

Stepping Stones Nursery

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique reference number	EY333206
Inspection date	22/10/2010
Inspector	Julie Sackett

Setting address	Cinque Ports Avenue, Hythe, Kent, CT21 6HS
------------------------	--

Telephone number	01303 230951
-------------------------	--------------

Email

Type of setting	Childcare on non-domestic premises
------------------------	------------------------------------

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, work-based learning and skills training, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for looked after children, safeguarding and child protection.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may copy all or parts of this document for non-commercial educational purposes, as long as you give details of the source and date of publication and do not alter the information in any way.

T: 0300 123 1231

Textphone: 0161 618 8524

E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk

W: www.ofsted.gov.uk

© Crown copyright 2010

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.

Please see our website for more information about each childcare provider. We publish inspection reports, conditions of registration and details of complaints we receive where we or the provider take action to meet the requirements of registration.

Description of the setting

Stepping Stones Nursery opened in 2006 and operates from a classroom within Hythe Bay Community School, Kent. A maximum of 20 children aged between 2 and 5 years may attend the nursery at any one time. There are currently 52 children from two to under five years on roll. The nursery is registered on the Early Years Register and both the compulsory and voluntary parts of the Childcare Register. The nursery is open each weekday from 8.45am to 3pm during term time only.

All children share access to one room and a secure enclosed outdoor play area. The nursery currently supports a number of children with special educational needs and/or disabilities, and also supports a number of children who speak English as an additional language. The nursery employs six members of staff. Of these, four hold a National Vocational Qualification at level 3; one has a degree in Early Years and one has attained Early Years Professional Status. The nursery receives support from the Local Authority.

The overall effectiveness of the early years provision

Overall the quality of the provision is outstanding.

Children are happy, secure and excited about learning. Safeguarding is given the highest priority and strongly inclusive so that children quickly settle and grow in confidence. Capacity to improve is strong because the manager and her staff work extremely well together as a team to build on existing strengths.

What steps need to be taken to improve provision further?

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

- develop activities in the outdoor area so that they are as stimulating and engaging as those inside and so that the excellent engagement and progress made by children indoors is duplicated outdoors.

The effectiveness of leadership and management of the early years provision

Safeguarding is given the highest priority at this nursery so that children are very secure and this contributes strongly to their rapid growth in confidence. Policies and procedures are regularly visited and updated by the staff team, signed by all adults and put into practice to great effect. These policies are readily available and shared with parents and carers. Robust suitability procedures are followed to ensure that staff are appropriately qualified and suitable to work with children. Child protection procedures are clear and up to date and risk assessments are thorough.

The manager and her team work really well together to maintain the highest of standards and to drive improvement. There is an effective system to evaluate the quality of the provision and to identify areas for future improvement. The manager has a clear vision and is constantly looking to develop the nursery. At staff meetings everyone is encouraged to contribute their thoughts, ideas and suggestions to help compile the self-evaluation form and parents contribute by questionnaire. Children have good opportunities to share their views and be involved. Every member of staff wants the children to be happy, confident, safe and making progress in their development.

This is an inclusive setting where all children and adults are fully respected. Attention is given to ensuring all children have equal opportunities to succeed and any kind of discrimination is actively discouraged. They enjoy each other's company, laugh together and work hard. Adults' positive attitudes to children's differences mean that every child's needs are met, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities. The manager has a system of planning that arises from knowing the needs and interests of the children. The key worker system works very well and observations are used to great effect in planning the next steps in children's learning and development. The nursery has outstanding links with parents whose confidence in the setting and appreciation for the staff's commitment is evident, for example, in the many positive comments in questionnaires. 'Link books' are a relatively recent initiative welcomed by parents. The books successfully build on existing strengths by enabling parents to play a more active part in contributing to their children's learning and development. There is an outstanding relationship with other providers particularly the feeder primary school that many of the children will attend. Children visit the school often, including on a daily basis to eat their lunch in the school lunch hall. This means the children become familiar and confident with school staff as well as the building. All this helps children to have an easy transition into their next phase of education.

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

Children's rapid growth in self-esteem and confidence is due in part to the strength of the warm and caring relationships between adults and children. The nursery is most welcoming and this, coupled with the skilful way that adults interact with the children; means that all the children, including those who have started very recently, settle quickly. When children first join the nursery information is obtained from parents and other sources to ensure children's particular needs are appropriately met.

Children's awareness of how to lead a healthy lifestyle is supported very well. Children are provided with a healthy snack during the morning, such as grapes and pear, which they enjoy very much. They have a choice of drink and even the youngest are encouraged, with help, to pour their drink. The children sit at tables in the school hall to eat their lunch. They demonstrate good table manners because adults provide positive role models, initiate conversations and reinforce excellent behaviour through praise. This helps children to develop the necessary personal and social skills to successfully support their future economic well-being.

Children thoroughly enjoy both the adult-led activities and those they choose for themselves. Adult interaction is sensitive and positive and is highly successful in encouraging children to participate in conversations. For example, with gentle encouragement, one child happily described how he had 'blown himself up like a balloon' during the dance session that morning, illustrating the strong progress made in the development of speaking and listening skills and socialising skills, in addition to the health benefits of exercise.

Curriculum planning is strong with interesting and stimulating activities planned to meet the needs and interests of all groups of children and reflecting all six areas of learning. The curriculum is enlivened by a wide range of regular trips and outings, such as walks along the canal and a visit to the fire station, and these successfully support the outstanding progress made by the children, particularly in speaking, listening and literacy skills. Parents and visitors talk to the children about a range of cultures, customs and beliefs so that children are encouraged to appreciate and value a people with a diverse range of backgrounds. Children have access to a large, carefully supervised and well-organised outdoor area where activities, such as sand and water play support the development of social and physical skills very well. Children demonstrate excellent independence skills and know how to use the activities safely and responsibly. That said, a slightly more limited range of activities outdoors than indoors means that children tend to gravitate to the indoor area and this is where the progress children make is strongest. Assessments of the children by their key persons are based on regular observations. 'Learning Journeys' are regularly used by key persons to monitor children's progress with clear identification of the next steps to maintain the pace of learning. These focus on children's achievements and demonstrate the children's excellent progress. Parents and carers are regarded as valued partners in their children's learning and their confidence in the nursery is reflected in comments such as 'my child has gained a lot more confidence, is more independent, and her speech has improved'.

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?	1
The capacity of the provision to maintain continuous improvement	1

The effectiveness of leadership and management of the early years provision

The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	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	1

The quality of the provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage

The quality of the provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	1
--	---

Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage

Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	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

Any complaints about the inspection or report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk

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