

Stepping Stones Day Nursery

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique reference number	127965
Inspection date	09/01/2009
Inspector	Paula Durrant
Setting address	38 Crib Street, Ware, Hertfordshire, SG12 9EZ
Telephone number	01920 469 698
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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 report includes information on any complaints about the childcare provision which Ofsted has received since the last inspection or registration whichever is the later, which require Ofsted or the provider to take action in Annex C.

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).

The setting also makes provision for children older than the early years age group which is registered on the voluntary and/or compulsory part(s) of the Childcare Register. This report does not include an evaluation of that provision, but a comment about compliance with the requirements of the Childcare Register is included in Annex B.

Description of the setting

Stepping Stones Day Nursery is privately owned. It opened in 1992 and operates from a listed building in the centre of Ware town. The premises comprises of five separate play areas. Younger children under the age of two years are cared for on the ground floor. Older children are cared for on the first floor. There are sufficient toileting facilities on both floors and an appropriate area for children to have undisturbed sleep. Access to the main entrance is via a gravelled path, although this is not level to the main building. There is an alternate side entrance which is on a level to the main building. This can be used if required. The nursery has a secure outside play area. There are two pet hamsters and goldfish.

The nursery is registered on the Early Years Register and the compulsory and voluntary parts of the Childcare Register. They are registered to provide care for a total of 28 children in the early years age range. There are currently 29 children in the early years age range on roll. Children attend for a variety of sessions. The nursery welcomes children with learning difficulties and or disabilities and children who have English as an additional language.

The nursery is open all year round. Sessions are from 07:30 until 18:30, with options of a morning session from 08:15 until 13:15 and an afternoon session of 13:30 until 18:00. The nursery also offer 'Tots Time' an hourly rate of care. The nursery employs four full-time staff and two part-time staff, of whom, five are qualified to Level 3. The setting receives support from a qualified teacher and is in the process of developing wider links within the community.

Overall effectiveness of the early years provision

Children's welfare is well promoted. The nursery have a positive attitude to continuous improvement and to enhancing outcomes for children. A proactive staff team that work very effectively together and are committed to personal development, ensures that children make good progress in their learning and development. Most documentation is in place. The nursery have positive relationships with parents and regularly share information to ensure children's individual needs are met. All families are welcomed and valued in this child-centred nursery.

What steps need to be taken to improve provision further?

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

- use observations and assessment to identify learning priorities and plan relevant and motivating experiences for each child.

To fully meet the specific requirements of the EYFS, the registered person must:

- carry out a full risk assessment, which includes an

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assessment of required adult:child ratios, for each type of outing (Safeguarding and promoting children's welfare).

The leadership and management of the early years provision

Generally well maintained records, policies and procedures that staff fully understand support the group's practice in the setting and children's welfare. Staff are highly experienced and skilled at meeting children's individual needs. The manager actively encourages personal staff development and a range of courses are attended by all. This ensures their knowledge is kept up-to-date. Staff are well deployed throughout the nursery. They recognise when to intervene in children's play and when to allow children the freedom and space to extend their own learning. Robust recruitment procedures ensure the suitability of adults caring for children. Staff work well as a team. They share roles and responsibilities, such as, when staff advise via 'walkie-talkie' of children coming down the stairs to use the toilet. This ensures children's safety is maintained.

There are good systems in place to monitor and evaluate the practice within the setting. For example, the manager carries out regular team and individual staff meetings. This ensures a clear focus and direction for the nursery and also provides an opportunity for staff to share their own ideas and suggestions to further improve the provision. All recommendations made at the last inspection have been addressed well. Consequently children's safety in respect of fire evacuation and physical challenges in relation to outdoor play have much improved. Whilst the nursery have yet to formalise their self-evaluation systems, overall they are able to identify their strengths and areas for development.

Generally effective systems are in place to identify and minimise risk to children. However, there is presently no system to risk assess outings. All staff have a secure understanding of child protection and of the Local Safeguarding Children Board's procedures. They know when, where and to whom to report concerns. There is a written safeguarding policy. This is openly shared with parents.

The nursery have very positive links with parents and carers. They share a range of information to ensure continuity is promoted in their care, learning and development. Use of daily diaries contributes to a good two-way flow of information. The setting are proactive in trying to build links with other settings where the children attend.

The quality and standards of the early years provision

Children thrive in this setting. They make good progress in their learning and development due to the secure relationships between staff, children and their peers. Children are very confident and enthusiastic learners. Staff engage very well with children. They listen attentively to children's requests. For example, when older children go out to play, some younger children ask to join them. Staff readily

support this request. This demonstrates to children their value in the nursery community.

The flexible daily timetable enables children to make independent choices in their play and to develop their interests further, such as, when returning from outside play children and staff talk about the cold weather, sing songs liken to the weather and discuss the appearance of a spiders cobweb. Staff enrich children's language for thinking as they introduce new descriptive words such as, shiny, cold and frost. Children thoroughly enjoy the impromptu activity that follows, making decorative spiders webs from silver paint and wool. Effective use of a range of tools supports children in developing their fine physical skills as they use scissors to cut, staplers to connect and a hole punch to make holes. They problem solve in practical situations, when cooking and when playing cards games. Children see a range of written text and numerals around the setting. This positively supports their understanding that print has meaning.

Children listen attentively in group discussions. They are confident in voicing their own opinions. For example, they state their own preference for snack. Children enjoy a range of adult-led activities. They welcome the adult intervention which enriches their play and learning. For example, during role play children competently take on real life roles of adults, such as being a baker cooking cakes and a parent caring for their children. After physical activity children discuss and practise with staff how to get warm. Children have a good knowledge of how exercise affects their bodies. They suggest a hot drink when coming in from the cold.

Staff are knowledgeable about how children learn and of the Early Years Foundation Stage framework. Observation and assessment draws on what children know and can do and what skills they need to develop. However, this information is not currently used to plan for the next steps in children's individual learning. Positive links with parents and good systems for sharing information ensures that parents are well informed about their child's progress. Parents are actively encouraged to share their knowledge and skills in the nursery. This supports children's knowledge and understanding of the wider community and to appreciate and value others.

Children learn to keep themselves safe as they adhere to clear adult direction, such as, when waiting to go up and down the stairs or out into the garden. They have a very clear awareness of emergency fire evacuation procedures and of road safety guidelines. Children stay fit and healthy. They receive regular opportunities to go outside to play and to be active. Children have a healthy and nutritious diet, they eat fresh fruit and vegetables at snack time. Main meals are freshly prepared, nutritious and well-balanced, for example, homemade vegetable soup with wholemeal bread. Individual dietary needs are known and complied with and drinks are freely accessible.

Children are encouraged to develop the habits and behaviour appropriate to good learners, their own needs, and those of others. Staff actively encourage children to take turns and share equipment. Older children demonstrate an understanding of the feelings of others, as they play and negotiate simple rule structures when

enjoying a game of 'snap'. Good manners are encouraged. Children know when and where to use, 'please' and 'thank you'. These skills purposefully contribute to children's future economic well-being.

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?	3
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?	3
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

Any complaints about the inspection or report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk

Annex B: the Childcare Register

The provider confirms that the requirements of the compulsory part of the Childcare Register are:	Met
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The provider confirms that the requirements of the voluntary part of the Childcare Register are:	Met
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Annex C: complaint/s made to Ofsted

This section of the report includes details of any complaint/s made to Ofsted when:

- we took action for the provider to meet the requirements of the Early Years Register; or
- we asked the provider to take action in order to meet the requirements of the Early Years Register; or
- the provider had already taken any necessary action to meet the requirements of the Early Years Register.

We will not report on any complaint where the provider met the requirements of the Early Years Register or did not require any action by Ofsted or the registered provider.

Detail of the complaint/s

There have been no complaints made to Ofsted since the last inspection.

The provider is required to keep a record of complaints made by parents, which they can see on request. The complaints record may contain complaints other than those made to Ofsted.