

Stepping Stones Nursery

Stepping Stones Nursery, 2 Bakers Lane, SUTTON COLDFIELD, West Midlands, B73 6XB

Inspection date

01/11/2013

Previous inspection date

Not Applicable

The quality and standards of the early years provision

This inspection:

1

Previous inspection:

Not Applicable

How well the early years provision meets the needs of the range of children who attend	1
The contribution of the early years provision to the well-being of children	1
The effectiveness of the leadership and management of the early years provision	1

The quality and standards of the early years provision

This provision is outstanding

- Children thrive in this beautiful and vibrant pre-school where they make rapid progress in all areas of learning given their starting points. This is because the wonderful activities offered are supported by staff's enthusiasm, expert knowledge and understanding of how children learn.
- The nursery is well planned and resourced. Toys and equipment are easy for children to access and move around as they choose, so that they can investigate and explore.
- Children's independence is promoted from a very early age and this means they become competent at many tasks, such as serving their food and pouring their drinks.
- Relationships between children and staff are very good, therefore, fostering a strong sense of belonging and ensuring that children are confident learners. Partnerships with parents and other agencies are strong with regard to sharing a comprehensive range of information that aids staff in meeting children's care and learning needs.
- Day-to-day management and professional supervision are of an exceptionally high quality and there is an excellent sense of teamwork. Roles are clearly defined and sharply-focused self-evaluation includes the views of all staff, parents and children, so that areas for improvement are identified and acted on.

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 staff engaging in a range of indoor learning activities, play and daily care routines with children.
- The inspector had a tour of the nursery and also conducted a joint observation with the deputy manager of the provision.
- The inspector talked to children and practitioners and also held a meeting with the management team during the inspection.
- The inspector looked at children's development folders, children's and staff files and a selection of policies and daily records.
- The inspector took account of the views of parents and carers spoken to on the day.

Inspector

Patricia Dawes

Full Report

Information about the setting

Stepping Stones Nursery was re-registered in 2013 on the Early Years Register. It is situated in a converted house in Streetly, Sutton Coldfield and is one of two nurseries managed by a limited company. The nursery serves the local and surrounding areas and is accessible to all children. It operates from four rooms and there is an enclosed area available for outdoor play.

The nursery employs 12 members of childcare staff, all of whom hold appropriate early years qualifications at level 3, 4 and 6.

The nursery opens Monday to Friday, all year round, from 7.30am until 6pm. Children attend for a variety of sessions. There are currently 55 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 receives support from the local authority.

What the setting needs to do to improve further

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

- enhance the already excellent relationships with parents and carers to offer enriched opportunities to involve them in their children's learning and development, so that children continue to achieve to the highest level.

Inspection judgements

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

Staff have a very good understanding of how children learn and develop. They have updated their knowledge in line with the revised Statutory framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage and adapted their systems for observing and assessing children's progress. Staff make detailed observations of children during their activities, which informs individual planning. This enables them to build on the next steps in each child's learning and they make very good progress. Staff know their key children extremely well. They record their achievements across the seven areas of learning, which gives them a clear overview of each child's progress. Staff have implemented the progress check at age two to enable them to assess children's development and act on any areas if there are concerns. Staff work extremely well together to plan the main activities. There is an excellent balance between child-initiated and adult-led activities, which means that all children are guided effectively and encouraged in their learning, so that they make

extremely good progress.

Parents and carers share information about children's needs. They receive detailed information about their children's activities at the nursery through daily discussion, diaries and photographs and are able to speak to their child's key person each day. The 'activity at home' board displayed by staff in each room gives parents additional ideas for learning at home, such as, practicing using scissors for older children or recognising the numbers on their front doors or counting how many red items are in their bedroom. Parents are very well-informed about their child's progress and achievements and they contribute to their child's 'learning journeys'. Nevertheless, there is scope to enhance these opportunities for parents to share information a little further, so that all parents are engaged in the highly successful strategies to support their child's learning at home.

Transition between rooms is well-managed, with children's assessments following through with them. Staff in each of the rooms discuss their observations and share their planning, so all are involved and knowledgeable about how to support each child. The key person system is well-established and staff know their key children's personalities and learning styles well. They frequently use effective questioning techniques to extend and challenge. Individual activities for children, based on their identified next steps, are well-combined into the daily routine of the room. All children enjoy leading their play and consistently demonstrate the characteristics of effective learning with the skilful guidance of staff. Children have continuous access to a wide-ranging variety of toys and equipment, which are stored at low-level enabling them to make choices that develop their independence skills. Equality of opportunity is a real strength and all children are welcome in the nursery. Positive images of different people are displayed around the setting and major celebrations from a variety of faiths and cultures are explored in the nursery. Staff provide a fully inclusive environment and have a positive impact on all children in their care.

Staff members join children in their play throughout the day readily conversing with them to stimulate children's interest and foster their developing language skills. Staff use their imaginative and creative skills exceptionally well to engage children and encourage their interest, making learning fun. Staff reinforce and extend activities by asking challenging questions and engaging in conversations. Staff are very well deployed, relaxed and supportive of children and know them well. Children speak confidently with staff, their peers and visitors, explaining what they are doing and why. During activities staff effectively foster older toddlers and pre-school children's skills, such as sharing and turn taking and actively promote their readiness for school during daily routines, such as at lunchtime, by encouraging children to serve themselves, helping to lay out and clear away. In addition, they have introduced a 'helper' system, in order to help promote children's self-esteem and independence further.

The learning environment is bright and inviting and all children have easy access to a wide range of resources, both inside and outside, which follow their interests and engage them. Children's artwork is displayed around the rooms and accessible resources enable children to confidently make their own choices. Children are encouraged to freely explore their environment and initiate their own play. Younger children's emerging language is promoted as staff support and extend their growing vocabulary at story time as children imitate the sounds of animals in books or during activities as staff burst into songs related

to the activity. They encourage children to talk about the consistency, size, smell and colour of a pumpkin during Halloween activities and make colourful pictures using the seeds which they have scooped out. They make spiders and webs and enjoy feeling the soft texture of the web. They hunt through the sand tray to find cars they have hidden, with staff supporting them, asking questions and showing amazement when they find the car. Older children learn the story of a witch on a broom and make pumpkin tarts, talking about the different shapes they can make. They thoroughly enjoy listening to familiar stories and staff encourage them to join in, recall, retell and predict what happens next, all of which they do with great enthusiasm.

All children have access to a range of technology. Younger children 'test-out' what happens as they push buttons and turn knobs on electronic toys. Older children freely access the computer to complete educational games. All children have excellent opportunities to spend time in the outdoor learning environment. It is a well thought out area which allows children access in all weathers. For example, older children showed great excitement as they ran around the garden on the all-weather surface during a rain shower. Children have excellent opportunities to practise their skills at balancing on the numbered logs, climbing on the large slide or negotiating spaces riding bikes and scooters. The growing area is used exceptionally well to give children experiences of growing a variety of fruits and vegetables as well as investigating insects and bugs. All of this helps all children attending to feel totally included, ensures they settle exceedingly well and make outstanding progress in their learning and development.

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

Children settle well into the nursery which is bright, spacious and invitingly decorated, so that they and their parents feel welcomed. The settling-in period is well organised. Staff spend time getting to know children and their parents, observing children in their nursery environment and encouraging parents to share important information about their children's individual needs until children naturally settle into the nursery routine, aiding their transition. Positive engagement by the key person and spontaneous praise and encouragement from staff throughout the day help to develop children's confidence, so they feel secure and try out new things. Behaviour strategies are clearly shared with parents for consistency at home. Children are rewarded for positive behaviour and are developing an exceptional understanding of the needs of others and how to manage their feelings through sensitive and highly skilled staff intervention. Staff are exceptionally kind and caring and comfort children if they are upset. They help children to resolve disputes so that they learn to respect others. Older children are very sociable and independently and confidently engage with staff and their peers. During activities they explore their own and others behaviour and feelings, commenting actively on what makes them happy or sad and actions which are kind and unkind. This helps them to understand the consequences of their actions and the effects on other children and on their parents.

Children's health is very well supported through attention to daily routines like nappy

changing, while others are developing their own self-care skills as they independently access the toilet and wash their hands. Healthy eating has a high focus at this nursery where children enjoy a very nutritious and varied menu, healthy snacks and have daily fresh air and exercise. Children's safety is of a high priority to staff and they effectively support children's growing understanding of how to stay safe. For example, children participate in regular fire evacuation drills and learn about risk management during activities, such as carefully using scissors or learning the rules of outdoor safety in the large play area. Staff actively encourage children to follow the rules and boundaries of safety by giving them opportunities to make decisions and overcome hazards for themselves. All children benefit from the strong links the nursery has developed with local schools to support children as they make the move to school or nursery. The key person liaises regularly with parents and school staff, sharing information between settings to ensure children's individual needs are being met and easing the transition process.

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

Children are exceptionally safe and well cared for at the nursery. Meticulous policies and procedures are adhered to by all staff. Staff have a very clear understanding of their roles and responsibilities in recognising signs of abuse or neglect and how to pass any concerns on effectively. Regular spot checks on their knowledge are conducted of what to do in a given scenario. For example, if an allegation is made against a member of staff or against themselves, or how they maintain the correct ratios of staff to children if a child needs individual attention outside the room. Highly comprehensive risk assessments for the premises and for all trips ensure children's utmost safety in all circumstances. The premises are extremely secure and staff ensure all visitors and children are signed in and out in case of emergency evacuation. This is practised regularly with children and they know that they need to exit the building calmly and quietly. Robust recruitment procedures mean that all staff are suitable to work with children. Safeguarding features highly in induction and at the regular staff meetings and all staff have attended external training. All necessary information is displayed in each room as well as a very informative display on the parent's noticeboard. All records are exceptionally well maintained

The management team are exceptionally well motivated and fires the enthusiasm of all staff. New staff receive a highly comprehensive induction to enable them to become familiar with the nursery procedures and they are supported extremely well. The manager observes and appraises staff performance through highly effective discussion and regular meetings. The manager ensures that all staff fully understand their roles and responsibilities and this enables them to implement the policies and procedures very effectively. The manager carries out regular monitoring of the educational programme to offer support and guidance to staff. She challenges the way staff reflect on the quality of their teaching and planning through peer on peer observations, so that specific improvements are targeted and children's learning experiences are improved significantly as a result. This shows a rigid, highly effective and well-documented drive for improvement. Staff attend regular training courses and are encouraged to further their

professional development to build on their skills and enable them to plan activities more effectively.

The leadership and management of the nursery is extremely strong. The management team has a positive vision for providing a high quality service and they are fully committed to reflective practice and engaging the views of staff and parents to achieve this. There is excellent team work and staff develop innovative ways to assist children in their learning and development. Staff work exceedingly well together to evaluate the provision. The management team show they value their staff and encourage them to share their views and opinions openly in an environment of trust and respect. Self-evaluation includes the views of parents and children and identifies specific areas for improvement, so that the needs of all are recognised and acted upon. Staff continually strive to find effective ways to improve learning opportunities for children, so that they always make exceptional progress. The manager leads her team with great efficiency and wonderfully inspiring practice in all aspects of the provision. The local early years development officer assists staff in their monitoring of the provision.

The management team and staff support parents and carers exceptionally well and value their opinions. They complete questionnaires and suggest ways in which they would like the provision to be improved. For example, everyone was consulted about the changes they would like included in the outdoor area, so that children could also share their ideas and interests. Staff understand and work in partnership with other professionals and settings children attend. They share new ideas and best practice with other local early years providers and have very strong links with other professionals. This ensures excellent support for the needs of all children and their families. The nursery makes an outstanding and important contribution to children's learning and well-being.

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	EY463068
Local authority	Birmingham
Inspection number	918984
Type of provision	Full-time provision
Registration category	Childcare - Non-Domestic
Age range of children	0 - 5
Total number of places	32
Number of children on roll	55
Name of provider	Stepping Stones Nurseries(Midlands)Ltd
Date of previous inspection	not applicable
Telephone number	01213531200

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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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