

Stepping Stones Nursery

168 Bramhall Moor Lane, Hazel Grove, Stockport, CHESHIRE, SK7 5BA

Inspection date	10/04/2013
Previous inspection date	23/03/2009

The quality and standards of the early years provision	This inspection:	
	Previous inspection:	
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

- Children are happy and settled in the nursery where they enjoy secure and trusting relationships with their key person and other staff. Staff know children well and value their individual needs, likes and interests.
- Partnerships with parents and external agencies are well established and effective. This ensures that all children, including those with special educational needs, receive a good level of support and consistency in their care and learning.
- Staff have a good understanding of safeguarding and health and safety procedures. This helps to ensure that children remain safe and secure whilst at the nursery.
- There is a strong focus on children acquiring good communication and language skills which is reflected in the planning of activities.

It is not yet outstanding because

- There is scope for the further development of the outdoor area in order to provide the younger children with more rich, interesting and challenging experiences.
- Sometimes staff miss opportunities to ask carefully framed open ended questions during activities in order to challenge and extend children's creativity and critical thinking.

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 activities children took part in.
- The inspector spoke to the manager and childcare staff at appropriate times during the inspection.
- The inspector carried out a joint observation of an activity with the manager.
The inspector viewed a range of documentation including risk assessments, fire drill records, accident and medication records, safeguarding and complaints policies and procedures and children's learning journeys.
- The inspector took into account the views of parents spoken to on the day.

Inspector
Susan Heap

Full Report

Information about the setting

Stepping Stones day nursery was registered in 2005 and is on the Early Years Register. It is situated in a large house in the Hazel Grove area of Stockport, and is one of four nurseries managed by Domalo Limited. The nursery serves the local area and is accessible to all children. It operates from four playrooms on the ground floor and there is a fully enclosed area available for outdoor play.

The nursery employs eight members of childcare staff. Of these, seven hold appropriate early years qualifications at level 3 or above, including the manager who has Early Years Professional Status.

The nursery opens Monday to Friday for 51 weeks of the year and is closed for one week at Christmas. Sessions are from 8am until 6pm. Children attend for a variety of sessions. There are currently 44 children attending who are in the early years age group. The nursery provides funded early education for two-, three- and four-year-old children. It supports a number of children who speak English as an additional language and children with special educational needs and/or disabilities.

What the setting needs to do to improve further

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

- consider ways of building on staff's confidence in modelling how to be creative and how to pose carefully framed open-ended questions during activities to challenge children's creativity and critical thinking, such as 'How can we..?' or, 'What would happen if..?'
- extend the educational programmes for the younger children by providing novelty in the environment that encourages them to use all of their senses to move indoors and outdoors, such as providing tunnels, slopes and low-level steps.

Inspection judgements

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

Important initial information is gathered from parents about the children during settling-in sessions. This information helps the children's key person to assess their starting points and individual learning needs. Children make good progress in their learning and development because staff complete regular observations and assessments of children's play. The planning of activities is thorough. It takes into account, children's interests,

parents and staff observations, and planned adult-led activities. These demonstrate how weekly plans are tailored to extend individual children's learning and next steps. There is also a strong focus on children developing and acquiring good communication and language skills throughout all the planning. The tracking of children's progress is routinely linked to the 'Development Matters in the Early Years Foundation Stage' guidance. Children's learning journeys clearly show that all children are making good progress within their developmental age bands given their starting points and capabilities and some are making very good progress. The staff build on children's interests to promote learning opportunities to enhance children's experiences. For example, pre-school children have been involved in recycling activities, in particular, using newspaper. They made bricks out of papier mache which led to them thinking about other things they could make. As a result, children engage in making animal money boxes by covering balloons with papier mache. They enthusiastically join in and take great enjoyment in rolling the newspaper in glue before placing on the balloon. They concentrate and work cooperatively side-by-side in the task. Staff listen to children and carefully observe what they are doing during activities in order to reshape tasks or give explanations to improve learning. However, not all staff are fully confident in asking open ended questions to enable children to find ways to solve problems or do things for themselves. Children receive lots of verbal praise for their efforts which develops their confidence and self-esteem. As a result, children become confident learners and communicators. The staff caring for younger children have successfully implemented the assessment check for children aged two years which is shared with parents.

The quality of teaching and learning is good because the staff know their key children extremely well and value their likes, interests and abilities. Children who have identified special educational needs and/or disabilities or English as an additional language are supported very well. This is achieved through individual education plans, one-to-one support, visual aids or ensuring the environment is conducive to support their needs. For example, ensuring background noise or music is minimised for children who may have a hearing impairment. As a result, staff show a good level of commitment to narrowing the gap for such children and ensure they progress well given their starting points and capabilities.

The recent introduction of each child's key person giving parents an observation comment sheet to complete has been a success. As a result, parents are more actively involved in children's learning and are providing more ideas of what they can do at home with children. This is highly effective in helping parents to become fully involved in their children's learning and development. Children in the pre-school room benefit greatly from activities which support their school readiness, such as, recognising letters, numbers and developing their independence skills. Children are well supported in acquiring good communication and language skills as they engage in conversations with the staff and their peers as they play together. They also enjoy regular phonic sessions and are beginning to recognise letters and sounds. For example, they join in singing the phonic alphabet song and make connections to the letter sound of their name. Daily activities are successfully used to bring mathematics to life. For example, pre-school count the number of children sitting at their table at snack time and know that there are five plus one which makes six. As a result, children are beginning to understand and use simple sums. They learn about portion control and their own needs as they serve themselves drinks of milk or

dried fruit and cheese.

Staff give younger children lots of smiles and encouragement and repeat the words they say so children hear them spoken clearly. Babies enjoy exploring different textures and sounds as they play with items in treasure baskets, or explore cornflour and water. The staff encourage them to develop their senses as they feel the different textures. The staff in the baby room are particularly attentive to children's individual daily routines for rest, sleep and quiet times. They snuggle in together on the sofa for stories and songs or when they are tired for comfort and reassurance. The learning environment is planned so that each room has cosy areas where children can sit quietly and look at books by themselves, with their friends, or listen to a story told by a member of staff. Toddlers take turns in weighing and mixing ingredients as they make biscuits for the children's afternoon tea. For those children who are preparing to leave for school, the nursery invites the children's future teacher to visit and meet them in familiar surroundings. A detailed report of each child's overall development is handed personally to the school. In addition, children are encouraged to talk and share their experiences of their visits to their new school. The nursery also supports this further, by providing activities and stories to successfully aid children's transitions.

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

Children are confident and settle well due to the effective key person system that is in place. Parents feel relaxed with the staff to exchange information about children's routines and individual needs. This means that children are well supported in their transitions between rooms. The good level of adult attention and warm interaction ensures that all children form positive and trusting relationships with their key person and other staff. The secure and safe environment helps them to develop self-confidence to join in and try new activities. Children's behaviour is good due to the clear boundaries and gentle guidance provided by the staff. For example, children are encouraged to be kind to each other and share and take turns. Planned activities, such as positive play, are useful in helping to promote teamwork, cooperation and turn taking, particularly for those children whose behaviour can be challenging at times. The 'Jewel Reward' behaviour reward system supports this further and some parents continue this at home, which ensures that children receive consistent clear messages. The nursery is decorated with children's art work and a variety of interesting wall displays which include photographs of children engaged in different activities. This helps the children to feel valued and have a sense of belonging. The staff complete regular environmental audits which enables them to thoughtfully plan the rooms so that the children are able to independently choose from a wide selection of resources that are easy for them to reach. For example, in the toddler room the construction area was relocated to another area of the room to enable children to have easier access to building blocks.

Children have frequent opportunities to enjoy fresh air and exercise in the outdoor play area. They develop their coordination and balance by riding on bikes, walking across log stepping stones or stepping in and out of hula hoops or practising yoga poses. The staff team have improved the outdoor area by providing resource boxes to use in the outdoor

area, such as a 'windy day' box. The fence panels are decorated with number lines, maps and bird feeders to promote children's interest in the environment. However, there is scope for the outdoor areas to be more attractive and appealing in order to ignite children's interest and offer more challenge, particularly for those children aged under two years. Children are developing good skills in handling equipment and tools effectively. For example, they competently use pencils, rolling pins and shape cutters, fix cogs and wheels together, as well as scissors. Staff teach the children about keeping themselves and others safe, for example, by using scissors carefully during activities. They move with care and control from the indoor to the outdoor environment and from room to room.

The children develop good self-care skills as they regularly visit the bathroom during toilet training. They receive lots of verbal praise for their achievements and therefore quickly succeed in this area. The nursery places a great emphasis upon the importance of a healthy diet and provides well-balanced, nutritious meals and snacks at regular intervals throughout the day. Conversation is encouraged at meal times to promote children's social skills and language and the time is used well for children to learn about which foods are healthy or unhealthy. Staff are vigilant and attentive to children's individual dietary and medical needs and act promptly when needed. For example, when children display unusual reactions to food or require medication. Each child has their own sleep box which contains their own bedding and comforters which minimises the risk of cross infection and gives them familiarity and a sense of belonging.

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

The manager and staff work very well together and are committed to ensuring that the children in their care are kept safe and secure at all times. They have undertaken safeguarding training and have a good understanding of the safeguarding and welfare requirements of the Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage. The manager and the staff team have a secure understanding of their role in safeguarding children, and the reporting procedures in place to protect children and keep them safe from harm. They successfully work in partnership with other agencies, such as, local authority Social Care teams, to protect children and keep them safe from harm.

There are thorough procedures for recruiting and vetting staff. At their six-monthly appraisal staff sign a form to indicate there have been no changes to their general health or any criminal convictions. This means their on-going suitability is monitored. Effective risk assessments and health and safety procedures ensure that hazards are minimised in order to reduce the risk of accidents to children. Only senior members of the management team administer medication to children and the manager checks the accident record book each evening to ensure that all parents have signed the record. This ensures that risks to children are minimised, promotes partnership working with parents and consistency of care for children. Security of the nursery is good and the staff are vigilant at all times, which minimises the risk of intruders entering the premises.

The nursery has a well-developed sense of its strengths and weaknesses through its

rigorous and accurate self-evaluation. There are effective improvement plans in place which successfully identify and prioritise areas for development, such as developing the outdoor area for children aged under two years. Recent improvements include the use of environmental audits, the development of sensory areas and treasure baskets in the baby room and involving parents more in contributing their ideas to children's learning. Recommendations from the last inspection have been effectively completed, resulting in children's improved access to information, communication and technology resources, and improvement in their independence skills. Parents and children's views are sought regularly, both verbally and through newsletters to improve the provision. For example, parents requested more detail within the younger children's daily diaries and children gave their ideas about other food they would like to eat.

The manager has a secure understanding of her role in monitoring and delivering all aspects of the Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage. Effective induction systems ensure that staff are clear about their roles and responsibilities. Their professional development is encouraged through regular team meetings, training and liaison with the local authority advisors. Regular staff appraisals, peer observation and supervision are carried out to identify staff's training needs and continued professional development. The staff are enthusiastic, reflective practitioners and show commitment to improvement to ensure that all children enjoy valuable teaching and learning experiences. For example, staff requested further training on behaviour management. As a result, this is planned to take place next week and is being delivered by the Behaviour Support Service. The monitoring and tracking of different groups of children is in place, in order to identify any group falling behind their peers or below their expected achievements. Records show that children are making good progress in all seven areas of learning.

The nursery's engagement with parents is good. They are actively invited to contribute their ideas comments and observations if their child has a new interest or achievement and add these to the 'My biggest achievement' sheet. This is then used to inform children's individual planning. They are kept informed regularly about their children's progress through daily conversations, parents' evenings, drop-in sessions and newsletters. These support strong foundations for partnership working. There is a strong ethos for staff to support all children, especially those with special educational needs and/or disabilities. As a result, all staff have high aspirations for children's individual progress through effective partnership working with parents and other professionals, such as, portage workers, dieticians, speech therapists and social workers. Parents comment extremely positively about the nursery; how they feel confident that their children are well cared for, and the good progress their children are making in their learning and development.

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	EY314799
Local authority	Stockport
Inspection number	908655
Type of provision	
Registration category	Childcare - Non-Domestic
Age range of children	0 - 5
Total number of places	45
Number of children on roll	44
Name of provider	Domalo Limited
Date of previous inspection	23/03/2009
Telephone number	0161 483 5475

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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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Piccadilly Gate
Store St
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M1 2WD

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