

Stepping Stone Day Nursery

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique reference number	EY301590
Inspection date	20/02/2009
Inspector	Angela Cole
Setting address	Manor Farm, Upper Slaughter, Cheltenham, Gloucestershire, GL54 2JJ
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Type of setting	Childcare - Non-Domestic

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.

Description of the setting

Stepping Stones Day Nursery has been established since 1984 and moved to the site in 1995. The present owner has been registered since 2005. The setting operates from five rooms in converted barn buildings near the village of Lower Slaughter in Gloucestershire. Children have access to two enclosed outdoor areas. The nursery is open each weekday from 08.00 to 18.00 for 50 weeks of the year. The setting is registered by Ofsted on the Early Years Register and on the compulsory and voluntary parts of the Childcare Register. A maximum of 59 children may attend the nursery at any one time. There are currently 65 children aged from three months to under five years on roll. The nursery currently supports a number of children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The setting provides funded early education for three and four-year-olds. There are 14 adults working with the children, of whom seven hold appropriate early years qualifications; of these two have teaching status, one has gained a degree in Early Childhood and Education while the manager has an Advanced Diploma in Childcare and Education. There are two members of staff who are working towards early years degrees.

Overall effectiveness of the early years provision

Overall the quality of the provision is satisfactory. Staff provide a friendly environment where families feel welcome and children's individual requirements are soundly supported. Children often engage in interesting play opportunities and activities, though focus on routine and the restricted range of resources available in several areas means that children's potential for learning is sometimes limited. The setting has good capacity to improve because of supportive management that is based upon clear vision for the development of the provision. Revised assessment and planning systems are established throughout the nursery, though monitoring of progress and links with children's learning needs and interests are sometimes tenuous. Children are cared for in a secure, safe environment and staff are attentive to ensure their welfare and well-being. Daily conversation with parents and carers keeps them informed about the provision and some aspects of the children's activities and learning, while some links for partnership with other agencies and providers involved in the children's care help to support their welfare and well-being.

What steps need to be taken to improve provision further?

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

- ensure that each child's learning needs and interests are regularly included in the planning process and that their progress towards the early learning goals is monitored
- extend staff's knowledge to know when and how to engage children's interests so that the support they receive as they learn is personalised to meet their individual needs and to extend their talents

- extend children's access to outdoor play and the full range of resources to increase opportunities for their choices and independent learning
- support children's learning and development further by developing the regular flow of two-way information with parents/carers and between providers.

The leadership and management of the early years provision

The nursery is soundly organised and adults' professional development is being well supported to bring about future improvement in the outcomes for children. This is because staff are willing to follow advice and some advanced level training is being accessed. Rigorous systems of vetting and induction are in place to ensure the ongoing suitability of staff and so that newcomers are included in team working as quickly as possible. Essential records, including children's health records, are up-to-date and satisfactorily maintained. In-depth self-evaluation and steps taken to improve are effective as the nursery is working towards achievable goals set through informed strategies for developing the provision for children. Views of staff and parents are carefully taken into consideration to assess strengths of the setting and timescales to work on areas for improvement. Previous actions have been fully included in practice, including systems to ensure that required adult to child ratios are always met and that children's attendance is recorded accurately. The nursery is still actively working on implementing recommendations from the previous inspection. Babies and younger children's access to play resources has been substantially improved, while the organisation of pre-school play areas and range of materials is currently being addressed to promote choice and independent learning for the oldest children. New systems for assessment and planning are linked to areas of learning in the Early Years Foundation Stage. As a result, key persons are now appointed to work with children to note their achievements, though these are not fully monitored to ensure their progress towards each early learning goal.

Children are well safeguarded because the management and senior staff have a strong understanding about safeguarding issues. Sound policies, procedures and documentation are in place and effective to ensure children are protected. The outdoor and indoor spaces, furniture, equipment and toys are suitable and safe. Action taken following the assessment of any hazard is effective in practice for children's well-being. Staff work well with parents and others about safety as gates and doors are always kept closed. Strong relationships are formed with families as, for example, staff willingly provide photographs of a child to send to distant relatives. An informative handbook enables parents to understand nursery life and contribute to the children's care. Some posters are offered regarding the Early Years Foundation Stage so that parents can be informed about the learning process. Staff organise effective settling routines and ensure that families understand the commitment to share children's achievements in daily conversation. The nursery does not offer regular opportunities for parents to share the assessments so they can be well involved in children's learning and development. Where appropriate, the setting forges strong links with agencies

supporting individual children and adults welcome visiting staff from other early years settings that children attend.

The quality and standards of the early years provision

The children take part in a range of activities and experiences, which over time, helps them to learn and develop. Staff have an awareness of the Early Years Foundation Stage and are becoming more confident in their use of it. They are observing the children at play and assessing what children are achieving in the areas of learning. Planning for each child is being developed as staff work to feel comfortable with the adopted method. Plans are not regularly based upon children's individual interests, nor do they clearly include children's next steps so that progress towards the early learning goals is monitored. Staff organise the indoor environment to give children opportunities to experience all areas of learning over a period of time. A mixture of adult-led and child-initiated activities is offered, though children do not have free access to outdoor play or to the full range of indoor resources to develop their independent learning.

Children settle and are soon happily involved in a range of activities. They have warm, secure relationships with the small groups of room staff, including their key persons, who recognise each child as an individual. Babies eagerly explore their attractive play environment. This is regularly varied so they choose and learn from a wide range of activities and resources, including exciting natural and man-made materials. For older children, opportunities vary for them to move at their own pace between activities set out for them. They concentrate for long periods of time when they have support from interested staff, for example, playing with puzzles and indoor sand. However, adults do not always give them freedom to carry out their own ideas and to extend their chosen activity as far as they wish. As a result, children are not regularly deciding upon and preparing their own play materials or ending chosen activities to their satisfaction. Children of all ages are confident communicators. Babies enjoy babbling and experiment with sounds, while toddlers use one or two words to convey simple messages that staff quickly pick up and use in interesting conversations. Pre-school children gain confidence to communicate their thoughts competently to discuss happenings at home and tell their own stories. Staff are aware to introduce problem solving and mathematical language into play situations so that, for example, young children name dough shapes and say their age at their next birthday. Older children confidently count but are not always supported to extend their thinking. For example, they know how much toast they have but are not challenged to think about one more or one less piece. Children learn about the local community as they enjoy visits to the farm and walk through allotments where local people offer them home-grown produce. Suitable positive images are displayed around the nursery to raise children's awareness of diversity. Children develop their understanding of the world as, for example, they grow vegetables, watch horse-riding and enthusiastically join in role play. Babies and toddlers pretend with real household implements and pre-schoolers excitedly create scenes, such as an outdoor fire station with a book of maps to plan because they 'have 14 fires to sort out'.

The children begin to learn the importance of a healthy lifestyle. The nursery offers

children a range of healthy snacks and nutritious, home-cooked meals. Mealtimes are social occasions as children and adults sit and eat together, though children do not always practise self-care skills as staff serve their food and drink. Drinking water is available to children during the day, ensuring they stay hydrated. Babies make good progress in their physical development. They play in the ball pool, ride wheeled toys indoors, and are regularly taken outdoors to benefit from fresh air. Children have daily opportunities to be active on country walks and during outside play as they swing, climb, balance and dig in sand or soil, though staff do not routinely plan for this area. Older ones are aware of positive hygiene routines and willingly wash their hands before they eat, though toddlers' hands are wiped clean at mealtimes and after being out of doors. Staff have realistic expectations of behaviour and children respond to their calm and friendly manner. Children follow this positive lead and learn to take turns, to share and to be considerate towards one another.

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

Overall effectiveness

How effective is the provision in meeting the needs of children in the Early Years Foundation Stage?	3
How well does the provision promote inclusive practice?	3
The capacity of the provision to maintain continuous improvement.	2

Leadership and management

How effectively is provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage led and managed?	3
How effective is the setting's self-evaluation, including the steps taken to promote improvement?	2
How well does the setting work in partnership with parents and others?	3
How well are children safeguarded?	2

Quality and standards

How effectively are children in the Early Years Foundation Stage helped to learn and develop?	3
How effectively is the welfare of children in the Early Years Foundation Stage promoted?	3
How well are children helped to stay safe?	2
How well are children helped to be healthy?	3
How well are children helped to enjoy and achieve?	3
How well are children helped to make a positive contribution?	3
How well are children helped develop skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being?	3

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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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