

Stepping Stones Day Nursery (Dogsthorpe)

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique reference number	256827
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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 Day Nursery (Dogsthorpe) was registered in 2000. The provision operates from a converted Victorian manor house in the Dogsthorpe area of Peterborough and serves the local and wider area. The building is accessible to all children and there is a staircase to the first floor, where provision for younger children takes place. Children have access to a secure outdoor play area.

The provision is open each weekday all year round, with the exception of Bank Holidays. Sessions are from 8am to 5.45pm. Children are able to attend for a variety of sessions. A maximum of 65 children may attend the provision at any one time. The provision is registered on the Early Years Register and on the compulsory part of the Childcare Register. There are currently 63 children on roll, all of whom are within the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS). The provision provides funded early education for three- and four-year-olds. The provision is also registered to offer care to children aged over five years. Children occupying these places share the same facilities as the children in the early years age range. There are currently no children on roll in this age range.

Some children attend other settings, such as the early years unit of the local primary school or childminders. The provision supports children with special educational needs and/or disabilities, and children who speak English as an additional language. The provision employs 14 members of childcare staff as well as a housekeeper. All childcare staff hold appropriate early years qualifications at Level 2, 3 or 4.

The overall effectiveness of the early years provision

Overall the quality of the provision is outstanding.

Planning for the Early Years Foundation Stage builds from every child's individual interest and stage of development, supported by responsive planning. This ensures that children receive imaginative experiences that foster rapid progress in their learning and development. The staff group create a highly welcoming environment using significantly focused safeguarding procedures and thorough risk assessments. They ensure that they have cohesive knowledge of each child's needs to ensure that every child is totally included. Partnerships with parents and carers, together with those with other agencies, are key strengths, showing dedication to meeting all children's needs. The owners and managers communicate clear ambition and drive to secure purposeful continued development using in-depth self-evaluation.

What steps need to be taken to improve provision further?

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

- continuing to broaden the current excellent practice of involving parents within the planned learning programme; with particular reference to shared resources and utilising skills.

The effectiveness of leadership and management of the early years provision

Comprehensive policies and procedures for safeguarding are implemented robustly to ensure that children are fully protected. Daily routines and staff vigilance ensure that safeguarding procedures work at all times. The child protection coordinator oversees all aspects of protection for children while all staff update their knowledge through the ongoing training programme that takes place. Close monitoring of visitors and internal release systems for doors support the overall security. When unannounced visitors arrive they are asked to provide ID that can be verified by contacting their employer before they are admitted to the premises. Senior managers ensure that all persons required undertake the appropriate checks to safeguard children. Children are safeguarded by the extensive recruitment and vetting procedures, including the in-depth induction of new staff. All new employees are placed with experienced staff to offer support and monitoring to ensure that children receive quality care at all times. The owners and managers are exceptionally successful in inspiring the staff team to work towards sustaining ambitious targets. High expectations and superior standards are embedded across all areas of practice. All staff take part in detailed appraisals which include a full training plan. Staff cascade their knowledge from training courses to the team, with options to feed back in different ways including holding shared training sessions and poster updates. Risk assessments for the premises and outings undertaken are scrutinised to ensure their efficiency. Self-evaluation at all levels reflects rigorous monitoring and analysis to bring about sustained improvement. Reflective practice, such as frequent meetings between owners, managers and room leaders, takes place with clear formative notes maintained. Parents and carers contribute to self-evaluation through feedback sheets used personally, through questionnaires or through feedback via the website. They receive feedback in the form of action plans from any surveys, ensuring that all parents are involved and thereby supporting inclusion. Parents comment that the provision is 'home from home' and that staff are 'friendly, approachable and helpful'. They also comment on the benefit of the resources being readily available, adding that they are '100 percent confident that attending Stepping Stones has helped (my children) become articulate, sociable and has benefited their education'. They clearly value the provision highly.

Children's individual learning styles are fully respected. The provision works across two floors, with younger children on the first floor. Integration plans and transition plans and logs for every child moving between rooms are extensive and monitored closely to ensure that the change is completed as dictated by children's individual needs. The environment is highly conducive to learning, extremely safe and well cared for, with an excellent range of quality play provision used to achieve the planned goals. The staff team are extremely well deployed throughout the day, with most children having free movement between indoors and outside, initiating their own learning. Partnerships with parents and others are exemplary and key

strengths. The inclusive systems of communication used to engage parents and carers ensure that there are consistent and productive partnerships resulting in strong levels of engagement. For example, by using website correspondence, home links books when required, shared reading schemes and individual care plans, the provision maintains meaningful contact. Children take home and complete 'all about me' books with their families, adding photographs and drawings, and this is shared within their group. This is also beneficial when children are settling in to a group, as staff use the book to comfort and reassure them and help them feel valued as an individual. Parents maintain their own notice board that includes leaflets, shared information and general information. The provision is beginning to include parents and extended family members in events and activities, such as storytelling. However, inviting parents to share their skills as resources or involving them in workshops is not yet fully explored. This would help them to fully appreciate the value of the varying activities to their children.

The provision places the promotion of equality of opportunity at the heart of its work. The managers and staff actively promote equality and diversity and tackle unfair discrimination. They are highly committed to working in partnership with others and play a proactive role in establishing effective working relationships. Links are maintained, with information passed between the provisions; shared learning plans, summary assessments and profiles are shared. The provision works closely with several other professional agencies where support for children is required. Within the provision they incorporate visual timetables and symbols to help all children to be fully involved in all areas. They show a committed and forward-thinking attitude towards the overall care for every child and make links to work cohesively. The managers and staff make the most of events and festivals to broaden children's awareness of each other's home culture. Key words in other languages such as Polish, Lithuanian and Portuguese are learnt and shared, and they celebrate events and festivals to stimulate children's interest. For example, the Bulgarian festival of Martisor, the advent of spring, which is supported by an attending family, when Martenitsa bracelets sourced from Bulgaria are offered to all of the children, which is a key part of the celebrations. This helps children to appreciate the local and wider society around them. Consequently, the outcome in children's achievement and the well-being for all children is exceptionally high.

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

Children are offered well-planned activities that help them to make rapid progress in their learning and development. Assessment through intricate recorded observation is clear and the information gained is used proactively to identify next steps and goals. Progression is fully detailed and closely monitored. Children's interests and next steps feed directly into the weekly planning, which is supported by an observation monitoring review. The impact of planned activities is measured by systematic evaluation. All children are physically active and link their developing knowledge across all areas of play when outdoors. The provision has fully embraced the emphasis on outdoor learning advocated within the Early Years Foundation Stage and totally reviewed their outdoor provision. Younger children and babies enthusiastically run, dance, sway, clap and stretch their bodies. They

begin to repeat the words of songs, extending language, and develop spatial awareness as they join in with action rhymes. The staff team ensure that babies and younger children have regular fresh air and take part in visits within the local community. Outdoors they can use a covered decking area equipped with a full range of activities but protected from the sun and with a surface that fosters their exploratory instinct. Children utilise an extensive rear garden as well as the 'forestry garden' to the front and side of the property. They help to plant and care for growing willow structures and tunnels, install stepping stones embedded with shells and glass beads, and plant and grow herbs and vegetables, such as, lettuces, onions, beans and garlic. All children explore the tactile benefits of herbs and plants that are grown. Children learn their own limitations when they take risks, showing great pride as they show adults how they climb the tree, construct obstacle courses and make vehicles or robots using crates, blocks and natural materials. Staff are skilled in capitalising on children's emerging interest and some staff have trained in the Forest Schools programme, cascading this new approach to all the staff group. Children's current interests are built upon in all areas. For instance, one group, fully engrossed in the story of the week, embark on acting the story in the forestry garden outdoors, developing skills in language, participating in group activities and using the natural resources around them as they delightedly pretend to creep, crawl, climb and find a bear! Children hunt and identify bugs and insects in the area they have built to provide homes for living creatures. They understand that composting food scraps, which they put into special bins following snack and lunch, in the compost area they helped to build will provide nutrients for growing plants. Children actively use recycling collection bins and become aware of the importance of recycling paper and plastics to sustain the environment. Children demonstrate significant levels of understanding of personal safety when they help to risk assess the outdoor area. They use red flags to find and mark hazards; they then write this on the white board outdoors for staff to address and make safe.

Children are developing excellent social awareness through a range of methods and fully exploring environmental issues, learning about sustainability. All children, including babies, show an extremely strong sense of security and belonging within the provision. They enjoy taking Honkers or Fizz, the provision's mascots, home or on holiday, returning with stories and photographs to share with their friends. Children write and make their own charts to display stickers that they earn proudly. They play an important role in raising funds for charities and other sectors of the community. For example, children sponsor a guide dog puppy and support a child through a charity in Bangladesh. The children send pictures and enjoy corresponding with the child and family, learning about their life. Children quickly become aware of their local and wider society through the innovative activities and daily practice. For example, they explore festivals such as Eid or Raksha Bandhan and languages including French, Urdu, Punjabi and German.

All children have ample opportunities to begin mark-making in a variety of forms. Younger children explore an excellent range of heuristic play where they explore textures and materials and develop concentration skills and dexterity. Babies and toddlers use malleable materials, such as gloop or ice play, and they take part in planting seeds into biodegradable pots. Older children extend the mark making experience into exciting and creative activities. For example, they write lists, make

graphs and develop shops or restaurants where they label items in text and number. Children are extremely competent in using modern technology. They confidently use cameras, dictaphones and computers to research. Children love to use internet technology to contact both the second Stepping Stones nursery and friends who are travelling abroad to share their experiences. Challenging and fun activities inspire children to explore early science. For instance, they build a wormery, catch rain in cups to measure rainfall, crush fresh mint to make 'perfume' and observe animal and insect tracks. Children enthusiastically take part in practical tasks, such as mending punctures. Staff are skilled at extending their interest, supporting children to write the instructions, identify tools needed, learn how valves work and find out how to locate a hole in an inner tube using water. Children are animated and fully engaged, making decisions together and directing the learning experience. Children are very well nourished, enjoying meals together. They serve themselves with the help of staff and learn about portion control and choice. The menu demonstrates the diverse society in which children live and includes stir fry noodles, curry, pizzas and tortilla wraps. Children show high levels of independence, curiosity, imagination and concentration in this dynamic setting. They respond to challenges with great enthusiasm, showing the attitude necessary to support them through future learning situations.

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

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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

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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