

Stepping Stones

Inspection report for early years provision

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Inspector	Ann Bamford
Setting address	Mondeor, Hoddlesden Road, Hoddlesden, Darwen, Lancashire, BB3 3LR
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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 nursery is located in the village of Hoddlesden, close to Darwen. It opened in 1994 and operates from a single-storey building. It is registered on the Early Years Register and the compulsory and voluntary parts of the Childcare Register. A maximum of 26 children may attend the nursery at any one time. The nursery is open each weekday from 8am to 5.30pm all year round. Children have access to a secure outdoor play area.

There are currently 48 children from birth to under five years on roll. The nursery supports children who have additional needs. Children attend from a wide catchment area.

The nursery employs seven staff and the proprietor also works in the nursery as a manager. Seven staff, including the manager, hold appropriate early years qualifications. One member of staff is working towards a level 3 qualification, two staff hold a level 4 qualification, and one staff is working towards an early years degree.

The nursery receives support from a teacher from the Early Years Development and Childcare Partnership.

The overall effectiveness of the early years provision

Overall the quality of the provision is good.

All children's needs are met in an effective way while they are cared for in the nursery. Children's welfare is promoted with attention to individual needs as the nursery works with parents in a very skilled way. Children are highly safe and secure at all times and enjoy the time they spend at the nursery. Most children's good health is maintained very effectively. The care provided meets children's needs in a creative way as the nursery makes extensive use of individual information elicited from parents. This focuses on all aspects of the child's life, including family, culture and what each child likes and dislikes. The nursery has begun to identify children's starting points using information given by parents. Children experience a rich variety of activities in an environment that is well designed and planned for them. The nursery has made solid use of self-evaluation as a tool to identify and develop areas of continuous improvement. This has resulted in the quality of childcare and education that children receive being effective and consistently improved.

What steps need to be taken to improve provision further?

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

- continue to develop the arrangements to ensure that babies and young children can sleep in line with their individual needs for support when resting

- continue to develop the gathering of information on what children can already do when they enter the nursery linked to the early learning goals in the Early Years Foundation Stage curriculum

The effectiveness of leadership and management of the early years provision

Children are extremely safe in the nursery as all staff have a very clear understanding of their role in safeguarding them and the confidence to seek assistance for a child, using the local area guidelines, should the need arise. The area where children are cared for is risk assessed on a daily and ongoing basis. As a result, children are very safe and are developing a sophisticated awareness of how to keep themselves and others safe. Extensive written risk assessments are in place for outings and many other areas of care. The childcare area is regularly modified to ensure that children have maximum access to toys and equipment, while still keeping them safe in the indoor and outdoor environment. Most children's good health is robustly maintained as staff give high priority to support children in performing self-help tasks from an early age, such as washing hands after using the toilet. However, some babies and toddlers sleep in pushchairs which restricts their comfort and ability to move freely while resting.

Good use is made of documentation for both the safe management of the nursery and as a means of ensuring that children are making the best possible progress in each area of learning. The nursery regularly reviews documentation and plans for further development. The records of planning and of children's progress show that they enjoy the clear challenges presented to them in activities. This gives them a thirst for learning.

The staff team has high aspirations for the quality of care and learning. Their commitment to ongoing improvement ensures that children receive a very good level of care that is consistently developing to meet needs in a creatively skilled way. The whole staff team has made effective use of the Early Years Foundation Stage documents as a tool for ensuring that each child makes general progress in all six areas of their early learning. However, the individual targets for each child, particularly early in the child's time in the setting, are not yet consistently linked to the early learning goals from the Early Years Foundation Stage. This affects the rate at which children progress. Staff use everyday experiences to encourage children's self-help skills. For example, children prepare and serve their own snacks, using cutlery to cut their own fruit. Older children serving younger ones helps to develop a concept of good citizenship.

Working in partnership with parents is good. The nursery involves parents in gathering information, planning next steps for children and evaluating their service. This enhances children's experience of consistency of care. In addition, the nursery already works effectively with other professionals in areas, such as health and other providers of nursery education, to achieve the best possible outcomes for children.

Children benefit from the whole staff team's unfailing strive for improvement. Their

regular attendance on courses and skill in weaving new knowledge and understanding into practice means that children can experience new ways of learning and having fun. The nursery's analytical approach to their own practice demonstrates their skilful ability to define where improvement can be made, using the views of parents and children. They then develop their practice in a methodical way using both their records of progress and demonstrating the impact upon children by challenging them to take next steps. For example, the nursery plans to allow children additional time engaged in outdoor activities. Children excitedly describe what their new play area will be like. Staff use all resources very effectively to develop the children's understanding of the multicultural world around them by planning creative use of stories, food, jigsaws and dressing up clothes to increase children's awareness of the rich variety around them.

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

This nursery is a good example of integrated care and learning delivered to meet individual needs. The careful allocation of key workers across the whole nursery means that they hold a robust understanding of the different stages of children's development and learning; as a result, children's individual learning needs are promoted in an individual way. The environment is organised to encourage a balance for children in selecting their own activities and engaging in adult-led activities, both in and out of doors. Observation, assessment and planning are used skilfully to create an environment where children can be active learners, with challenges provided by adults to think critically. However, this is not always firmly linked to the early learning goals in the Early Years Foundation Stage. Children are involved in every aspect of planning, for example, what time they will eat their snack, or what they will do for specific parts of the day. All children are encouraged to do as much as they can for themselves. For example, staff only provide support for children to start off fastening their own coats to go outdoors. Children develop excellent self-help skills in managing their own hygiene needs as staff focus consistently on helping children become independent when using the toilet, blowing their noses or playing outdoors appropriately clothed.

Staff's patience and encouragement of the children to persist enhances their confidence to succeed. The planning of next steps ensures that a child who does not naturally choose areas of play, such as the computer, can have the support to move on. Staff identify what areas children readily select and then provide encouragement to select unfamiliar areas. Children's individual progress is charted with care; the next steps are agreed with parents verbally and in meetings. Records are used to reflect clearly children's good levels of achievement in relation to their starting points.

Children's welfare is promoted in a very effective manner. All children learn how to maintain their own health and safety from a very early age as they are encouraged to indicate their needs for food and drink, managing their own hygiene, sleep and cuddles. The nursery's use of strategies, such as concentration on initials or endings of words, enhances children's communication skills and confidence. All children pour their own drinks and wash their own hands before eating food with

increasing independence. Children develop a keen awareness of preventing cross-infection as they talk about what happens if they do not wash their hands before eating. The strategic placing of towels and soap at child height significantly develops children's ability to take responsibility for their own hygiene needs. All children have a strong awareness of safety as they help a younger child to use a tricycle safely, completely without adult intervention. This is a result of the organisation of the nursery and their knowledge and understanding of how to use equipment safely. All children in the nursery have an awareness of the needs of others as they engage in many planned activities which require turn taking and sharing, or negotiation for the use of a particular piece of equipment. Children's consideration of others and older children's care and concern for younger children is an exemplary feature of this nursery. Children develop excellent independence skills as they are involved in discussing, for example, whether they should play out in the rain, considering whether or not they will be safe if they get wet. The children develop a robust understanding of the wider world as they visit the local park, grow their own plants, feed their garden birds or focus on a variety of festivals, which reflect both their own and others' cultural heritage.

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?	2
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?	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

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

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:	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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