

Little Steps Day Nursery

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique reference number 123558
Inspection date 30/11/2009
Inspector Valerie Fane

Setting address 1 Lancaster Road, St. Albans, Hertfordshire, AL1 4EP

Telephone number 01 727 856651
Email littlesteps@btconnect.com
Type of setting Childcare on non-domestic premises

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, work-based learning and skills training, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It rates council children's services, and inspects services for looked after children, safeguarding and child protection.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 08456 404040, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may copy all or parts of this document for non-commercial educational purposes, as long as you give details of the source and date of publication and do not alter the information in any way.

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

T: 08456 404040
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.ofsted.gov.uk

© Crown copyright 2009

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.

Please see our website for more information about each childcare provider. We publish inspection reports, conditions of registration and details of complaints we receive where we or the provider take action to meet the requirements of registration.

Description of the setting

Little Steps Day Nursery owned by Little Steps Ltd was registered in 1999. It operates from a house in a residential area of St Albans near to the town centre. The nursery serves the local area. The nursery is accessible to all children and there is a fully enclosed area available for outdoor play.

The nursery opens Monday to Friday all year round except for a week at Christmas. Sessions are from 7.45am until 6.15pm. Children are able to attend for a variety of sessions. A maximum of 30 children may attend the nursery at any one time. There are currently 61 children attending who are within the Early Years Foundation Stage. The nursery is registered on the Early Years Register and on both the voluntary and compulsory parts of the Childcare Register. The nursery provides funded early education for three and four-year-olds. It supports children with special educational needs and/or disabilities and children who speak English as an additional language.

The nursery employs 12 members of child care staff. Of these 10 hold appropriate early years qualifications. One member of staff has Qualified Teacher Status. The nursery receives support from the local authority.

The overall effectiveness of the early years provision

Overall the quality of the provision is inadequate.

The owners of the nursery have not complied with requests to supply information to Ofsted and have not ensured that a record of the staff's Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) checks is available in the nursery. The manager provides very clear leadership to a well-qualified and strong team of staff who work closely with her to provide childcare that is very good in most respects. All children make good progress in their learning because staff have an excellent grasp of the Early Years Foundation Stage and provide a well-planned range of play opportunities to support children. They work closely with outside agencies to support children with special educational needs and/or disabilities and provide all children with opportunities to increase their awareness of our diverse society. However, links have not been formed with other providers who share the care of children in the nursery. The manager has a clear awareness of the strengths of the nursery because she is continually reflecting on her practice and implementing improvements to improve outcomes for children but she has not ensured that all welfare requirements are met.

Overall, the early years provision requires significant improvement. The registered person is given a Notice to Improve that sets out actions to be carried out.

What steps need to be taken to improve provision further?

To comply with the requirements of the EYFS the registered person must take the following action by the specified date:

- provide information to Ofsted so checks can be made to confirm that providers are suitable people (Suitable people) 14/12/2009
- make available records of information used to assess staff suitability including the unique reference numbers of Criminal Records Bureau disclosures obtained and the date on which they were obtained (Suitable people) 14/12/2009
- ensure that managers are familiar with the requirements of the Independent Safeguarding Authority (ISA) (Suitable people) 14/12/2009
- obtain information from parents of all children about who has parental responsibility for the child (Safeguarding and promoting children's welfare). 14/12/2009

To improve the early years provision the registered person should:

- update the complaints procedure to include the correct telephone number for Ofsted
- develop the opportunities for partnership working where children receive care and education in more than one setting.

The effectiveness of leadership and management of the early years provision

Children are not fully safeguarded because the owners of the nursery have not supplied information to Ofsted to enable their suitability checks to be completed. The manager has ensured that all staff have completed checks with the CRB to confirm they are suitable to work with young children but a list of these checks is not available at all times. The safeguarding policy was updated recently but it does not include information about the Independent Safeguarding Authority and the manager has limited knowledge of the new requirements. In all other respects children are safeguarded well. All staff have a secure knowledge of safeguarding procedures and understand what to do if they were to have concerns about a child in their care. Children receive care in a safe and secure nursery environment because detailed risk assessments are in place and regular safety checks are completed by staff. All required policies and procedures are in place and are reviewed regularly but the telephone number for Ofsted has not been updated.

Children enjoy their time in a friendly, family-orientated nursery that has many strong qualities. The owners and manager are all committed to providing a high level of care and have a clear vision to initiate and support ongoing developments. The manager leads a very well-qualified team of staff and they work together closely and effectively with a strong ethos of reflective practice. They have met the recommendations made at the last inspection thoroughly and have implemented many other changes to ensure that outcomes for children are of a high standard in

most respects. For example, they have reviewed the settling-in procedures for new children to ensure that these are adjusted to meet the needs of individual children very effectively. The manager is constantly evaluating her practice to identify areas for further development, such as the creation of a mobile mark making area. However, she has not carried out a careful review of the welfare requirements to ensure that these are fully met. Children in all rooms use an interesting range of resources appropriate to their age and stage of development and this includes toys and books that reflect other cultures.

Children thrive because the staff work very closely with their parents or carers. Parents are given detailed information about the nursery and provide all required information except information about who has parental responsibility for their children. There is an effective key person system in place so a member of staff gets to know each child and their family very well. Children are able to continue their learning at home because parents are very well-informed about children's learning through newsletters, a daily summary in the hall, parents' evenings and regular conversations. Parents are encouraged to come into nursery to share areas of expertise. Children with special educational needs and/or disabilities thrive because staff work very closely with outside agencies such as, an advisory teacher to ensure that they have the knowledge to provide the best possible support for such children. Children who attend other Early Years Foundation Stage provision do not benefit from continuity of care because the nursery has not developed links to share information with the other providers.

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

Children of all ages make good progress in all areas of learning. This is because the staff have a very secure knowledge of the Early Years Foundation Stage and understand how to provide an excellent balance of free play and planned activities that meets children's individual learning needs well. All children are challenged in their learning because staff adapt activities appropriately. They observe children's progress in all areas of learning regularly and use the observations to inform assessment records and to identify children's next steps in learning. Staff have recently begun to implement a system that will make even closer links between the planning and children's individual learning needs. Children behave very well throughout the nursery and are interested and engrossed in their learning.

Babies feel secure with their key staff and relate confidently to them. They have excellent opportunities to explore different textures. They play with a set of pots and pans and bang them together to see if they make a noise. A CD of children's songs is played while children are experimenting and this encourages their early attempts to develop a sense of rhythm. Babies play with the sand and the older ones use tools, such as spoons, to scoop up some of the sand. Staff have previously noted that they enjoy using the spoons more than other tools so they have made them available more often. Babies enjoy sitting with staff to look at picture books and staff develop their language skills by talking to them about the pictures. They love to use the soft play equipment and develop very good climbing and balancing skills.

Older children enjoy a very wide range of opportunities. They develop their awareness of initial sounds using the 'Jolly Phonics' scheme so they identify today's letter and enthusiastically think of things that begin with that sound using hints from staff and also providing their own ideas. Staff skilfully include children who are quieter and encourage them to contribute their own ideas. Staff also make good use of spontaneous learning opportunities. For example, at snack time children count how many are round their table. They have a good understanding of one-to-one correspondence and tell staff that they need the same number of cups. They count the cups to see if there are the right number. They enjoy listening to stories at circle time and staff make very good provision for children with special educational needs and/or disabilities to enable them to gain maximum benefit from the activity. Children of all ages use different forms of technology. Babies play with interactive toys that make lights flash and make different noises. Older children use computer programs with increasing confidence for free writing and use a paint program to make their own pictures. Activities such as these also support children's development of skills for the future.

Children develop a very good understanding of healthy lifestyles. They spend plenty of time outside in the well-resourced garden. They play in the mud, they use small equipment, such as bats and balls, to develop their co-ordination and they love climbing and balancing on the large play equipment. They gain awareness of their personal safety because they learn to use the large equipment safely. Children gain a good awareness of healthy eating because they enjoy a nutritious selection of meals and snacks that is varied and also meets children's individual dietary needs. Older children begin to exercise control over their eating because they serve their own food. All children help to grow their own vegetables in the nursery allotment. They sow, water and harvest crops such as beetroot, tomatoes and potatoes and enjoy eating them at mealtimes.

Children's home culture is celebrated in the nursery. If children are bilingual staff learn some words in their other language to use in addition to supporting their use of English. They feel valued because their parents are encouraged to come in and share parts of their culture such as dance and cookery. All children gain a good awareness of our diverse society because in addition to using resources from other cultures they take part in activities to celebrate different festivals. For example, they make a red and gold paint display for Diwali, they wear saris, learn Indian dances and do some Indian cookery.

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

How well does the setting meet the needs of the children in the Early Years Foundation Stage?	4
The capacity of the provision to maintain continuous improvement	2

The effectiveness of leadership and management of the early years provision

How effectively is the Early Years Foundation Stage led and managed?	4
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	4
The effectiveness of the setting's self-evaluation, including the steps taken to promote improvement	3
The effectiveness of partnerships	3
The effectiveness of the setting's engagement with parents and carers	2

The quality of the provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage

The quality of the provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
--	---

Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage

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	3
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

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:

Not Met (with actions)

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

Met

The registered provider does not meet the requirements of the compulsory and or voluntary part/s of the Childcare Register.

To comply with the requirements of the compulsory part of the Childcare Register, the registered person must take the following action/s by the specified date:

- inform Ofsted of the name, date of birth, address and telephone number of any partner, director, senior officer or other member of the governing body. 14/12/2009