

# Stepping Stones Day Nursery

Inspection report for early years provision

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**Unique reference number** 509576  
**Inspection date** 28/10/2009  
**Inspector** Sylvia Shane

**Setting address** 74 Eling Lane, Totton, Southampton, Hampshire, SO40  
9GF

**Telephone number** 023 80866763

**Email**

**Type of setting** Childcare on non-domestic premises

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Royal Exchange Buildings  
St Ann's Square  
Manchester  
M2 7LA

T: 08456 404040  
Textphone: 0161 618 8524  
E: [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk)  
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## 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*.

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## **Description of the setting**

Stepping Stones Day Nursery opened in 1997. It operates from a converted house in a residential area of Eling. The premises are divided into units for children under and over two years old. Children have access to an enclosed rear garden for outside play. Children attending come from a wide surrounding area.

The nursery is registered on the Early Years Register for 30 children aged from three months to under five years. It currently has 60 children on roll. This included funded three and four year olds. The group is able to support children for whom English is an additional language and children who have disabilities or learning difficulties.

The nursery is open from 8:00am to 6:00pm on Monday to Friday, 50 weeks of the year and the group operate occasionally on a Saturday for special events. Children attend a variety of sessions.

There are 14 staff working with the children on a part time and full time basis. A high majority of staff are trained to a level three qualification in childcare and some have level four qualifications. The setting receives support from a teacher from the Hampshire Early Years Development and Childcare Partnership (EYDCP) and they have achieved the 4children 'Aiming Higher Quality assurance' status. They are part of the New Forest Day Nursery Network.

## **The overall effectiveness of the early years provision**

Overall the quality of the provision is good.

Children thrive in this stimulating and safe child-centred environment and are making good progress in their learning and development. Through a range of robust policies and procedures which are effectively implemented, children's good health and safety is assured. An effective evaluation process involving staff, children and parents enables the nursery to acknowledge their strengths and identify areas for future improvements. Key to the success of the nursery is the well established staff team and the outstanding partnerships with parents and other professionals support. This ensures that each child receives continuity of care, is included as unique individual and all children have the opportunity to reach their full potential.

## **What steps need to be taken to improve provision further?**

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

- further improve the range of resources accessible to children when playing outdoors to allow children to have more control over their own learning

## **The effectiveness of leadership and management of the early years provision**

Robust recruitment and induction arrangements in place ensure staff who work with children are suitable to do so. The nursery have improved the vetting and employment procedures and now thoroughly check the health of staff. Staff demonstrate a good knowledge and understanding of safeguarding children procedures and are pro-active in helping children to understand how to keep themselves safe. Risk assessments are thorough and daily checks identify any hazards and these are acted upon ensuring children's on going safety both indoors and outside. All required documentation is in place for the safe running of the group and all policies and procedures are reviewed annually or before if the need arises. This ensure that the staff are pro-active rather than reactive to meeting the requirements of regulation and ensuring their policies work in practice.

The setting has exceptional working relationships with parents and as a result children's individual needs are well met. An extensive range of information is provided to parents about the setting, children and about other support agencies. Confidentiality is respected and as a result there is a strong sense of trust. Saturday fun days allow parents to share in fun activities such as Halloween Parties and a Christmas 'shop and drop' facility allows children to play with their friends whilst parents have time they need to shop. Parents are provided with an excellent range of books and articles on child care issues to help them identify and resolve such thing as behaviour or sleepless nights. They are asked to contribute to their child's education in a number of ways including a book sharing scheme. Parents and their children are asked to contribute to the evaluation of the setting on a regular basis. Suggestions are taken seriously and where possible changes are implemented. These are then reported back to parents through the newsletter. Parents are asked to share any important family occasions so that they can discuss and acknowledge these important events in the child's life so that all children feel acknowledged and included. Parents are provided with daily verbal updates to ensure they are fully informed about their child's care and progress. To enhance this they are provided with parent evenings where they share the children individual files and discuss their progress and develop plans for the future, at the suggestion of parents they have now increased this to twice a year. Parents are able to see what the children have been doing during the day as photographs are put on to a computerised photo frame in the reception area. Parent's take a keen interest in the on-going development of the nursery. Their contribution to the reorganising of the garden area has increased the experiences that children receive. For example, since last inspection parents have provided a sensory garden. Green Willow was planted and now children enjoy cosy den to play in.

Staff have worked extremely well to build positive relationships with other providers delivering the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS). They visit each other and share good practice and information, this has enabled them to plan a comprehensive package of care and education for individual children. In addition staff have excellent links with other professionals agencies and work extremely well with them to support children with special educational needs and/or disabilities. Staff help consolidate the links between the local family centre by

providing open evening so that parents learn about the different services they have to offer.

The manager provides strong leadership and children benefit from being cared for by a enthusiastic and stable staff team as staff turn over is low in this group. They communicate really well with each, with the permission of parents share what they know about individual children and offer continuity of care. The setting runs smoothly and ensures children benefit from the good provision. They have been extremely proactive in to developing effective system for self evaluation, as a result, are able to clearly highlight areas of strength and identify areas for improvement. Clear and progressive plans are in place to ensure that any weaknesses are addressed. The group have achieved this in a number of ways; they work particularly closely with local authority and have completed and achieved an accredited status with the 4children organisation. They are currently working towards further improvements, one of these being access to further resources outdoors so children can have instant access to explore and develop their play ideas.

## **The quality and standards of the early years provision and outcomes for children**

Staff have a secure knowledge and understanding of the EYFS curriculum and this enables children to make good progress and develop positive attitudes to learning. Staff use questioning effectively to support children's learning as they play alongside the children during the sessions. A successful balance of adult-led and child-initiated activities allow children to learn and explore at their own pace whilst enabling staff to provide support. The system for assessment is consistently being reviewed to ensure it effectively informs planning and parents are asked to contribute. Staff build on what children know and identify the next steps in their learning.

Children are happy and settle well, a key strength is the warmth, re-assurance, praise and respect the children receive from staff. Children engage them in conversation and seek out their company and want to please. Staff in turn, offer children good role models, they show them respect and listen carefully to them, showing they value children's contributions. Children are extremely well behaved and supportive of each other, they are keen to tidy up and as a result are given stickers as a reward and praised for their good team work. Children love the nursery bear and are keen to take him home, parents are involved in keeping a diary and taking photographs, this makes important link between nursery, enabling children to share with the other children their unique lifestyle .The key person system works well in practice and this helps young children to feel settled and secure. Children learn about their community and visitors, such as the local 'lollipop lady' who help them to remember the rules of road safety.

Children initiate their own activities and have access to both quiet activities and more vigorous play, both inside and outside. They enjoy turn taking games and they play happily with and alongside each other and make friends. Children explore their creativity in a good range of art and craft activities using various painting

techniques to freely express themselves. Activities are adapted so that all children can take part and enjoy it at a level that suits their individual needs. They are proud of their achievements and these are displayed for others to admire and enjoy. Children choose from a wide range of musical instruments ,creating music and choose the songs they want to sing. They use numbers and they develop appropriate skills for their future learning as they weigh ingredients for cooking, have a number of opportunities to recognise and develop writing their names and have regular opportunities to use a computer.

All children enjoy the attractive outdoor play area. A 'baby hut' has been built so that babies can come together with other children in a safe and secure environment. Bright attractive sturdy toys capture their interest and are encouraged to crawl and explore their environment. Staff support them as they develop their confidence in using the slide and show great delight in achieving this. Children enjoy kicking a ball and have plenty of opportunity to do this outside. Older children are showing increasing balance and co-ordinations in riding tricycles and managing their environment. They have opportunities to jump on the trampoline and climb on the climbing frame. However, water and sand play appear to be a great favourite as they explore what happens when water and sand mix. They take a keen interest in nature; enjoy growing and watering plants with mini watering cans. They are thrilled to see a frog in the garden and gather round and staff encourage them to compare it to the one they saw yesterday. They learn to talk gently and not to frighten it. Children are unable to take a photograph as the memory card in the camera was full. They are keen to explore how things work, for example the windmill. The staff recognise the need to develop the range of resources to encourage continuous play opportunities to extend and increase the free flow play outdoors.

Good hygiene routines followed by the staff and children help to prevent cross infection. Any medical or learning difficulties are noted and supported as necessary to ensure that no child is excluded. Individual dietary requirements and any specific needs are very well catered for. Children enjoy meals and snacks that are healthy, nutritious and their individual dietary needs and preferences are taken in to account. A café style snack bar allows them to choose when they want to eat snacks; this allows them to continue their activities and enhance the flow of the session. Meal times are social occasions when children sit together with staff who give the appropriate level of support they need to increase their independence. Older children are able help themselves from serving dishes and are learning to share and consider others.

## 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*

### The overall effectiveness of the early years provision

<b>How well does the setting meet the needs of the children in the Early Years Foundation Stage?</b>	2
The capacity of the provision to maintain continuous improvement	2

### The effectiveness of leadership and management of the early years provision

<b>How effectively is the Early Years Foundation Stage led and managed?</b>	2
The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	2
The effectiveness with which the setting deploys resources	2
The effectiveness with which the setting promotes equality and diversity	2
The effectiveness of safeguarding	2
The effectiveness of the setting's self-evaluation, including the steps taken to promote improvement	2
The effectiveness of partnerships	1
The effectiveness of the setting's engagement with parents and carers	1

### The quality of the provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage

The quality of the provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
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### Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage

<b>Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage</b>	2
The extent to which children achieve and enjoy their learning	2
The extent to which children feel safe	2
The extent to which children adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which children make a positive contribution	2
The extent to which children develop skills for the future	2

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