

Stepping Stones Nursery

Inspection report for early years provision

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Inspection date

27/05/2010

Inspector

Gillian Little

Setting address

55 Glanville Road, Oxford, Oxfordshire, OX4 2DD

Telephone number

01865 717139

Email

Type of setting

Childcare on non-domestic premises

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

T: 0300 123 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.ofsted.gov.uk

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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 a privately owned setting which opened under the current management in 2003. The nursery is situated in East Oxford and operates from a converted detached house with several playrooms at ground floor and first floor level. An enclosed outdoor area is available for all children. The nursery is open on weekdays from 8am until 6pm all year round. After school care is provided from 3.30pm until 6pm in term time and a holiday club operates during school holidays. Children attend from the local communities in and around Oxford city.

The nursery is registered to care for a maximum of 25 children under eight at any one time, all of whom may be in the early years age range. It currently cares for 34 children on the Early Years Register. The nursery is registered on the compulsory and voluntary parts of the Childcare Register to care for children over five years and currently has six children in this age group on roll. The nursery supports children with special educational needs and/or disabilities, and children who speak English as an additional language. The nursery is in receipt of funding for the provision of free early education for children aged two, three and four.

The nursery employs 12 staff, of whom nine hold relevant qualifications, including Qualified Teacher Status. Three staff are working towards qualifications and two staff are working towards Early Years Professional Status.

The overall effectiveness of the early years provision

Overall the quality of the provision is satisfactory.

Children are able to make satisfactory progress towards the early learning goals in this welcoming nursery. Staff have positive relationships with parents which enable them to have a sufficient understanding of children's individual needs. They work appropriately with other professionals to support individual children where appropriate. However, there are weaknesses in the nursery's procedures for observing and assessing children's progress and planning for their individual needs. The nursery has made some positive improvements in some areas of practice and, with the regular support of the local authority, staff are identifying and addressing other areas which are likely to further improve outcomes for children.

What steps need to be taken to improve provision further?

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

- ensure that the observation, assessment and planning process is consistent across the nursery, supports all children effectively and that all key persons have time to update their records
- ensure that parents have opportunities to access and discuss their children's development records
- ensure that the risk assessment for outdoor play identifies how to protect

children from the harmful effects of the sun.

The effectiveness of leadership and management of the early years provision

Staff demonstrate an appropriate understanding of safeguarding children procedures and the nursery is undertaking a programme of training to extend knowledge in this area. Most staff hold suitable background checks, and appropriate supervision is in place for those who are awaiting checks. Suitable recruitment and induction procedures ensure that staff are sufficiently qualified and experienced to work with children. Staff do not routinely read through the nursery's policies, most of which have not been reviewed for some time; however, these are currently being updated.

The nursery is now safe and secure following recent improvements, particularly in the outdoor area, although there are weaknesses in the procedures for sun protection. Staffing levels are good, which allows for the close supervision of children. The quality and availability of resources and equipment is gradually improving. For example, the nursery has recently purchased new tables and chairs, a climbing frame for toddlers, water trays and painting easels, which all help to provide a more attractive learning environment. There are further plans in place to purchase additional equipment.

The nursery adequately promotes equality and diversity. Children attend from a range of different backgrounds and staff positively support children who speak English as an additional language. For example, they use words in children's home languages and effectively support their progress in English. Appropriate support is available for children with special educational needs and/or disabilities as staff work in partnership with other professionals. For example, key persons are familiar with children's individual education plans and follow recommendations to provide specific activities. However, there are inconsistencies in the monitoring of individual children across the nursery. Their development records differ in quality and quantity as staff do not always have sufficient time to maintain these effectively. The quality of planning for individual children is also variable across the nursery, with weaknesses particularly evident in the toddler room. Parents do not have routine opportunities to see or discuss their children's development records. However, staff do talk to parents daily about their children's progress and welfare, they gather good information about children's starting points when they first attend the nursery, and they maintain positive relationships. Parents are happy with the nursery and state that their children are settled and progressing well. There are currently no children in the nursery attending other settings but staff are aware to develop appropriate partnerships where necessary.

The nursery management are sufficiently aware of the strengths and most weaknesses in the setting. They respond positively to advice from the local authority to secure improvements and have plans in place to further develop the quality of the nursery.

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

Children enjoy exploring their nursery environment which has an improving range of resources easily accessible in each room. Younger children enjoy using a new climbing frame and slide under close supervision of staff and respond enthusiastically to music by dancing, clapping and twirling. Older children enjoy exploring a train track, a drawing activity and dressing up with appropriate support from staff to help develop their learning. All children have daily opportunities to play outdoors and enjoy exploring a range of activities including climbing equipment, ride on toys, pushchairs and dolls, water, sand and painting. Younger children show a keen interest when they find a snail and staff successfully sustain their interest through questions and discussion. Older children pedal bikes confidently using the space well and become engrossed in sand play, filling and emptying containers. They receive some good support from staff, such as counting as they bounce on a trampoline or writing their names on a wall in chalk as they talk about the letters and sounds.

Most children engage readily in activities which are generally suitable for their levels of development. However, the inconsistencies in the observation, assessment and planning procedures mean that staff do not identify some children's progress and individual interests effectively, especially in the toddler age group. Children are, therefore, not always able to engage in activities which interest them or which focus on their particular learning requirements.

Children with special educational needs and/or disabilities are able to follow their particular interests as staff identify these with the support of other professionals. Key persons know them well and are familiar with the activities they enjoy, such as sensory and outdoor play. They benefit from one-to-one attention from staff and the use of quiet areas of the nursery at appropriate times of the day to help them settle and focus on activities.

Children have a healthy diet as the nursery provides nutritious snacks and encourages parents to provide healthy packed lunches. Children learn to wash their hands before and after eating, and staff explain the importance of this. They have good opportunities for daily outdoor play but staff are not sufficiently knowledgeable about sun safety and fail to apply sun protection when children need it.

Children have good relationships with their key person and with other staff in their rooms. Behaviour is positive throughout the nursery as staff are quick to help children resolve squabbles and they act as good role models. As a result, children successfully learn about important social skills, such as sharing and taking turns. Most children are settled and happy in the nursery and receive caring support from staff if they are upset. This helps them to feel secure and recent improvements in safety ensure that they also feel safe. They are developing a good understanding of safety rules as staff support them well, such as learning to use bikes safely and to be careful around other children.

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

The effectiveness of leadership and management of the early years provision

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	3
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	3
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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Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage

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	2
The extent to which children adopt healthy lifestyles	3
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
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The provider confirms that the requirements of the voluntary part of the Childcare Register are:	Met
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