in the preschool room confidently use information, communication and technology equipment as they follow simple computer programs, use the mouse and follow simple instructions to close the program down. They successfully match colours and shapes, and those who are less confident are well supported by the caring staff, or a more knowledgeable older child. Children are naturally curious and show delight as they compare the patterns their shoes make in the sand tray; while the youngest children show curiosity as they play with a visitor's bracelet and identity card or explore sensory materials, such as paint, shaving foam or cooked pasta. Children consistently behave well, are encouraged to use good manners and work cooperatively together. For example, when the music starts to play they help to tidy up promptly and receive lots of verbal praise and receive a sticker for their efforts. They are responsive to the needs of others, for example, an older child helps a younger child complete an activity. As a result, children are developing skills that help them make a positive contribution.

Annex A: record of inspection judgements

The key inspection judgements and what they mean

Grade 1 is Outstanding: this aspect of the provision is of exceptionally high quality

Grade 2 is Good: this aspect of the provision is strong

Grade 3 is Satisfactory: this aspect of the provision is sound

Grade 4 is Inadequate: this aspect of the provision is not good enough

Overall effectiveness

How effective is the provision in meeting the needs of children in the Early Years Foundation Stage?	2
How well does the provision promote inclusive practice?	2
The capacity of the provision to maintain continuous improvement.	2

Leadership and management

How effectively is provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage led and managed?	2
How effective is the setting's self-evaluation, including the steps taken to promote improvement?	2
How well does the setting work in partnership with parents and others?	2
How well are children safeguarded?	2

Quality and standards

How effectively are children in the Early Years Foundation Stage helped to learn and develop?	2
How effectively is the welfare of children in the Early Years Foundation Stage promoted?	2
How well are children helped to stay safe?	2
How well are children helped to be healthy?	2
How well are children helped to enjoy and achieve?	2
How well are children helped to make a positive contribution?	2
How well are children helped develop skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being?	2

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