

Stepping Stones Day Nursery and Nursery School

Inspection report for early years provision

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| Unique reference number | EY258333 |
| Inspection date | 30/03/2010 |
| Inspector | Jenny Read |
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| 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 and Nursery School has been run by the current owner since 2003. The nursery is registered on the Early Years Register and both the compulsory and voluntary parts of the Childcare Register. It operates from purpose-built premises over two floors situated in a residential area of Deer park in Witney. The nursery has two large base rooms on the ground floor with a kitchen and toilet and nappy changing facilities. There are two base rooms upstairs with a sleep room, nappy changing room, milk kitchen and staff room. A separate terrapin building with two small rooms is used for children in the later years age group. All children share access to an enclosed garden with hard standing, grass and bark surfaces and a planting and growing area.

A maximum of 73 children may attend the nursery at any one time, of these no more than 21 children may be under two years at any one time. There are currently 98 children on roll aged from one month to under nine years at any one time. Of these, 31 children aged three and four years receive funding for early education. The nursery is open each week day from 8.00am until 6pm all year round, excluding bank holidays. The nursery also provides out of school care. All children share access to an enclosed outdoor play area. The nursery currently supports children with special educational needs and/or disabilities and also supports children who speak English as an additional language. Children come from Witney and surrounding villages.

The nursery employs 16 staff to work directly with the children. Six of the staff, including the manager, hold appropriate early years qualifications to level 2, 3 and 4. The manager holds the Early Years Professional Status qualification. Four staff are currently working towards the National Vocational Qualification in Children's Care, Learning and Development at Level 3. Two staff are currently working towards Early Years Foundation degrees.

The overall effectiveness of the early years provision

Overall the quality of the provision is satisfactory.

The nursery promotes many aspects of children's welfare with success, ensuring that they are safe and secure. Most children are well engaged in many activities, although weak planning for outdoors and limited assessment mean that some children are not achieving their full potential. There is a friendly and informal partnership with parents and links with other agencies is extremely effective providing high quality support for children with identified needs. The management team make some use of self-evaluation to identify key strengths and some areas for development but systems are not yet sufficiently robust to ensure that all gaps in the provision are identified.

What steps need to be taken to improve provision further?

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

- develop the planning outdoors to ensure particular emphasis is given to all areas of learning and focus is given to all children attending
- develop the systems for observing and assessing children's progress to track and monitor their learning and development to plan for children's next steps
- develop the information to parents about their children's progress and development across the whole nursery
- extend the safeguarding policy to include notifying the regulator of any allegations of serious harm or abuse by any person working or looking after children at the premises.

The effectiveness of leadership and management of the early years provision

Children's health, safety and welfare is promoted generally well. Whilst all the required policies and procedures are in place and are generally well known and implemented by staff to support their care, the safeguarding policy does not include procedures for informing Ofsted in the event an allegation of abuse is made against a member of staff. Many staff demonstrate satisfactory awareness of safeguarding issues and procedures to follow to protect children from harm and abuse. Systems for recruitment and induction are secure, ensuring staff are suitable to care for children. As a result, new staff show good awareness of the setting's policies and procedures. Highly effective links with other agencies is providing good support for children especially those with identified special needs. Parents benefit from generally good information about the setting in the parent pack and their children's day through the daily feedback sheets. Parents praise the friendly and welcoming staff and value the daily communication and approachability of staff. Although parents' evenings take place within some groups, systems for sharing information about children's progress is not consistent throughout the nursery to ensure all parents receive on-going information about their children's learning.

Children benefit from a friendly, committed staff team who work generally well together. Systems for self-evaluation are inclusive of the whole management team, meaning there is drive and ambition to secure improvements. The manager and deputy communicate key priorities generally well to staff during staff meetings. As a result, recently introduced sign language and free flowing indoor and outdoor play extends experiences and support for many children. Suitable progress has been made from the last inspection to promote outcomes for children. The deployment of staff within each room has significantly improved ensuring each room is well staffed and children are supported. Additional staff have been employed specifically during the lunch time period ensuring sufficient numbers of staff are present to cover lunch breaks. There are plans to interview additional staff to cover school pick ups to further enhance the security of the key person system because all staff can remain with their key children during transition times. Whilst yearly parent questionnaires enable parents to provide feedback, the questions asked do not provide purposeful input to the self-evaluation, limiting their effectiveness to improve outcomes for children.

Staff have a growing knowledge of the Early Years Foundation Stage framework and recent introduction of free-flowing indoor and outdoor play for the older children downstairs enhances their experiences. However, staff's knowledge of children's next steps, the learning intentions or reasons why the activities are set out is not consistent throughout the nursery. This limits purposeful support and challenge for the younger children. Whilst some staff are animated and purposefully facilitate children's play, some staff supervise meal times and activities rather than actively interact and support children's learning. Support and progress for children with a disability or learning difficulty is excellent. Children are extremely well supported and nurtured within the setting, with good quality links with other agencies to enhance their progress and experiences. All children are fully integrated and displaying key words in children's native languages and recent introduction of sign language, introduced to the whole group, is enabling all children, including those who speak English as an additional language, to communicate.

Most children play in spacious, homely base rooms. The rooms downstairs are generally well organised and benefit from an abundant range of toys and equipment to provide stimulating experiences for children. Resources are displayed in low-level units with labelled boxes encouraging older children's independence and ability to make choices. However, few resources in the toddler room upstairs are at child-height to enable the younger children to see what is available and to make informed choices. Also, staff put away all the toys prior to meal times, then set out other toys afterwards. Although this offers more opportunities for children, it also means children are unable to continue with what they were already doing to extend their play ideas further. Risk assessments for indoor and outdoor areas are routinely completed alongside assessments for occasional walks and school pick ups ensuring children play in a safe, secure environment.

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

Children know their key person well because staff tend to their individual care needs well throughout the day. This helps the children to feel safe and secure. Good focus is given to promoting children's sense of belonging and nurturing their well-being. Babies respond to comfort and cuddles from staff to help them settle and feel secure. Many children benefit from enthusiastic staff who actively engage and interact confidently during play to provide purposeful support. As a result, children are happy and engaged and confidently build good relationships with peers and adults. Nevertheless, this is not consistent throughout the nursery. Meal times in the toddler room are quiet with minimal interaction from staff or sharing of news to support children's language and enjoyment of food. Children benefit from a suitable range of nutritious, well-balanced meals and easy access to regular drinks. Many children access their drinks when they are thirsty ensuring they stay well hydrated. Sensitive explanations and direction from staff ensures children learn to keep themselves safe and behave in ways that are safe for themselves and others. Whilst children show little awareness of safe action to take in an emergency through occasional practise of the escape plan, children demonstrate

growing awareness of safety hazards.

Although the older children downstairs are engaged, busy and making good progress, the younger children upstairs are making satisfactory progress in their learning and development. Throughout the nursery staff plan for their key children's individual needs because every child has a dedicated planned activity once a month. These are based on observations from parents at home, previous planning and observations of previous activities. This ensures planning is child focused but also means children often wait a month before the planning is specific to their interests and needs. Although, the weekly planning is effective in both the pre-school and two-to-three's rooms, meaning children experience a wide range of experiences that challenge their learning and next steps, this is not consistent throughout the nursery. Whilst children have fun exploring in the spacious outdoor area, planning for children's learning outdoors is weak and not inclusive for all children. The plans are not monitored sufficiently to ensure all areas of learning are covered and is not inclusive of all key staff to ensure outdoor activities are purposeful to challenge all children's learning. As a result, some activities are not set out, are not appropriate and children quickly lose interest.

Staff complete on-going observation notes for each child, however, this is not consistent throughout the nursery meaning there is little evidence to show some children's achievements and progress. Whilst the nursery's own assessment sheet is used well to record when specific everyday tasks are completed, such as holds finger food, looks at books alone, there are no assessments in place to track and monitor each child's progress and learning in line with the development matters. Consequently, knowledge of where children are at in their learning in order to plan successfully for their next steps is not secure. A visual timetable displayed in the pre-school room informs staff, parents and children of the routines and enables children to predict what comes next. Children show delight when nominated as the helper of the day, helping them to feel special. Children are well behaved demonstrating clear understanding of the rules and boundaries.

Pre-school children gain good awareness of numbers, shapes, letters and their phonetic sounds through well planned activities, daily routines and displays around the room. Children confidently count the numbers of children present beyond 10 and effective questioning from staff, such as 'Who can tell me the day today?', 'Who can tell me what tomorrow will be?' is extending children's understanding of mathematical language. Staff skilfully introduce letters of the alphabet and their sounds during circle time, such as, 'There is a z and an o and an o and we call it oo when there are two o's.' Children confidently name the word 'zoo' and eagerly share their toys brought from home during show and tell that represent the letter z. This is further extended by reading stories with the corresponding letter of the week and using an imaginary pencil to write the letter. However, children are not always encouraged to practise their emergent writing skills as staff write the children's names on their pictures. Children have fun, excitedly exploring different sounds with the various instruments, enabling them to freely express themselves. They show interest experimenting with different media and materials, such as paint, shaving foam, pasta, rice and custard, investigating the various textures and sensory experiences.

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? | 3 |
| The capacity of the provision to maintain continuous improvement | 3 |

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? | 3 |
| The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement | 3 |
| The effectiveness with which the setting deploys resources | 3 |
| The effectiveness with which the setting promotes equality and diversity | 2 |
| The effectiveness of safeguarding | 3 |
| The effectiveness of the setting's self-evaluation, including the steps taken to promote improvement | 3 |
| The effectiveness of partnerships | 2 |
| The effectiveness of the setting's engagement with parents and carers | 3 |

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 | 3 |
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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 | 3 |
| The extent to which children achieve and enjoy their learning | 3 |
| 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 | 3 |

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Annex B: the Childcare Register

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

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