

# Stepping Stones Nursery School

Inspection report for early years provision

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<b>Unique reference number</b>	955834
<b>Inspection date</b>	28/09/2010
<b>Inspector</b>	Amanda Tyson
<b>Setting address</b>	129 Woodfield Road, Thames Ditton, Surrey, KT7 0DR
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<b>Email</b>	
<b>Type of setting</b>	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*.

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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 School registered in 1990 and has been owned by the current provider since 1995. It operates from two sites; one in Thames Ditton and one in Long Ditton, as a continuous provision. Both provisions have a manager and deputy. Most children start off at Long Ditton and transfer to Thames Ditton for their final year before starting mainstream school. There is also a smaller scale provision for two year olds to attend afternoon sessions at Thames Ditton. This inspection reports on the quality of provision at Thames Ditton.

Stepping Stones Nursery School (Thames Ditton) is registered on the Early Years Register and the compulsory part of the Childcare Register; for a maximum of 46 children aged from two to under eight years. The nursery operates for 38 weeks divided over three terms. Three and four year-olds attend between 9.15am to 12.15pm. Early arrival, lunch club, and additional afternoon sessions are also offered. Two year-olds attend between 1.15pm to 3.45pm. A playscheme operates, at agreed times, during the school holidays for children aged from three to under eight years. There are currently 64 children on roll. The setting supports children who speak English as an additional language and those with special educational needs.

The premises are situated on the edge of a modern housing development, which lies between Hinchley Wood and Thames Ditton. Children are grouped, according to age, in one of three classrooms over two floors. There is a fully enclosed outdoor play area. In total, 13 staff are employed to work with the children during any one week; of these, two are qualified teachers, two hold early years degrees, one an NVQ5, four NVQ3 and one is imminently due to complete NVQ3 in early years.

## The overall effectiveness of the early years provision

Overall the quality of the provision is outstanding.

Overall the quality of the provision is outstanding. Leadership is strong and highly proactive. Self evaluation is astute and very well targeted to ensure continuous improvement. Children's welfare is given the highest priority. Activities are planned to meet the needs of all children and are based on thorough assessments, which identify what children need help with next in their learning. The deployment and use of resources, along with the provision for supporting children with additional needs is a key strength of the setting. Equality and diversity is embedded in all aspects of the provision. Partnerships with parents are very good and well on the way to being excellent.

## What steps need to be taken to improve provision further?

To further improve the high quality early years provision the registered person should consider:

- complete plans to develop the provision for Information Communication and Technology.

## **The effectiveness of leadership and management of the early years provision**

Children's welfare is exceptionally well safeguarded by comprehensive record keeping and effective operational policies and procedures. Methods used for recruiting, vetting, and inducting new staff are rigorous. References are sought, identity and qualifications are verified and Criminal Records Bureau checks are initiated before the first day of employment; staff are supervised at all times until these are returned confirming their suitability to work with children. High priority is given to ensuring that new staff are thoroughly inducted. This means that staff are secure in their knowledge and understanding of the setting's ethos and regulatory and operational policies and procedures; such as safeguarding children, managing behaviour and promoting equality and diversity. Child protection training is mandatory for all staff and this is updated through whole team training days and regular team meetings. All records and documentation required for the safe and efficient management of the setting are in place, comprehensively maintained and, where applicable, shared with parents.

High quality resources and thoughtful presentation of the setting provides a highly stimulating, inclusive and enabling environment for children. The building is exceptionally well maintained. Potential hazards are identified and minimised and there are effective procedures in place for keeping children safe on outings. Staff roles and responsibilities are clearly defined and delegated to individuals with the required level of expertise, for example, supporting children with special educational needs. Equality and diversity is embedded in all aspects of practice. It is very well highlighted with focus on closing the gap in achievement between boys and girls, supporting children with English as an additional language and those with special educational needs, or speech and language delay.

Leadership is strong, united and proactive in driving improvement. Their ambitious vision is extremely well communicated to staff, parents and the local authority early years advisors whose astute advice they have enthusiastically sought and promptly acted on. Record-keeping systems, the provision for outdoor play and the educational program for two to three year-olds have improved significantly since the last inspection. The methods used for evaluating the effectiveness of on-going practice are excellent and strengthened by the utilization of parent questionnaires, team meetings, training, staff appraisals and the use of personal development plans. Current priorities for improvement are particularly focused on strengthening partnerships with parents. Parents are well informed about operational matters and about the curriculum themes and topics. They have opportunities to meet with their child's key worker to discuss progress and development each term. Some parents are less familiar with the Early Years Foundation Stage. Those that attended the recent and newly introduced 'information evening' are full of praise

for the 'inspirational presentation'. Parents say it has motivated them to adopt an active role in supporting and planning for their child's individual learning journey from now on. The setting has been instrumental in initiating and securing strong and highly effective partnerships with external agencies and carers, such as other early years settings children attend and childminder's. This highly progressive setting demonstrates particularly strong capacity to maintain continuous improvement.

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

Thoughtful strategies, such as transferring samples of children's creative work from Long Ditton to Thames Ditton and displaying this on the wall, helps children to feel an immediate sense of belonging in their new surroundings. New children benefit greatly from the individually tailored and gradual settling-in procedure, which helps to minimise parent-child separation anxiety. This time is used to build secure and trusting relationships between key staff, children and parents. There are additional procedures in place for supporting children who are learning English as an additional language; for instance, a pictorial timetable is used to help children understand what will happen next and key words are obtained from parents in children's first language to assist communication. As a result, although children have only been attending for a few weeks they are happy, settled and emotionally secure. Positive behaviour is exceptionally well promoted by the staff team, who give gentle guidance and clear explanations. For example, when a tug of war results in a book being torn, children are encouraged to think of a solution and then help to mend it using tape. Resources, such as sand timers are used to ensure inclusion and equitable turn taking.

Children's development is closely monitored through observational assessments. Potential emerging concerns are identified, discussed with parents and supported to a high level. The excellent programme for music supports children's developing speech and literacy, for example, they enjoy singing along to the guitar and creating rhythms with sticks. Children learn to identify the subtle sound differences created by a set of bells, which prepares them well for recognising phonic sound differences in the future.

Children's understanding of how to keep themselves safe is very well demonstrated; as they manoeuvre the bikes around the garden being careful not to bump into each other and use small tools, such as knives to cut and prepare fruit snacks, hammers and nails and scissors. They learn road and dog safety rules when they go on outings and the importance of not eating berries when they visit the local allotment. Children benefit from high quality outdoor play and the garden provides an exciting play and learning environment. They grow their own vegetables and flowers, and enjoy the experience of snow and rain. They build enclosures and create their own trails using giant wooden blocks and planks. Lunchtimes are a sociable occasion with conversation often focusing on the nutritious contents of children's lunch boxes, helping lay the foundations for

children to adopt healthy lifestyle habits.

Children's rapidly developing critical thinking and problem solving skills are key to the outstanding progress they are making towards the early learning goals, based on their age, ability and starting points. Children are inquisitive and confidently help themselves to resources to enhance their own play and learning. They use rulers to measure their models and are intrigued when they discover how to make a car filled with magnetic objects, which they move by hovering a magnet overhead. They operate the interactive globe that introduces them to kangaroos, the Sidney Opera House, elephants and the Tajo Mahal as they pass through Australia and India. Children skillfully navigate the computer mouse, create their own designs using various programs and use a camera to take photographs. The setting do not yet have a printer, which means children cannot produce what they have created, and the computer keyboard displays only uppercase letters. However, the setting plans to further develop their Information Communication Technology resources.

Children's awareness of diversity is naturally raised by the provision of play resources, such as small world people figures and cooking equipment and packaging in the home corner. Children learn about the cultures, religions, and beliefs of others as they join in festival celebrations and creative activities. Boys and girls visit the creative, graphic and block play areas with equal frequency. This is testament to the skilful planning and resourcing by staff who ensure that activities link with children's individual interests. For example, boys are inspired to write on clipboards when they are engaged in active outdoor play or dressed as a policeman. Girls use their imagination to create enclosures with giant blocks and are joined by boys who bring their trucks filled with sand. Activities, such as water and sand play, are exceptionally well resourced; children help themselves to corks, metal whisks, funnels, sponges, and different sized containers that encourage experimentation with cause and effect, weight, volume and capacity. The creative workshop trolleys inspire innovation; children think of something they need and if they cannot find it, they transform recyclables using various joining, assembling, and design methods. The program for literacy is skillfully delivered by qualified teachers. Children take books home, from the early reader scheme used by the local schools. By the time children transfer to school they are familiar with the character in these books and many have progressed to being able to work out simple words using their acquired knowledge of phonics.

## 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

<b>How well does the setting meet the needs of the children in the Early Years Foundation Stage?</b>	1
The capacity of the provision to maintain continuous improvement	1

### The effectiveness of leadership and management of the early years provision

<b>The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage</b>	1
The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	1
The effectiveness with which the setting deploys resources	1
The effectiveness with which the setting promotes equality and diversity	1
The effectiveness of safeguarding	1
The effectiveness of the setting's self-evaluation, including the steps taken to promote improvement	1
The effectiveness of partnerships	1
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	1
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### Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage

<b>Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage</b>	1
The extent to which children achieve and enjoy their learning	1
The extent to which children feel safe	1
The extent to which children adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which children make a positive contribution	1
The extent to which children develop skills for the future	1

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## **Annex B: the Childcare Register**

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

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