

Stepping Stones Day Nursery

13 Plato Rd, Brixton, London, SW2 5UP

Inspection date	06/12/2013
Previous inspection date	16/02/2011

The quality and standards of the early years provision	This inspection:	3
	Previous inspection:	2
How well the early years provision meets the needs of the range of children who attend		3
The contribution of the early years provision to the well-being of children		3
The effectiveness of the leadership and management of the early years provision		3

The quality and standards of the early years provision

This provision requires improvement

- The learning environment provides an appropriate range of equipment and materials at child height, so children can choose what to play with.
- The partnership with parents is strong, because staff give regular updates to parents about their child's development and suggest complementary activities to do at home.
- The assessment and planning format is embedded well, so children benefit from regular activities which cover all areas of learning.

It is not yet good because

- There are weaknesses in the provision for communication and language development which affect the language development of children under two and those with language delays.
- Staff do not receive regular supervision which reduces their opportunities to develop their teaching skills in the prime areas and how they write observations.
- Children's opportunities for independence are occasionally reduced because staff take over aspects of their self-care, and the equipment is not well-labelled.

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 children of all ages at play, indoors and outside.
- The inspector examined a range of documents including safeguarding information and learning journals.
- The inspector met with the manager and registered person to discuss improvement and monitoring.
- The inspector and manager evaluated activities they had observed.

Inspector

Susan McCourt

Full report

Information about the setting

Stepping Stones Day Nursery is one of two privately owned nurseries run by the same owner. It is situated in a residential area in Brixton, in the London Borough of Lambeth. It was registered in 2009 and operates from three rooms in a converted house. A fully enclosed play area is available for outdoor play. The nursery is open five days a week and operates from 7.30am to 6:30pm, 49 weeks of the year. The setting is registered on the Early Years Register. There are currently 28 children on roll, some in part-time places. The nursery supports children who are learning English as an additional language. The nursery employs eight members of staff, including the manager, with six staff holding a suitable early years qualification with one being a qualified teacher and the registered person has Early Years Professional status.

What the setting needs to do to improve further

To meet the requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage the provider must:

- improve the provision for communication and language development in the under-twos room and for children with language delays
- create an effective system for supervising staff and monitoring their practice to raise standards of teaching.

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

- enhance children's independence by improving the labelling of equipment, and their opportunities to manage their own self-care
- write observations based on what children do and achieve, in order to refine their accuracy to promote children's better progress.

Inspection judgements

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

Staff have a suitable understanding of how to meet children's learning and development needs. They plan an appropriate range of activities to ensure that children experience the whole curriculum, with a suitable balance between those which are adult-led and those initiated by children. Staff engage children's interests, such as by providing magnifying glasses with toy bugs and insects, so that children can examine them more closely. This

means that children are engaged in purposeful play through their time in the nursery.

Staff have suitable teaching skills, but sometimes these are inconsistent. Staff working with older children initiate conversations about their play, extending their vocabulary appropriately. However, in the under-twos' room staff have variable skills and as a result younger children do not experience as much communication and talk as older children. This reduces their opportunities to develop well in this prime area of learning.

All staff play with children at their level and respond appropriately to children when they initiate play. For example, a child in the under two's room shows staff the gel balls she is playing with in the water tray, and staff admire them and praise her. Younger children also enjoy exploring technological toys such as push-button toys which demonstrate cause and effect. Older children enjoy watching small foam shapes float in the water tray, and see how blowing through a straw moves the shapes around. Children enjoy setting their own challenges in self-initiated play, such as sorting foam shapes by colour and then using them to build a pyramid. Children become very absorbed and have time to extend their play as they choose. Children enjoy messy play and take part in regular dough, sand, water and paint activities. When staff display children's work, they thoughtfully note what children said as they painted, and add these words to the display. Older children enjoy innovative outings to a major art gallery to explore interactive displays. This extends their understanding of art and technology as well as having an interesting excursion around their community. Staff use effective questioning techniques to help children develop their mathematical understanding. For example, they ask older children to collect all the green toy insects, and count how many they have. Staff also use vocabulary such as 'more' and 'taller' to introduce comparative language to the older children.

Senior and more qualified staff act as key persons and they meet with parents to establish children's starting points. All staff write observations of children's achievements and interests and the key person reviews them to track children's learning and set the next steps. The observations are occasionally worded in terms of what the staff have taught, rather than what the child has achieved. For example, after a remembrance themed activity, staff note that 'children learned that conflict solves nothing' rather than describing what the children themselves said. This means that observations do not always reflect what children have actually achieved. The key person for the under-two's room concentrates on the prime areas of learning when reviewing the child's progress. This is an effective preparation for the progress check for two year old children. All reviews happen every three months and parents meet with the key person to agree the next steps. This helps to build an effective learning partnership to support children's development. Where the key person identifies an issue with a child's development, they devise one to one activities, but they are occasionally inappropriate. For example, staff planned an activity to name letters of the alphabet for a two-year-old child with a speech delay which is not appropriate for the child's age and stage of development. However, staff track children's learning against their expected levels of development, which shows that children make steady progress in their learning.

All staff know children well as they share information about care routines with key persons. Parents share detailed information about the care routines for babies, which means staff can comfort children and support their sleep patterns. Staff working with older children know which languages children speak at home and their individual personalities. This means they can provide appropriate support and care. Staff have created suitable learning environments with the majority of toys and equipment stored at child height. This supports children to make choices and self-select activities. However, children's independence is not fully supported because drawers of equipment are mostly labelled with words only, and not pictures. This reduces children's ability to make informed choices in their play. The outdoor area also provides space for an appropriate range of activities such as climbing, using ride-on toys and sand play. There is also an awning which means children can play outside all year round. Materials and equipment include found and natural items such as fir cones and raffia shapes. This means that children can explore different natural textures and materials.

Children benefit from an appropriately healthy lifestyle at the nursery. Meals and snacks are prepared each day on the premises and are made to suit any dietary preferences or allergies. Children can largely serve themselves and staff support them in their feeding skills. Children enjoy a range of fruit and vegetables as a regular part of their meals and snacks, and have water available to drink. Staff are careful of children's hygiene and follow well-established routines. All nappy changes are noted for parents' information. Older children can independently access the toilets to take care of their personal hygiene and they learn to wash their hands appropriately. Staff occasionally take over some aspects of personal care which children could do themselves, such as wiping their faces after meals. This reduces children's opportunities to learn independent self-care skills. Children have suitable opportunities to develop their physical skills. Younger children can pull themselves up onto furniture, use walkers and trolleys to support their mobility skills. Older children enjoy ride-on toys, a climbing frame and opportunities to dig in sand, or carry buckets of sand and water. This helps to develop their strength and physical abilities. All children have smaller items of equipment to manipulate, which helps their small muscle development. For example, children use crayons, paint brushes and pencils in early writing activities and mark-making. Staff support children appropriately to learn about how to keep themselves safe. For example, they ask them to be careful where they ride their tricycles and to all go in the same direction.

Children's behaviour is good. Staff encourage politeness by being good role models and using 'please' and 'thank you' frequently. Children are cooperative when playing together and share their toys and equipment. They understand how to take turns and join in with group activities confidently. Children persist when they encounter a problem. For example, children make several attempts to put a steering wheel on a ride-on toy before asking for help. Children show pride in their achievements. Overall, this means they are steadily acquiring suitable skills to help them in their future learning.

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

The registered person and manager have a suitable understanding of how to meet the safeguarding and welfare requirements. All staff undergo checks as to their suitability as part of the recruitment process. Newly appointed staff members do not have unsupervised contact with children before their suitability checks have been completed. All staff understand the safeguarding policy and know to report any concerns they may have about the welfare of a child. All staff have safeguarding training. Children, staff and visitors are signed in and out at the door, so there is always an accurate record of who is in the building. Staff gather essential information and parental consents when children start at the nursery, which underpins children's welfare. Accident and medication records are accurately maintained. The manager and registered person organise training for staff to develop their skills. For example, staff with a qualification at level two go on to study for their qualification at level three. The manager also organises in-house training and supports staff to carry out the planning and assessment methods in a consistent style. The manager and registered person both work alongside staff in the setting, and so know their skills and strengths. However, there is no established system for providing staff with the support, coaching and training involved in regular supervision. This is a breach of requirements of the Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage. The manager and registered person sometimes send questionnaires to parents to gather their views about the provision, and this contributes to the self-evaluation process. As a result of parent comments, the nursery staff now hold regular parents' evenings. This demonstrates that the management take suitable steps to improve the provision for children's learning and development.

Parents enjoy a strong partnership with the nursery. They receive daily information about their child's care in the communication diary and in verbal handovers. Parents contribute to the diaries so that staff are informed of any changes at home. Parents attend the regular parents' evenings and appreciate being kept informed of their child's learning and development. Staff also provide ideas for complementary activities at home, and have a bank of resources which parents can borrow. The newsletter keeps parents informed of plans and important dates. The nursery has built appropriate partnerships with other day care settings. They keep in contact with the key persons in other settings to share information about the child's learning and development. Staff give the child's learning journal to schools when children go to reception, and talk to children about the change between nursery and school. The manager makes referrals to other professionals such as speech and language therapists where relevant and works with other children's services in the area. This supports the consistent care of children.

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	EY400334
Local authority	Lambeth
Inspection number	909530
Type of provision	
Registration category	Childcare - Non-Domestic
Age range of children	0 - 4
Total number of places	32
Number of children on roll	28
Name of provider	Quinary Ltd
Date of previous inspection	16/02/2011
Telephone number	02073267246

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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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