

Stepping Stones Day Nursery

58-62 Wood Street, MARYPORT, Cumbria, CA15 6LD

Inspection date

11/03/2013

Previous inspection date

21/09/2009

The quality and standards of the early years provision

This inspection:

2

Previous inspection:

3

How well the early years provision meets the needs of the range of children who attend 2

The contribution of the early years provision to the well-being of children 2

The effectiveness of the leadership and management of the early years provision 2

The quality and standards of the early years provision

This provision is good

- Teaching is embedded in a secure knowledge and understanding of children's learning and development needs. Staff support children's learning through effective levels of challenge which are appropriate for the children's age and stage of development. As a result, all children make good progress in their learning.
- Children settle easily into their designated playrooms because they feel safe and secure. This is the result of children building close relationships with key members of staff who meet their individual needs, care and welfare routines well.
- Partnerships with parents are good. The sharing of information effectively contributes to children's overall development and well-being, because parents are actively involved in their child's learning, both at the setting and at home.

It is not yet outstanding because

- There is scope to increase younger children's mathematical understanding in number in the toddler room.
- The outdoor play area available for the babies and toddlers does not fully support children's understanding of nature, or enhance their imagination, creativity, and sensory experiences.

Information about this inspection

Inspections of registered early years provision are:

- scheduled at least once in every inspection cycle – the current cycle ends on 31 July 2016
- scheduled more frequently where Ofsted identifies a need to do so, for example where provision was previously judged inadequate
- brought forward in the inspection cycle where Ofsted has received information that suggests the provision may not be meeting the legal requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage or where assessment of the provision identifies a need for early inspection
- prioritised where we have received information that the provision is not meeting the requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage and which suggests children may not be safe
- scheduled at the completion of an investigation into failure to comply with the requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage.

Inspection activities

- The inspector observed the staff and children during activities in the pre-school room, toddler room, baby room and both outdoor play areas.
- The inspector held discussions with the manager, staff and children during the inspection.
- The inspector held a meeting with the nursery manager.
- The inspector looked at children's assessment records, the planning documentation, the systems for the monitoring of children's progress, and appraisal and supervision systems.
- The inspector checked evidence of suitability and qualifications of practitioners working with the children, the policies and procedures for the setting and the current online self-evaluation form.
- The inspector took account of the views of parents, carers and children spoken to on the day of the inspection.

Inspector

Carys Millican

Full Report

Information about the setting

Stepping Stones Nursery was registered in 1991 and is registered by Ofsted on the Early Years Register. It is privately owned and is situated in Maryport, Cumbria. It operates from a converted double fronted shop which consists of a baby room and toddler room on the ground floor and a pre-school room on the first floor. The children have access to a rear yard and a first floor balcony for outdoor play.

The nursery employs 10 members of childcare staff, of these seven hold appropriate early years qualifications at level 3 and two hold appropriate early years qualifications at level 2. The nursery opens from Monday to Friday for 51 weeks of the year. The sessions are from 7.30am until 5.30pm. Children attend for a variety of sessions. There are currently 80 children attending who are in the early years age group. The nursery provides funded early education for two-, three- and four-year-old children. The nursery supports a number of children with special needs and/or disabilities. The nursery is a member of the National Day Nurseries Association.

What the setting needs to do to improve further

To further improve the quality of the early years provision the provider should:

- enhance younger children's understanding of number, for example, by introducing natural and manufactured resources that can be sorted and matched in various ways
- enhance the baby and toddler outdoor play area by introducing resources, such as mirrors, sound lines, chimes and mobiles and natural wild and growing areas, to stimulate younger children's imagination, creativity, sensory development and understanding of the natural world.

Inspection judgements

How well the early years provision meets the needs of the range of children who attend

All children enjoy themselves and have fun as they play and learn in this well-organised nursery setting. They are supported well by knowledgeable early years practitioners who engage children in their play so that they acquire skills and develop and learn effectively. Staff support children's interests, providing stimulating play opportunities and skilfully extending their learning by listening to what children say and do. As a result, children make good progress in their development in relation to their starting points. Staff have a

good understanding of the Early Years Foundation Stage and how children learn best. Therefore, children are encouraged and praised, and supported and guided in their learning. The staff provide good levels of challenging experiences appropriate for children's age and stage of development. This means children are supported well and enjoy their time at nursery. Staff involve themselves in the children's play and engage them at suitable times so that they do not disrupt their play.

Staff plan activities that reflect children's individual learning needs. They know the children well and observe them to assess their progress and to identify the next steps in their learning. The planning board contains observation notes completed by staff to inform the planning for the following weeks. Staff follow the same format in each room to show consistency in records. The regular reports on children's progress in the baby room and toddler room inform the progress check at age two. This is shared with parents and their views and thoughts are obtained to also inform this document. The pre-school parents attend an open evening where their child's records and progress are discussed with their child's key person. An agreement is made on the next steps in their child's learning and given to parents to share with the teaching staff on transition to school.

As children play, they learn the skills that contribute to school readiness. For example, pre-school children are confident talkers. They engage with staff in a wide range of discussions and conversations about their dinosaur world. The theme is extended to engage children in a wide range of learning opportunities. The dinosaur world is created in a pop-up tent with a number of different reading materials being available, such as story books and reference materials. Staff create dinosaur themes throughout the room to invite children to play in the different play areas. For example, large stones that resemble fossils sit in the sand and water trays with dinosaur figures. Displays of children's work are creatively displayed on walls, for example, a colourfully painted figure of a tyrannosaurus rex. Interactive puppet dinosaurs are set out on tables for children to handle and investigate. The children learn to unbutton its pouch to see what is inside. Staff introduce this dinosaur topic outside by hiding large animal bones into the sand tray, which is built inside the garden shed.

Children in the pre-school room use an upper outdoor play area. This decked play area provides an interesting and stimulating environment for older children to explore and investigate. The children use tools to break the frozen water in the metal water trough. They break the ice into pieces to show the staff, who ask them questions and reinforce their language by introducing new words and vocabulary. This play area is well organised. A section is set out with growing tubs and a composter ready for use for planting bulbs and flowers in the spring. There is space for children to practise their physical skills. For example, obstacle courses are laid out using old tyres, wooden planks and crates which children construct themselves. The pre-school children's sensory experiences are enriched by the use of sound lines, wind chimes and mobiles where they see the effect the wind and snow flurries has on moving the metal sun figure around and around. Although there is a baby and toddler outside play area available, this is not as inviting or as well set out to ensure that the youngest children have equally strong opportunities to investigate and explore nature or engage in sensory experiences.

Children's self-esteem, confidence and independence are growing successfully in all

rooms. Staff ask pre-school children to help prepare their own snack and help clear the table after they have finished. Younger children's self-help skills are supported during practical routines, such as toileting and meal times. Children help tidy away toys and learn to pour their own drinks. Staff constantly encourage children to help them, which makes children feel valued and important. The toddlers and pre-school children help staff to make new modelling dough. They measure it out and mix it together to form 'curry' dough, which they take pleasure in smelling. Children are interested and keen to explore the textured dough. This supports their creativity and thinking. Children create pretend cakes and develop physical skills and hand to eye coordination while rolling out dough and using shape cutters.

Staff provide children with opportunities to make choices and to follow their own interests. Each playroom is well organised and well resourced. The layout enables even the youngest children to access different play areas that contain a wide range of toys and resources. However, there is scope to enhance resources by introducing more natural and manufactured objects that can be sorted and matched in various ways. This is to enhance toddlers and pre-school children understanding of number and organising and categorising objects into sets or groups. All toys, especially in the baby room, are organised at low level and staff encourage children to engage in independent learning. Colourful static wooden activity toys encourage babies to explore and investigate using sight and touch. Lift the flap and board books are arranged in low-level boxes so babies can help themselves and a nursery gym helps to promote very young children's physical skills of crawling, and walking up steps and down ramps. Staff guide play by introducing materials, such as pens and paper, into role play and construction areas and make painting areas inviting. These activities help towards developing physical skills and writing skills in readiness for school.

Pre-school children and toddlers engage in role play and use their imagination to re-enact real life events, such as making a cup of tea in the home corner. They dress up and become superhero's pretending to fly round the room. Staff use these play opportunities to link super heroes and safety, for example, firefighters and fire. Children begin to understand about the world they live in because they participate in planned activities introducing different festivals and cultural events, for example, Chinese New Year. They learn about the difference and diversity of the world around them through visual images and the resources available to them, for example, books, dolls, dressing up and small world toys. Children competently use programmable toys that help develop their awareness of technology, these include, computers, torches, and CD players. Children enjoy looking at books and singing songs. The quiet areas in all rooms are arranged so children can sit together comfortably while they join in story time and singing sessions.

Staff engage well with parents who feel involved in their children's learning. Parents are provided with a wealth of information about the Early Years Foundation Stage. Visual displays are provided throughout the nursery and information is exchanged in written form and verbally on a daily basis. Parents are actively involved in their children's learning. They are given information on how they can continue to support their child's learning at home and in the setting. For example, a story sack and a book borrowing service is available for parents to take home to share with their child. Parents are also asked to bring in resources to match a theme or topic, for example, for a recent shoes and feet

project in the baby room. Parents contribute to diary entries, share information on activity sheets, and add comments in progress records about events and activities their child has completed at home. Staff encourage parents to share information about their child when they first start at the nursery so that children's individual needs are met at all times. This continues throughout their time spent at the nursery.

The contribution of the early years provision to the well-being of children

Children settle easily in this warm and welcoming nursery setting. The key person approach is well embedded throughout the nursery. Children develop a strong bond and secure relationship with key staff who work with them in their designated playroom. They feel safe and secure in the staff's company. Pre-school children and toddlers happily sit on staff members' knees at story time and babies cuddle in closely when they are tired. Children's individual needs are met in consultation with parents during their initial settling-in period and during transitions times through the nursery rooms. Parents receive a detailed report on progress when transferring from one room to another and are introduced to new key staff. Children complete short visits into the next room to get familiar with new surroundings and key people. As a result, their personal, social and emotional well-being is supported.

All children are well behaved. They begin to learn social skills and how to respect each other. Children share and take turns in group activities and play cooperatively with each other. They take part in established routines that help them to learn expected behaviour and how to keep themselves safe. For example, when the 'tidy up' music plays in the pre-school room, children eagerly help to tidy away the toys. Staff supervise children in all rooms and both outdoor play areas. They deploy themselves effectively to support children's safety at all times. Children begin to learn to keep themselves safe through gentle reminders by staff during play. They remind children not to throw toys and climb on tables. Staff talk to children about road safety before going out for walks to the library or to the local park. Children also learn how to keep themselves safe while taking part in emergency evacuation drills, and through topics linked to safety.

Staff promote good hygiene practices, independence and self-help skills with the children. Children know that they should wash their hands before eating and competently do this at mealtimes. All the rooms are well laid out, clean and well maintained. Staff complete appropriate hygiene practices when changing nappies and ensure all cot bedding is changed after use. Children eat healthy fruit snacks. The packed lunches for toddlers and pre-school children are appropriately stored until required. Staff encourage children's independence and self-care skills by encouraging older children to pour their own drinks and clear away their utensils afterwards. Children adopt a healthy lifestyle. They go outside in all weathers where they enjoy the opportunity for fresh air and exercise.

Children are prepared well for their transition from nursery to school. Staff invite the local schools in the area to visit the children in pre-school. They speak to children about going to school and place examples of school uniform in the role play areas. Staff read stories to the children about starting school, and discuss their feelings and new experiences. Staff

support skills in dressing and undressing, putting on coats and shoes and doing up buttons and fasteners, so that children develop self-help skills in readiness for school. A smooth transition process is encouraged by staff for children between the nursery rooms. Staff share information with key staff in the new rooms so that children's needs are known and supported. Parents are informed of children's progress when moving from one room to another and short visits ensure that children settle easily, therefore, their emotional well-being is supported during this time. Written information is given to staff about children with special educational needs so that specific support and individual help is shared to ensure that children's needs are effectively met.

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

The manager and staff have a secure understanding of the seven areas of learning and their responsibility to ensure the requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage are met. Their teaching is embedded in a secure knowledge and understanding of children's learning and development needs. The manager and staff closely monitor the educational programme to ensure a balanced curriculum is provided and all areas are included. They provide a wide range of experiences for children giving them the opportunity to be active learners, remain motivated and to think for themselves. Children's learning and development is assessed through observations, and linked to 'Development Matters in the Early Years Foundation Stage'. Planning is efficient and incorporates children's interests and the next steps in their learning. By monitoring children's progress and by looking at what children can do, key persons are able to identify gaps in children's learning or development and support their progress effectively. As a result, children's abilities and achievements are recognised and supported. The progress check at age two is completed by staff either in the baby room, before transition to the toddler room, or in the toddler room for children starting the setting aged 24 months to 36 months. The progress check is given to parents to share with health professionals. Pre-school children's ongoing progress is completed with input from parents and shared at transition times for entry into school.

Children are protected and safeguarded. Staff understand their role and responsibility with regard to following the safeguarding policy and child protection procedures. All staff know who to contact if they are concerned about a child in their care. Staff regularly undertake safeguarding training and all supervisors hold current first aid certificates. The safety of children is a high priority. Staff complete safety checks and room checks daily. Written risk assessments for indoors, outside and outings ensure potential hazards are minimised to keep children safe. The staff supervise children effectively indoors and outside. All the required records, policies and procedures are well organised and effectively implemented. The manager ensures that they remain current and updated in line with any new legislation. Staff inform parents of any accidents, complete accident records and log the administration of medication. The manager completes robust recruitment procedures; this ensures that children are cared for by suitable people. New staff undergo suitability checks, and induction procedures are completed with new staff and student volunteers. The manager monitors staff performance through regular supervision meetings and

annual appraisals. Staff training needs are identified to ensure that the nursery continues to have well-qualified early years practitioners. There are procedures in place to ensure that any inappropriate behaviour, attitude or practice of staff is challenged. Staff working with the children in all rooms treat children with equal concern, promote equality of opportunity for all the children in their care and use appropriate behaviour and language in front of the children.

The manager and staff work well together as a team. The recommendations made at their last inspection have resulted in improvements under learning and development, and children's care and well-being. The self-evaluation is thorough. The manager and staff are clear about their strengths and areas for improvement. Parents, carers and children are consulted through discussion, and written statements and questionnaires. Their views are used to evaluate the effectiveness of the nursery so that changes are made to continually improve the setting.

The nursery has a good relationship with parents. Parents feel valued and respected because staff take every opportunity to engage with them. Those spoken to during the inspection speak highly of the staff and the nursery manager. They state that all staff are friendly and approachable and they appreciate the support their children receive in their learning and development. Partnerships are established with other professionals, such as the speech and language team. This helps all involved in the children's care to meet their needs effectively. Parents are fully involved in discussions regarding their children and staff are fully aware of how to seek additional support in a timely way when children's progress is not as expected.

What inspection judgements mean

Registered early years provision

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	Outstanding provision is highly effective in meeting the needs of all children exceptionally well. This ensures that children are very well prepared for the next stage of their learning.
Grade 2	Good	Good provision is effective in delivering provision that meets the needs of all children well. This ensures children are ready for the next stage of their learning.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	Satisfactory provision is performing less well than expectations in one or more of the key areas. It requires improvement in order to be good.
Grade 4	Inadequate	Provision that is inadequate requires significant improvement and/or enforcement action. The provision is failing to give children an acceptable standard of early years education and/or is not meeting the safeguarding and welfare requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage. It will be inspected again within 12 months of the date of this inspection.
Met		The provision has no children on roll. The inspection judgement is that the provider continues to meet the requirements for registration.
Not met		The provision has no children on roll. The inspection judgement is that the provider does not meet the requirements for registration.

Inspection

This inspection was carried out by Ofsted under sections 49 and 50 of the Childcare Act 2006 on the quality and standards of provision that is registered on the Early Years Register. The registered person must ensure that this provision complies with the statutory framework for children's learning, development and care, known as the Early Years Foundation Stage.

Setting details

Unique reference number	317402
Local authority	Cumbria
Inspection number	907561
Type of provision	
Registration category	Childcare - Non-Domestic
Age range of children	0 - 5
Total number of places	65
Number of children on roll	80
Name of provider	Stepping Stones Day Nursery (Cumbria) Ltd
Date of previous inspection	21/09/2009
Telephone number	01900 812773

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Type of provision

For the purposes of this inspection the following definitions apply:

Full-time provision is that which operates for more than three hours. These are usually known as nurseries, nursery schools and pre-schools and must deliver the Early Years Foundation Stage. They are registered on the Early Years Register and pay the higher fee for registration.

Sessional provision operates for more than two hours but does not exceed three hours in any one day. These are usually known as pre-schools, kindergartens or nursery schools

and must deliver the Early Years Foundation Stage. They are registered on the Early Years Register and pay the lower fee for registration.

Childminders care for one or more children where individual children attend for a period of more than two hours in any one day. They operate from domestic premises, which are usually the childminder's own home. They are registered on the Early Years Register and must deliver the Early Years Foundation Stage.

Out of school provision may be sessional or full-time provision and is delivered before or after school and/or in the summer holidays. They are registered on the Early Years Register and must deliver the Early Years Foundation Stage. Where children receive their Early Years Foundation Stage in school these providers do not have to deliver the learning and development requirements in full but should complement the experiences children receive in school.

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