

Stepping Stones Nursery

Inspection report for early years provision

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EY348836

Inspection date

12/05/2011

Inspector

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Setting address

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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 Nursery is one of three provisions run by Stepping Stones Nursery (Weston) Limited. It was registered in 2007 and operates from an old school building in the village of Weston, Crewe. The nursery serves the local area, and is accessible to all children. There are a number of secure outdoor play areas around the building.

The nursery opens Monday to Friday all year round, excluding Bank Holidays. Sessions are from 7.30am until 6pm. Children are able to attend for a variety of sessions. A maximum of 95 children may attend the nursery, which incorporates an out of school provision, at any one time. There are currently 334 children on roll. The nursery is registered on the Early Years Register and on both the voluntary and compulsory parts of the Childcare Register. The nursery provides funded early education. It supports children with special educational needs and/or disabilities and children who speak English as an additional language.

The nursery employs 28 members of childcare staff. Of these, 27 hold appropriate early years qualifications, including one staff member with Early Years Professional Status and another working towards this. The nursery receives support from the local authority and is a member of the National Day Nursery Association (NDNA) and Cheshire Private Day Nurseries Association (CPDNA).

The overall effectiveness of the early years provision

Overall the quality of the provision is outstanding.

The organisation and management of the nursery is highly effective in promoting excellent outcomes for all children. Arrangements to ensure their welfare are clearly routed in the exceptionally good practice. Children's individual needs are fully understood and respected, demonstrating a clear commitment to inclusive practice in all areas. Exceedingly strong links with parents, carers and other professionals ensures consistency of care and education. The management and staff team use robust systems to monitor, review and reflect on the practices used within the nursery in order to continually develop high quality care and education for all children.

What steps need to be taken to improve provision further?

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

- reviewing the risk assessment to ensure that it covers anything with which a child may come into contact, for instance, the activities they part in.

The effectiveness of leadership and management of the early years provision

The leadership and management of the nursery is excellent. Well-managed procedures and work practices ensure all staff are able to play a full and supportive role in ensuring children are well cared for and safeguarded. Staff have designated roles and responsibilities in relation to safeguarding children and are instrumental in ensuring that effective procedures are in place for identifying any child at risk of harm and liaising with the appropriate child agencies.

Children's welfare is fully protected by the effective recruitment and vetting arrangements, which ensure all adults with unsupervised contact with children are suitable. Robust induction procedures ensure staff are knowledgeable about all aspects of their work. Their professional development is given high priority and enables them to continue to develop their understanding in all aspects of childcare and development. Staff qualification levels are high and, as a result, children's development is promoted exceptionally well. The setting employs an Early Years Professional to develop and support the delivery of the Early Years Foundation Stage. The management and deployment of staff are very well organised and monitored to ensure staffing levels exceed requirements within the nursery and fully meet the needs of the children.

Children's safety is paramount. Improvements to security to promote children's well-being include a fingerprint access system and regular reinforcement of the importance of monitoring access to the building as parents enter. Comprehensive risk assessments and daily checks of the setting and outside areas are carried out to ensure that children can play safely. However, the procedures to promote children's safety within activities, such as cookery sessions, have not been committed to the written document. Central heating pipes have been noted as a potential risk and an action plan is in place to ensure this risk is minimised by the time the heating is required.

Positive relationships with all groups of parents and carers enhance opportunities provided for their children. They are very well informed on all aspects of their child's achievement, well-being and development. They are positively encouraged to play an active part in their child's learning and development and to contribute to the educational programme. The staff allow parents sufficient time to discuss any issues or concerns about their child when they drop off and collect children on a daily basis and written information is provided in children's developmental folders. There is a good rapport between children's key person and parents, which means that information is shared effectively, enabling staff to put in place any strategies required to support children and ensure an inclusive environment is provided. Children with special educational needs and/or disabilities and with English as an additional language are well integrated and welcomed; strategies used are very successful in supporting all children; as a consequence, the outcomes for children and their experiences are positive and rewarding. Staff are proactive in working in partnership with other agencies and providers, this ensures children receive consistency in their care and learning; they are particularly successful in helping children to make a smooth transition to their new primary school's learning

environments through reciprocated visits and shared activities.

The enthusiastic, stable staff team work very effectively together. Regular staff meetings help them to identify and plan changes and improvements, which are driven and inspired by management's vision for the provision. The whole staff group are highly motivated and continually strive to improve and develop their setting. Recent refurbishment of all areas has resulted in a very attractive, stimulating nursery; the new entrance hall is welcoming and includes a parent zone with interesting and useful information for parents. The pre-school and baby rooms, in particular, offer many opportunities for children to see and interact with wall displays and activities displayed at child height. Innovative resources are accessible to children in all areas of the nursery, enabling them to develop their own play. There are excellent examples of natural materials for children to experience and explore; these include rustic wigwams, fir cones and everyday sensory objects collected with the help of parents.

The setting's self-evaluation is thorough and comprehensive. Advice and guidance from the monitoring visits undertaken by the Local Authority's advisors are used proactively. Staff carry out regular evaluations on all areas of practice and parents are also encouraged to add their ideas through periodic completion of questionnaires. Their opinions are valued and, when possible, changes or adaptations are implemented.

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

The nursery environment is exceedingly well organised and resourced with very good quality toys and equipment that are appropriate to the age of the children in each room. Staff's obvious enthusiasm and commitment further help to create a very positive and enabling environment for the children, who are also extremely well motivated to learn. The opportunities for children to make decisions and choices about their care and learning are excellent. Children show a very keen sense of belonging as a result. Children choose from an excellent range of extremely well-planned activities, indoors and outdoors, that fully promote and extend all aspects of their learning and development. Staff have high expectations of what children can achieve and skilfully plan activities with many possible learning intentions. The planning and observation systems are monitored, evaluated and adapted to provide staff with invaluable information on how effective the systems are in promoting the very best outcomes for children.

Children are extremely settled and relaxed in this highly stimulating and welcoming setting. They respond well to the staff and form secure and trusting relationships. Their needs are met through consistent routines and ongoing development of the environment, for instance, to provide quiet areas for rest and focused activities. A strong emphasis is placed on the promotion of children's independence, self-esteem and their understanding of right and wrong. They learn to keep themselves safe through consistent daily routines, such as tidying away resources after use to familiar music. Information and visits from 'people who help us' reinforce safety messages; children practise the emergency evacuation procedures regularly so

that they know how to react in such circumstances.

Babies become increasingly mobile as they explore interactive toys and the broad range of interesting 'treasure' objects using their senses. Their physical skills are encouraged as they have opportunities to pull themselves up on furniture and fixed aids, for instance, a rail across a wall-mounted mirror. Staff are on hand to ensure children are safe, yet able to set their own challenges in relation to their mobility. All children enjoy a breadth of experiences through the regular use of the outdoor play areas; here they benefit from the fresh air and active play. They relish the opportunity to take their learning into the outdoor environment, using chalks to make marks on the rubber matting and playing imaginatively with large recycled materials. They move freely and with confidence, for example, they quickly master the skills needed to navigate up and down the undulating lawn area and use their sense of movement and space to move safely around other children. 'Stretch and grow' sessions enhance toddlers' and pre-school children's development and their understanding of how exercise has a positive benefit on their health.

Children's knowledge and understanding of the world is admirably encouraged through an extensive range of first-hand learning opportunities. For example, children observe insects they search for and find in their outdoor area. They describe what they see and note the features of the insects using magnifying, viewing pots. Staff involve children in discussions that fully extend their thinking, their vocabulary and their skills in communication. All children have opportunities to learn about diversity through the celebration of customs, special days and religious events. Good quality resources add to their developing understanding of the wider world. Positive images and welcome signs, words and symbols around the nursery promote a sense of welcome and belonging to children and families. Children enjoy excellent opportunities to make a positive contribution to the local community, attending events, writing poems with the help of their parents for a locally produced poetry book and providing art work for a display at a local school.

Children learn to identify shapes, numbers and colours that they see around them and within activities. Older children use numbers in a practical way, such as when measuring ingredients to make gingerbread biscuits. Staff skilfully introduce positional language spontaneously into activities, enabling children to develop their vocabulary and use everyday words to describe position, size and shape. High priority is given to developing children's communication and language skills to help them to grow socially and personally. Staff use initiatives, such as '2011 the Year of Communication', to introduce exciting activities and resources for use in the nursery and at home. Younger children enjoy looking at books and listening to stories in small and large groups. Pre-school children make puppets and a theatre to enthusiastically retell a chosen fairytale to the group; the children's interests are captured and the room is full of laughter and enjoyment.

Children develop an excellent understanding of healthy eating and where food comes from. They help with gardening activities, learning to tend and grow plants which they can use in food tasting, meals and cookery activities. Freshly prepared, nutritious meals are provided by the nursery chef, who ensures children receive a well-balanced diet. The individual routines of the babies in relation to food and sleep are respected. Children's good health and understanding of personal hygiene

are promoted very well through good practices and routines used by staff and taught to 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?	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	2
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
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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	2
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
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The provider confirms that the requirements of the voluntary part of the Childcare Register are:	Met
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