

Stepping Stones

Ardleigh Green Road, Hornchurch, Essex, RM11 2LL

Inspection date	13/12/2013
Previous inspection date	09/03/2011

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

- An effective key person system supports children to make secure emotional attachments and promotes their well-being and confidence.
- Children make good progress during the time they spend at the nursery. This is because staff have a clear awareness of their needs and complete precise assessments and planning for all children.
- Staff understand and implement effective safeguarding policies and procedures and have a good knowledge of child protection. As a result, they keep children safe.
- Children's behaviour is good and they play harmoniously together, as staff explain their expectations to them and give them plenty of praise and encouragement.
- The members of the very longstanding staff team work well together. They demonstrate good practice and are passionate about providing the best possible care for children.

It is not yet outstanding because

- Staff do not maximise use of the outdoor learning environment so all children can experience a wide range of inspiring activities in the garden area all year round.
- Babies have few opportunities to explore an interesting variety of everyday objects that ignite their natural curiosity.

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.

The provision is also registered on the voluntary and compulsory parts of the Childcare Register. This report includes a judgment about compliance with the requirements of that register.

Inspection activities

- The inspector observed children's play and staff interaction.
- The inspector sought the views of parents.
- The inspector talked with available staff and held discussions with the management team.
- The inspector looked at documentation, including a representative sample of children's records, staff supervision and suitability records.

Inspector

Sharron Fogarty

Full report

Information about the setting

Stepping Stones was registered in 1991. The nursery is managed by Havering College of Further and Higher Education. It operates from a purpose built unit on the Ardleigh Green campus of Havering College of Further and Higher Education in the London Borough of Havering. The nursery is registered on the Early Years Register and both parts of the compulsory and voluntary Childcare Register. The nursery provides full- and part-time day care and is in receipt of funding for the provision of free early education for children aged two, three and four years. There are currently 68 children on roll, all of whom are in the early years age group. The nursery supports children with special educational needs and/or disabilities and children who speak English as an additional language. All children share access to a secure enclosed outdoor play area. The nursery is open each weekday from 7.45am to 6.15pm for 51 weeks of the year. The nursery employs 15 members of staff. All hold appropriate early years qualifications.

What the setting needs to do to improve further

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

- maximise outdoor learning opportunities so babies and children have a wider range of exciting play experiences in the garden all year round

- enhance opportunities for babies to explore by providing more inspiring natural objects.

Inspection judgements

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

Staff have a good understanding of early childhood development and the individual learning styles of young children. Their interactions and teaching techniques are effective and they show a good understanding of how to engage and capture children's interests. They ask carefully formed questions to extend children's thinking and learning and show genuine interest in what children do or say. For example, they encourage children to talk about the characters in a story and link this to their own experiences. Staff often engage in conversation with children, for instance, about their fantasy play. As a result, children develop clear communication skills, they chat to each other as they play and talk confidently to the staff. Older children are articulate and they provide a narrative to their play and talk in detail about their interests and home life. The key persons working with the younger children place a good focus on promoting the prime areas of learning. As a result, children have a firm knowledge base from which they can build on and learn new skills. Older children successfully gain useful skills in readiness for starting school. They

choose to look at books for pleasure in the well-used reading area which contains an interesting variety of fiction and non-fiction materials, including favourite stories. Staff ensure that children have easy access to writing materials and allow them to become absorbed in their attempts at writing or drawing pictures that represent recent experiences. Children are developing their understanding of sounds and letters as they recognise the letters within their names. Staff promote children's mathematical skills. For example, they encourage them calculate how many of their friends are sitting at a table or to measure the length of different objects. Children adeptly use the computer to navigate educational software on the computer and they have access to a tablet computer to further support their interest in technology.

Before children start at the nursery staff obtain information about their likes and capabilities from parents. This information is then used successfully, along with the key person's initial assessment, to plan for children's starting points. Children continue to make good progress in their learning and development as planning is flexible; it is based on children's next steps in learning and centres on their interests. On-going observations and assessments ensure that their individual needs are fostered well. Children's development records include individual planning and targets for each child across the areas of learning. Staff thoughtfully document children's learning using photographs of previous activities in special books. These illustrate that children take part in a wide range of interesting activities which children take immense pleasure in looking at, recalling and discussing what they can see. Each term the key persons complete a summary assessment report in consultation with parents. The required progress reports when children reach the age of two are also completed in a timely way. This means that staff promptly identify when progress is less than expected so that early intervention from outside agencies can be sought when necessary. As a result, there are appropriate systems in place ready to support children with special educational needs and/or disabilities or those who speak English as an additional language.

Staff working with the younger children are caring, skilled and considerate in meeting children's care and development needs. Close and affectionate relationships are evident, as babies respond with smiles and chuckles to the positive attention given by staff. Babies watch intently as staff sing to them or cuddle them. They develop early communication skills as they respond to the repetition of words and gestures, including sign language. Staff make sure that babies can easily reach a range of good resources that promote their development, including soft play books, stackers and touch-and-feel toys. This encourages children to explore and be confident in moving around the environment. However, there is less opportunity for babies to explore a wide range of natural, everyday objects to further promote exploratory learning. All children have plenty of opportunities to be active and engage in a range of physical activities. Staff closely support babies as they practise walking and give them plenty of praise and encouragement as they develop their emerging mobility. Babies are able to use a range of activities that help them to stand and move around. Older children use the outdoor play area every day, thus developing their physical skills as they run, climb and kick balls. Staff also use the garden to teach children about healthy eating by involving them in growing vegetables. However, opportunities for the youngest children to go outside and get fresh air are not consistent enough and there are not always enough exciting and inspiring activities for children outside, especially during the winter months.

Staff effectively encourage parents to be involved in their children's on-going learning in the nursery. Regular parent meetings and the sharing of summary reports each term update parents on their children's progress and their key learning priorities. Parents are also encouraged to share any new achievements at home, thus supporting a shared approach to children's learning and development.

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

Children and babies are happy and content as staff create an enjoyable and relaxed atmosphere where they can play and learn. Children arrive happily at the nursery and parents share information about care needs, such as individual routines, with their child's key person. This ensures continuity of care is maintained. The key person system is fully embedded within the nursery as parents are told about the role of the key person and the allocated member of staff. When children move rooms, parents are also told about their child's new key person and before they move children spend time familiarising themselves with their new surroundings. This effectively supports children's emotional well-being at these times of change within the nursery.

Staff make sure that children's care needs are met well. Babies' nappies are changed on a regular basis and the baby room is well organised; there is a separate area for children to have restful sleeps during the day. All staff have a good understanding of how to calmly and effectively manage children's behaviour. They know about appropriate boundaries, providing children with choice and explaining to them about what they can or cannot do. This includes children sharing the nursery toys and waiting their turn during an activity. Children demonstrate good social skills and they willingly help staff to tidy up or distribute cups and plates at mealtimes. The staff frequently praise children for their good manners or acts of kindness. As a result, children's behaviour is good and they play harmoniously together. The older children develop good independence skills as they pour their own drinks or serve their food and attempt to put on their own coats before going outside. Children understand the safety rules in place. For example, they can explain why it is safer to walk rather than run indoors.

The staff give children clear messages to ensure they are developing a positive understanding of how to keep healthy. They know about important hygiene routines and talk about the foods that are good for them at meal times. Staff ensure that cleanliness in the nursery is maintained to a high standard. They follow good hygiene procedures with regard to changing children's nappies. Staff have attended food safety training and the nursery kitchen has been awarded four stars for food hygiene. Any special dietary requirements are respected and catered for. Healthy, nutritious meals are freshly prepared each day by an outside caterer. Meal times are a relaxed and a social time. Children have healthy appetites and eat well.

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

The nursery effectively fulfils its responsibilities in meeting the requirements of the Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage. Teamwork amongst staff is very strong as the manager is a good role model; she is proactive within the nursery and works well with the staff. The essential documentation that promotes the welfare and safeguarding of children is readily accessible for inspection. The procedures for safeguarding are implemented effectively. Staff know to record accidents that occur in the nursery and also record any minor existing injuries. This ensures that children are effectively safeguarded and any accidents or injuries are monitored. Staff have a good awareness and effective knowledge of their role in child protection, in relation to the reporting of any concern they may have about a child's welfare or a colleague's behaviour. Regular risk assessments are carried out to minimise all hazards and so ensure children's safety in the indoor and outdoor environments. There are robust systems in place for staff recruitment and vetting, to ensure that all staff are suitable and qualified for their roles. Staff are deployed effectively and ratios are maintained above the minimum requirement to ensure children's safety. Staff are vigilant about the security of the children, there are secure entry systems and the gate to the outdoor area is locked when children play outside. There are good procedures in place to ensure the nursery remains clean and to promote children's good health. For example, there is a no outdoor shoe policy in operation in the baby room. This safeguards crawling babies from being exposed to germs and debris being carried in from outside and cleaning rotas ensures toys and equipment are cleaned on a regular basis.

All staff are committed to continuous improvement; the nursery self-evaluation form has recently been updated and staff and parents are fully involved in the evaluation process. Assessments of the effectiveness of the provision are accurate and realistic and targets set for further improvement are achievable. For example, staff plan to ensure all accessible resources are labelled in all rooms and, with support from the local authority, they are evaluating the educational planning. There is a long standing, well-qualified staff team. The staff regularly access additional training opportunities to enrich their qualifications and experience. They feel supported by the manager as she spends time in the playrooms getting to know the children's capabilities and observing staff practice. Staff meetings are used effectively to monitor the educational programmes for groups or individual children and the staff are welcoming of appraisals and peer support. The manager also attends cluster groups with other early years professionals to discuss and share ideas about best practice.

Partnerships with parents and carers are good. Parents have lots of opportunities to be involved in their child's care and learning. The foyer area contains a wealth of information about the nursery, including the role of Ofsted and the complaints procedure. Written communication regarding children's care needs, for example the amount children have eaten for lunch and how long they have slept, is shared with parents daily. The nursery works closely with local schools to support children's transfer to full-time education. The staff are also fully aware of the importance of working with other professionals, advisors or health workers to support children's individual requirements when the need arises.

The Childcare Register

The requirements for the compulsory part of the Childcare Register are **Met**

The requirements for the voluntary part of the Childcare Register are **Met**

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	Requires improvement	The provision is not giving children a good standard of early years education and/or there are minor breaches of the safeguarding and welfare requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage. It will be monitored and inspected within twelve months of the date of this inspection.
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 monitored and inspected again within six 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	118617
Local authority	Havering
Inspection number	946729
Type of provision	Full-time provision
Registration category	Childcare - Non-Domestic
Age range of children	0 - 8
Total number of places	43
Number of children on roll	68
Name of provider	Havering College of Further And Higher Education
Date of previous inspection	09/03/2011
Telephone number	01708 462827

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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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