

Little Steps Day Nursery

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique reference number 123558
Inspection date 05/05/2010
Inspector Naomi Brown

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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

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 59 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 good.

Children are very happy, settled and confident in the setting because staff value and support them to make the most of their abilities. Children have easy access to well managed resources and they are able to make choices from a broad range of activities which meet their learning needs. Staff evaluate these so that they consistently work towards strong outcomes for each child. The setting has an effective and inclusive approach towards working with parents and others, which results in a service that is responsive to the needs of its users.

What steps need to be taken to improve provision further?

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

- further develop assessment systems to include information on what children can do when they join the setting to further underpin their good progress
- further develop systems for sharing policy information with parents to ensure that they are aware of all steps the setting will take to protect their children

The effectiveness of leadership and management of the early years provision

Clear and well written risk assessments for the premises and outings underpin children's safety while they are in the care of the setting. All staff have a firm

understanding of the procedures to be followed to protect children and they are all aware of how to make an appropriate referral if they have concerns about a child in their care which further protects children. Staff are suitably qualified and firm suitability checks are in place to ensure that those working with children are consistently appropriate to do so.

Careful management of documentation and robust procedures enhance the children's safety, health and welfare. However, parents do not have unlimited access to policy information which means that they are not completely aware of all steps that the setting may take to protect their children, although they receive all required information and verbal communications with parents are strong. Policies, procedures and practice at the setting are very inclusive and staff have very firm relationships with all parents, underpinned by strong communication and regular consultations. The manager has worked hard to build strong relationships with outside agencies that support children with special educational needs and/or disabilities, local early years support teams and families and this thoroughly supports children's continuity of care. Parents are encouraged to take an active role in their children's learning, for example incentives are given to families who walk to the setting rather than drive and parents are given focussed observation sheets to fill in at home, something they have responded to with enthusiasm. This is demonstrative of the positive attitude of the provider towards gaining a rounded view of children's progress which further encourages the strong progress they make in the setting. This also demonstrates the provider's desire to involve the entire family in the setting. Siblings are encouraged to spend time with each other for example sharing playtime and meals together. This underpins children's feeling's of security and familiarity and supports them to feel safe and welcome in the nursery.

Resources are effectively organised, creating a warm environment in which children are able to be independent learners and explore their spontaneous interests. Children display high levels of confidence in the setting as they have easy access to low level furniture, a wide range of play materials and resources which promote equality and diversity and well trained staff who support their enjoyment and achievement. Staff ensure they plan a rich and broad curriculum which thoroughly meets the needs of the children who attend the setting. Consequently, children are able to have fun and progress with their development. Children with special educational needs and/or disabilities thrive in the setting as well informed, attentive staff and strong links with outside agencies ensure that their specific needs are consistently met.

All staff are able to contribute to the development of the provision and they have priorities and targets for improvements. This is clearly reflected in the self-evaluation document and the manager and her staff team have a very good understanding of their strengths and weaknesses. This enables all improvements to be targeted and effectively celebrates the strengths of the setting and staff team.

All staff constantly seek to improve their childcare practice so that children have enjoyable and challenging learning experiences in play. The staff anticipate and respond well to children's welfare and development needs. The provider drives

improvement through continuing commitment to improve knowledge by attending ongoing training courses and encourages her staff to do so as well. As a result the capacity for improvement in the setting is great.

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

Settling procedures are carefully managed for each child. Key persons are assigned for each child and are responsible for the settling-in of the children from the start, ensuring that the parents are aware that they are the key person for their child's needs. Children clearly feel safe in the setting due to the vigilance of the staff. Children show high levels of confidence when moving around the setting and take care when moving around younger or less steady children to ensure that they keep each other safe. Staff are also on hand to offer reassurance should the children require it. All activities are well thought out to help children develop skills for the future. For example an allotment area in the garden encourages children to learn about where their food comes from and the fact that they can grow food for themselves. Access to technology such as computers encourages children to become familiar with equipment they will encounter in their everyday lives.

Staff are able to use extremely detailed observations to assess children's progress accurately. However, currently, although they make good assessments of children during their time in the setting, they do not thoroughly assess what the children can do when they first join. However, assessments are clearly used to inform planning for groups and individual children and all children's progress is strong within the Early Years Foundation Stage. Plans are focussed on individual children, recognising their uniqueness. Plans are flexible to allow children's interests to drive activities and different abilities and stages of development for each individual child are sensitively taken into account when adapting activities. Activities are sensitively evaluated which helps staff to maintain an enjoyable and effective curriculum for all children.

Children are able to understand healthy lifestyles through healthy and nutritious snacks and regular cooking activities. Children have plenty of opportunities for large scale physical play in the well stocked outdoor area, which they also help to prepare before play. A wide range of climbing equipment, bikes and ball games ensure that they understand the effect of exercise on their bodies and that they are able to develop their large muscle skills effectively.

Children thoroughly enjoy a wide range of well thought out activities. Staff are confident to allow children the freedom to develop as individual learners and participate enthusiastically in their spontaneous and imaginative play. For example, children enjoy building a house around the 'big bad wolf,' they wake him up and watch him blow the house down, while the staff member joins in, giving a lively narrative. Children's individual skills are celebrated, for example, children who are able to count beyond ten in a counting song are encouraged to lead the rest of the group in counting to twenty. Staff are not afraid to deviate from planned activities and have the confidence to allow children to lead sessions, which greatly enhances their enthusiasm and pride in their play. Younger children are supported well by

the staff as they explore their surroundings. Babies have access to many natural and familiar objects and are encouraged to investigate their environment with few boundaries. Staff are calm, enthusiastic and talk to the children with high levels of respect and courtesy, proving to be excellent role models. As a result, children are well behaved and are polite to staff and each other.

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

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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

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