

Stepping Stones Day Nursery

Inspection report for early years provision

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| Unique reference number | EY331414 |
| Inspection date | 10/11/2009 |
| Inspector | Saida Cummings |
| Setting address | Ashcroft Road, Cirencester, Gloucestershire, GL7 1RA |
| Telephone number | 01285 642 460 |
| Email | |
| Type of setting | Childcare on non-domestic premises |

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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*.

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.

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Description of the setting

Stepping Stones Day Nursery is managed by Bright Horizons Family Solutions Limited. The nursery was first registered in 1995 and became part of the Bright Horizons Family Solutions Limited group of nurseries in 2006. The setting operates from detached premises in the centre of Cirencester, Gloucestershire. Children are cared for in several rooms and they have access to an enclosed outdoor play area. The setting serves children from local and surrounding areas. A maximum of 78 children may attend at any one time. Children from birth to under eight years of age attend the setting.

There are currently 44 children attending who are within the Early Years Foundation Stage. The setting is in receipt of funding for the provision of free early education to children aged three and four. This provision is registered by Ofsted on the Early Years Register and on the compulsory part of the Childcare Register. The setting offers support to children with special educational needs and/or disabilities, and children who speak English as an additional language.

The nursery is open each weekday from 7:30am to 6:00pm all year round. Children attend for a variety of sessions. The setting employs 14 staff who work with the children. Of these, 11 hold appropriate early years qualifications. The manager and one of the members of staff are qualified teachers. The setting receives support from the local authority.

The overall effectiveness of the early years provision

Overall the quality of the provision is good.

Children's welfare, learning and development are well-promoted as staff take time to plan specific activities which link in to individual children's interests and abilities. This promotes inclusive practice as all children are able to participate at their own level. The manager and staff work closely together and with parents and carers so they clearly know the individual needs of each child. Although there is an effective partnership with parents and carers, liaison systems with other providers are not yet fully established. Children's right to choose and make decisions are well-supported for most of the time. The self-evaluation systems are not yet fully developed to ensure the setting is able to make continuous improvements in all areas.

What steps need to be taken to improve provision further?

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

- improve the organisation of the setting to include effective procedures to evaluate the provision and identify areas for development to ensure continuous improvements are made
- improve opportunities for children to be active in a range of ways, particularly

- regarding regular access to outdoor play provision
- develop systems to ensure a more regular two-way flow of information with other settings attended by children in the early years age range.

The effectiveness of leadership and management of the early years provision

Children are safeguarded by a team of staff who have a good understanding of the issues surrounding child protection and recognise that this is their first priority. Robust systems for the recruitment, vetting and induction of staff ensure that children are cared for by suitable and knowledgeable adults. Children's welfare is promoted as the staff ensure that the setting remains safe, suitable and child friendly. Thorough risk assessments are carried out regularly and a daily safety check ensures any potential hazards to children are minimised. This includes times when children are taken on outings ensuring all aspects of the event are carefully considered. New management and improved evaluation of the nursery's practice have helped enthuse staff, develop more positive attitudes to change and led to new ways of working. For example, future improvements have been planned and more effective team working has been developed. However these recent changes, new plans and evaluation systems are not yet sufficiently developed to ensure continuous improvements are made in all areas.

Children benefit greatly from the ongoing liaison staff maintain with their parents and carers, which effectively contributes to the continuity of their care and supports their learning. For example, parents and carers are kept well-informed about their child's activities and events within the nursery through daily discussions, regular newsletters, notices and information leaflets. The manager and staff have devised effective systems to enable parents and carers to share their views and ensure they are consistently included in their children's learning. In the wider context, some successful partnerships have been made with other professionals, such as to support children with additional needs. However, partnerships have yet to be established with other providers of the Early Years Foundation Stage in order to share the ongoing progress and development of individual children who also attend other settings.

Comprehensive systems underpin the smooth operation of the nursery and, as a result, children's welfare, learning and development are well catered for. The effective policies and procedures work in practice to safeguard children and promote their health and well-being. The managers and staff are enthusiastic, dedicated and work well together as a strong and supportive team. Children are encouraged to play a full part in the life of the setting because staff fully understand, respect and value their unique needs. Staff work closely with children to promote tolerance and acceptance and this creates a strong sense of caring within each age group. Staff deployment is well-organised to ensure children are fully supervised without inhibiting their ideas and imagination. Children easily access the broad range of good quality interesting and stimulating resources which enables them to instigate their own play. For example, they choose various items from the clearly labelled storage boxes to help them construct and develop their problem solving skills.

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

Children flourish due to good quality care and the strong attachments they make with their key persons. There are effective systems for observing children and assessing their progress. The key persons know their key children very-well and use this knowledge to support individual children to develop their skills and early education by providing a well-balanced adult-led and child-initiated programme of activities. The systems for planning age-appropriate activities ensure these are unique to each child's stage of development. Staff regularly evaluate individual children's progress and successfully use this information to plan further activities and opportunities which ensure each child is able to move on to the next stage in their development. Learning journeys are maintained for each child, which clearly demonstrate the progress made and are effectively shared and added to by parents and carers. As a result, children are animated, interested and making very good progress in all areas of learning.

Children are active and independent learners as they have great fun exploring the wide variety of play materials and activities available for them. For example, babies enjoy exploring different textures through the use of natural play resources. Children develop a strong sense of belonging within the setting, enjoy the attention of caring staff and engage in both self-selected and planned activities individually and also with their peers. Their independence is developed as they are encouraged to carry out basic tasks for themselves. For example, at lunch-time children serve themselves from the food platters, pour out their own drinks and learn how to use cutlery from a very early age. Positive behaviour strategies, such as praise and encouragement, are implemented effectively, creating a calm and productive environment in which all children thrive. Children participate in activities and events throughout the year which help them to gain an appreciation of the wider world. For example, they join in with fun activities linked to cultural festivals and events, such as Diwali, Chinese New Year and Christmas.

Children have many opportunities to explore and investigate, and to extend their imagination and problem solving skills. For example, children of all ages enjoy completing puzzles, constructing with various materials and joining in with sand and water play. Staff use effective questioning techniques to support and develop children's learning, such as supporting them to start to understand the concept of volume when playing with the water. Children pour water from one receptacle to another and staff encourage them to guess which pot or jug they need for the amount of water they wish to pour. Children of all ages relish joining in with craft and sensory activities, such as printing with paint and creating colourful collages. Children's language and literacy skills are developed through fun and relaxed activities, such as joining in with story time and singing familiar nursery rhymes. Innovative strategies are used by staff to help children link their love of story telling with their creativity. Children choose a section of one of their favourite books to create the 'Story board'. They collectively recreate some of their favourite characters using craft materials which are displayed on the board for them to refer to and talk about. As a result, children are building up their vocabulary and

communication skills through interesting and exciting activities. Children are confident and are encouraged to join in with discussions throughout the nursery. They enjoy sitting with their friends and chatting during their everyday routines, such as at mealtimes and when engaging in tabletop activities.

Children's good health and well-being are promoted as all children have opportunities for physical indoor and outdoor activities. They enjoy using the variety of outdoor equipment to develop their physical skills; for instance, they learn to run, jump and manoeuvre the wheeled toys around the obstacle course. However, the current systems of how sessions are organised does not ensure children are given every opportunity to make full use of the outdoor play facilities. This does not always enable them to freely choose to play out in the fresh air. Children receive healthy and nutritious meals and snacks which are planned to ensure their likes and dislikes are taken into consideration. All the food is freshly-prepared and all staff, including the cook, are made fully aware of individual children's specific dietary needs to ensure these are fully catered for. Effective strategies are used by the staff to promote children's understanding of healthy eating through various activities and projects. For example, children plant and look after vegetables and herbs which are picked and used as part of the ingredients in their meals and snacks. As a result, children are developing an awareness of leading a healthy lifestyle, and their knowledge and understanding of where some of their food comes from through interesting and exciting activities.

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

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

The effectiveness of leadership and management of the early years provision

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| How effectively is the Early Years Foundation Stage led and managed? | 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 | 2 |
| The effectiveness of the setting's engagement with parents and carers | 2 |

The quality of the provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage

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| 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

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| Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage | 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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Annex B: the Childcare Register

The provider confirms that the requirements of the compulsory part of the Childcare Register are:

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