

# Stepping Stones Day Nursery (Bolton Ltd)

Inspection report for early years provision

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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*.

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 is run by a limited company. It was registered in 1996 and operates from a converted church hall on one of the main roads leading into Bolton town centre. Children are cared for in three main base rooms for babies, toddlers and pre-school aged children. They also have use of the hall and dining area. All children have access to an enclosed outdoor play area. The nursery is open each weekday from 8am to 6pm for 50 weeks of the year.

The nursery is registered on the Early Years Register and on the compulsory part of the Childcare Register. A maximum of 60 children may attend the nursery at any one time. There are currently 100 children aged from birth to under five years on roll, some in part-time places. The nursery also provides holiday care for children beyond five years who have previously attended the nursery. At present, the nursery has a number of children with special educational needs and/or disabilities. The setting provides funded early education for three- and four-year-olds.

There are 17 members of staff, almost all of whom hold early years qualifications to level 3. One member of staff has recently achieved an early years degree, with additional staff in the process of completing theirs. The two nursery managers hold qualifications to level 4.

## The overall effectiveness of the early years provision

Overall the quality of the provision is good.

The highly motivated management team inspire a continually developing setting and team of committed practitioners. Significant changes to practice and to the premises have taken place since the last inspection and are ongoing. These are likely to bring about further improvements to the provision for children. Effective arrangements are in place to ensure all requirements are met and children are very well cared for. They progress securely because almost all practitioners implement systems to plan for every child comprehensively. Parents are very well informed; they plan together with key workers to meet children's needs and receive some information about their child's learning journey. Highly effective partnership working ensures children's individual needs are met and that they are exceptionally well protected.

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

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

- improve provision to promote children's good health by reviewing menus to ensure all children, particularly babies, are provided with healthy meals and snacks, and by providing babies with separate space and equipment where they can sleep undisturbed
- strengthen provision which actively promotes equal opportunities and anti-

discriminatory practice, ensuring that all children and families feel valued and included

- strengthen arrangements for monitoring the planning for individual learning, ensuring that key workers consistently use their observations and assessment to identify learning priorities and plan relevant and motivating learning experiences for each child.

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

Safeguarding is at the heart of all the setting does. Their collaborative working with other key agencies is exemplary and ensures that the children and families who need it the most are properly supported. This includes regular visits to the setting from local health visitors. Management have an expert working knowledge of safeguarding procedures and confidently use the common assessment framework to ensure children are protected. Comprehensive policies and procedures are implemented which ensure any concerns are prioritised and dealt with effectively. The setting implements extensive vetting procedures which ensure anyone coming into contact with children at the nursery is suitable to do so. This extends to routine maintenance persons, for example, the electrician, and in the contracting of builders who have been doing extensive works on site. Almost all the nursery practitioners have worked at the setting for many years and provide consistency for children and families. This helps them feel really safe. Safety is given utmost priority. Staff have an innovative understanding of the difference between risks and hazards and teach children and parents the importance of keeping children safe while allowing them to take appropriate risks to help them progress. As a result, children manage themselves well and display an excellent awareness of safety issues.

The manager and her team are highly motivated to seek further improvement. This is demonstrated through their commitment to professional development which has significantly increased their knowledge and skills and thus improved the provision for children in line with developments in early years practice. One staff member has achieved her early years degree and two others have almost completed it. Both managers have also upgraded their core qualifications to level 4. Using their increased knowledge and skills, staff have revised how they provide outside play experiences for children. This has resulted in outside play being made more accessible to children and also the provision of all-weather wear. Staff have found it has improved children's ability to explore, investigate and follow through their own thinking using natural materials. It has also improved the behaviours of some children, particularly boys, and made some provision, such as mark making, more interesting to boys. The setting is planning to continue to develop this area of the provision. Managers are well informed and make appropriate changes as a result. For example, following a study of the key person system and transitions in the nursery, managers changed the layout of rooms in line with the building works being completed. This was with the aim of supporting babies' transitions into toddler room by providing interlinking space. Self-evaluation is well informed and clearly evidenced, demonstrating that the setting knows itself well. The management of quality across all aspects of nursery provision is broadly secure. An

assessment tracker system is used to analyse children's progress and identify weaknesses in teaching. Some appraisal is undertaken and staff support sessions are provided when needed. However, practitioners' skill in planning for children's learning is sometimes variable, which has a minor impact on the delivery of focused learning opportunities for every child.

Well-organised planning ensures good development opportunities, consistent deployment of staff, good quality resources and skilful use of space in most areas to promote children's welfare, learning and development. The setting actively promotes equality and diversity. Working very effectively with parents and other agencies, they prioritise support and meet individual needs. As a result, children with special educational needs are exceptionally well supported and make some very good progress. This demonstrates how effectively the setting does in narrowing the achievement gap for some children. Every child's health needs are known and specific training is sought to ensure staff are able to administer lifesaving medication. Individual dietary requirements, along with children's unique preferences, are known and respected, although the planning of the nursery menu does not consistently reflect best practice guidance for the nutrition of very young children. All children and families are valued by staff, who are proactive in ensuring that every child and family feels welcome and develop a sense of belonging. However, fewer steps are taken to ensure the setting is as accessible to the wider community as it could be.

The setting has developed very positive relationships with parents. Right at the start, a secure gradual admission process with a named key person facilitates relationship building and gives staff clear information about each child's backgrounds and needs. Parents and carers are actively encouraged to share information about children's routines and basic learning at home. They are provided with access to children's records of development and are given some information on planning for their next steps, although not yet routinely enough to help them become involved in helping their child progress. Parents are very well informed about the setting and its provision for children. They are helped to understand how it provides for the Early Years Foundation Stage through attractive displays, photographs around the setting and the completion of an informative DVD made by staff showing images of children's outdoor learning experiences. Additionally, they are provided with access to an extensive range of leaflets and information to help support their parenting. Parents' views are sought and the use of exit questionnaires helps the setting make continual improvements. In response to suggestions made they have fitted a doorbell and provided staff name badges. Parents' comments are very positive and demonstrate the good reputation of the nursery in the area. They value the consistent staff, the key person system and, for example, the nursery 'allowing the children to develop in their own way'.

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

Almost all the staff in the setting have a secure understanding of the Early Years Foundation Stage and of how children learn. The setting uses a very consistent and effective key working system to support children to achieve good outcomes.

They use this to plan systematically for every child's individual learning needs. Key workers observe their children and know them well. Mostly, they use what they know to plan focused, relevant experiences which are based on children's interests and designed specifically to help children make continual progress in their learning. Occasionally, however, some plans for children's learning are generalised and these do not support practitioners in helping children make as much progress as they could. The loving and caring relationships children develop with their key people helps them become very confident individuals who develop caring relationships with their friends. Use of stories helps children understand their feelings and concepts of keeping safe. Children think about what makes them happy and sad after looking at what makes the dog feel these emotions in a story book, and they learn to understand why holding adults hands on outings is vital after they listen to what happened when a character didn't. Children enter the nursery happily and through such a strong sense of safety and security, they explore with confidence. This helps them become active, independent learners who develop the skills they need for their future learning securely.

The enabling environment supports children's good progress across all areas of learning. Continuous play provision means that children become active learners who are able to self-select resources, think creatively and follow through their own ideas independently. For example, as children dig in the soil they count as they put spoonfuls into tubs to make their pretend food. They mix in the ingredients of grass and leaves that they have collected. They use large plastic crates as work benches and tyres as seats to sit on in their pretend outside cafe. Their instinct and ability to use natural materials in play increase their opportunities for learning. For example, boys who rarely take an interest in mark making with traditional media relish in the opportunity to mix their own mud mixture and use it to paint a picture. Practitioners facilitate the development of children's independent thinking and respond positively to children's own ideas. When children select games to play and think of things they want to do this is positively addressed. Once a game is modelled by staff children are encouraged to take the lead. They thrive on the opportunity, which increases their self-esteem and feeling of self-worth. This has a positive effect on their behaviour. The integral bathroom facilities allow children to respond to the needs of their own bodies. Free access to individually labelled cups allows children to get a drink when they need one and all children sleep following their own home routines. However, at present, all children who need a sleep, including babies, sleep on mats within their playroom, which hinders a restful sleep.

All the main base rooms are attractively decorated with a wealth of clearly labelled displays which promote children's awareness of the written word. Children make good progress in communication, language and literacy. Through self-registration they learn to recognise their own names. They develop an early understanding of making marks for a purpose through the wealth of opportunities to paint, chalk, draw and make marks in a variety of ways. Children show a keen interest in books and stories, which are freely accessible to them and which they sit and look at in the comfort of attractively furnished cosy corners. Practitioners support their love of stories by reading with them in small groups. As a result, children model story telling and use the phrases with which they have become familiar. Children also develop skills for the future through their use of ICT throughout the nursery. Many

learn to use the computer independently, closely monitored and supported by staff. They learn about the world around them through visits into the local community and by, for example, growing vegetables to eat. Children count confidently in their play and match and sort during everyday routines.

Children's transitions throughout the nursery and beyond are managed very securely. Their journeys are flawless and a continuous process. Children are supported positively and visit local school nativities, for example, which gives them an early introduction to school life. Their teachers visit them at nursery and are provided with information about each child's needs. Where it is needed the most, practitioners also facilitate children's visits to school in order to support transition into mainstream education. This helps children make good and continuous progress towards the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage.



## 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>	2
The capacity of the provision to maintain continuous improvement	2

### 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>	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	1
The effectiveness of the setting's self-evaluation, including the steps taken to promote improvement	2
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	2
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### Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage

<b>Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage</b>	2
The extent to which children achieve and enjoy their learning	2
The extent to which children feel safe	1
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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## **Annex B: the Childcare Register**

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

Met