Stepping Stones Children's Centre
Inspection report for early years provision

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Inspector: Abigail Cunningham

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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 Children's Centre registered in 2006. It operates from a large purpose built nursery room and creche room within the Sure Start building in Maltby, in the borough of Rotherham. The children's centre serves the local and surrounding areas. The children's centre is accessible to all children and there are fully enclosed areas available for outdoor play.

The children's centre opens Monday to Friday, all year round. Sessions are from 8am to 6pm. Children are able to attend for a variety of sessions. A maximum of 35 children may attend the children's centre at any one time. There are 57 children attending who are within the Early Years Foundation Stage. The children's centre is registered on the Early Years Register and on both the voluntary and compulsory parts of the Childcare Register. The children's centre provides funded early education for two, three and four-year-olds. The group supports children with special educational needs and/or disabilities and children who speak English as an additional language.

The children's centre employs 13 members of childcare staff. Of these, two hold appropriate early years qualifications at Level 2 and 11 at Level 3 or above. Four members of staff are working towards a foundation degree. One member of staff has Early Years Professional Status and four members of staff are working towards this. There are two members of staff with Qualified Teacher Status. The children's centre receives support from the local authority. The children's centre is working towards two quality assurance schemes, 'The Quality Mark' and 'Healthy Foundations'.

The overall effectiveness of the early years provision

Overall the quality of the provision is good.

The staff team are highly committed to working in partnership with parents and external agencies. Self-evaluation is effective and the senior management team are able to demonstrate how they have made significant improvements to the provision. The staff team are very good at promoting the children's welfare and they are working particularly well, to ensure all children are included and their individual needs are met. All children, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities and those learning English as an additional language, make good progress towards the early learning goals given their capabilities and starting points.

What steps need to be taken to improve provision further?

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

- develop further the ways in which you share relevant information with other childcare providers.
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the early years provision

Safeguarding procedures are secure and all the required checks have been carried out on all the adults who are working within the children's centre building. For example, regular volunteers, the children's centre staff, receptionists and caretaker. The staff have completed safeguarding children training and demonstrate a very sound understanding of safeguarding issues and procedures in line with the Local Safeguarding Children Board guidance. For example, the staff record concerns, they seek advice and work in partnership with external agencies. Risk assessments for the premises and outings are regularly undertaken and reviewed and all potential hazards have been identified and minimised to ensure children's safety. The system for managing access to the premises is very good. This is because the risk of unauthorised persons being able to gain entry is minimised because all visitors have to sign in and out at reception.

The senior management team communicate high expectations to staff about securing improvement. As a result, the staff are focused on promoting the children's welfare and helping all children to make good progress in their learning and development. The staff team work well together to ensure that all groups of children have the opportunity to achieve as well as they can. Self-evaluation takes into account the views of children, parents, staff and other interested partners. For example, the main outside play area and the children's cloakroom was developed after consulting service users. Self-evaluation is effective in identifying strengths and weaknesses of the provision and makes good use of findings from any other quality checks. As a result, those in charge are able to demonstrate how they have raised children's achievement and made improvements to the provision.

The setting has highly positive relationship with all parents. Parents are extremely well informed about all aspects of their own children's achievement, well-being and development. For instance, the staff hold a meeting once every six weeks with each child's parents, to discuss their child's progress and to plan for their child's next steps in learning. Parents also receive regular information via notice boards, newsletters, communication books and daily verbal feedback from the staff. In addition, the staff provide tailored guidance and information about precise ways parents can support their children, for instance, with advice on successful ways of managing the children's behaviour. The highly inclusive systems of communication ensure that there are consistent and productive partnerships with parents, resulting in the children making positive progress across all areas of learning.

The staff have created an inclusive environment in which to care for the children. They are fully aware of the children's backgrounds, home language, individual needs and starting points. The staff team are very experienced in working with children who have special educational needs and/or disabilities and children who speak English as an additional language. There are well-established channels of communications between all partners involved with individual children. For example, staff work alongside other professionals, such as, speech therapists. Regular meetings are also held and individual education plans are fully
The staff have started to develop links with other childcare providers, where children receive care and education from more than one setting. For example, they have introduced themselves to the other practitioners and have plans to further strengthen these partnerships.

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

The cook and most of the staff have completed food hygiene training. Meals, such as, tomato pasta, garlic bread and salad are offered to the children. The children have good appetites and enjoy their food very much. They are successfully developing their self-help skills; they independently pour their own drinks, serve their own lunch and can assert their own needs and preferences. Planned activities, such as, growing, harvesting and eating tomatoes introduces the children to healthy ingredients. The children understand and adopt healthy habits, such as, good hygiene practices. They know to wash their hands prior to eating and after wiping their nose.

The children have direct access to the outdoor play areas and both babies and children of all ages enjoy playing outside. The pre-school children have great fun participating in weekly movement sessions, which are run by volunteers from a local football team. They also have fun playing in the sand pit, they like to dig in the mud and enjoy the challenge of using the balancing beams. As a result, the children are developing a positive attitude to exercise and being healthy.

Activity planning responds directly to each child's individual needs and interests. The system for assessing and recording the children's development accurately identifies the children's achievements and progress. Monitoring systems have been implemented, as individual and group tracking systems are regularly updated. Tracking processes accurately identifies the next steps in the children's learning and any gaps in the curriculum planning. As a result, staff are able to demonstrate how all children are making good progress in their learning and development.

The children engage in a good range of activities requiring hand-eye coordination, such as, using felt tip pens, chalks and paintbrushes. Young children know how to use various tools and equipment, for example, they enjoy rolling and cutting out shapes in the play dough and making hedgehogs out of clay. Children enjoy singing songs and listening to stories in small groups, such as, 'my baby sister'. More able children are starting to form recognisable letters and are attempting to write their own name. The children show an interest in technology and know how to operate equipment, for example, using a mouse, one child drew a pirate ship on the computer screen. All of these activities develop children's skills and contribute to children's future economic well-being.

The children are happy, settled and enjoy learning. As a result, young children separate easily from their parents. They are developing a positive self-image and show that they are comfortable with themselves. For example, one child proudly
showed off the worm they had dug up in the outside play area and another child was very pleased that they had managed to wrap the skipping rope around the washing line. The children are very independent, many can put their own outdoor shoes on with very little or no help.

The children are developing a positive attitude to others and a good understanding about the wider world and local community. This is because the children enjoy playing with a broad selection of resources which reflect positive images, which includes books, play figures, posters and dolls. They also learn about interesting events, such as, Chinese New Year. Children of all ages regularly go out for walks in the local community, for example, the pre-school children recently visited the post office and the under two's children went to the library for 'rhyme time'.
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

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

The quality of the provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage

| The quality of the provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage | 2 |

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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This inspection was carried out under sections 49 and 50 of the Childcare Act 2006
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