

Millom Stepping Stones

Millom Pre-School Playgroup, St. Georges Road, MILLOM, Cumbria, LA18 4LE

Inspection date	24/02/2014
Previous inspection date	09/02/2009

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		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

- The quality of teaching is outstanding. Staff plan an excellent variety of exciting and challenging activities undertaken in large groups, small nurture groups and on an individual basis. This variety of teaching methods ensure children are making excellent progress in their learning and development according to their starting points.
- Excellent partnerships with parents and external agencies ensure that children's individual needs are well-known and superbly supported. Staff are extremely proactive in assessing and identifying children with additional needs and ensure they receive excellent support through early intervention from a variety of supportive health and education professionals.
- Managers and staff place the utmost priority upon supporting children's physical, personal, social and emotional development extremely well. They are exceptionally caring, sensitive and skilled in helping children to form secure emotional attachments. This, in turn nurtures children's self-esteem, confidence and overall well-being.
- The inspirational and highly motivated managers have extremely well established and thorough systems in place for monitoring and evaluating staff's professional development and conduct. This ensures all staff receive an excellent level of support and coaching in order to maintain outstanding practice.
- Excellent attention is paid to ensuring children remain safe and secure at all times while at the nursery and on outings.

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 and spoke to children and staff undertaking activities in the two play rooms, the small room and the outdoor play area.
- The inspector conducted a joint observation with the manager.
- The inspector looked at a sample of children's assessment records and planning documentation.
- The inspector checked evidence of suitability and qualifications of the staff, the self-evaluation and monitoring forms and policies and procedures.
- The inspector took account of the views of parents spoken to and by reading a number of questionnaires.

Inspector

Sandra Williams

Full report

Information about the setting

Millom Stepping Stones opened in 2008 and is run by a private limited company. The nursery is registered on the Early Years Register and the compulsory and voluntary parts of the Childcare Register. The nursery operates from a self-contained building adjacent to Park View Nursery School and is in partnership with Millom Children's Centre. Children are cared for in two rooms and have access to an enclosed outdoor play area. Children also have use of the sensory room based in the children's centre. The nursery serves the immediate locality and also the surrounding areas. It opens five days a week from 7am until 6pm all year round except on bank holidays and Christmas. Children attend for a variety of sessions. There are currently 90 children on roll in the early years age range. The nursery receives funding for the provision of free early education for two-, three- and four-year-old children. The nursery supports a number of children with special educational needs and/or disabilities. There are currently 18 staff working directly with the children, all of whom have appropriate early years qualifications at level 3 and 2. The manager and another member of staff hold early years qualifications at level 4. The nursery receives support from the local authority and is a member of the Pre-School Learning Alliance.

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 partnerships with parents by finding further ways of encouraging all parents to consistently contribute information about their children's learning at home to enrich the planning for their ongoing learning at the nursery.

Inspection judgements

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

The quality of teaching is outstanding. Managers and staff have an excellent understanding of how to support young children to achieve the best they can in their learning and development. They have high expectations of themselves and the children, and therefore, plan high quality and challenging activities and experiences for all children. Staff recognise the uniqueness of all children in their care and plan individually according to the children's interests and abilities. Key persons are extremely effective in establishing warm relationships with the children, which helps them to settle quickly and happily. They gather information about the children's individual interests and learning needs from the parents when they first start attending. From this information, staff assess and identify children's starting points and ongoing developmental stages extremely well. They undertake regular observations and precise assessments of the children and use this information to plan for their individual next steps in their learning. Additionally, through the highly comprehensive completion of the progress check at age two years, any identified delays in children's development are promptly identified. Staff provide superb

support to children with special educational needs and/or disabilities through organising early intervention and involvement from other agencies such as health and education professionals. Exceptionally effective working relationships between the staff, parents and other agencies results in children receiving sensitive and highly individualised support and one to one attention and teaching. This helps them make exceptional progress given their starting points. Staff have highly successful methods of engaging parents in their children's learning when they first attend and thereafter on an ongoing basis. Most parents provide photographs and written information about children's achievements at home to add to their learning journals. These are used to provide a complete picture of children's overall development. This joint approach supports the children extremely well to make very rapid and exceptional progress in their learning towards the early learning goals. Staff recognise that these already excellent partnerships with most parents may be improved even further by finding additional ways of encouraging all parents to consistently contribute information about their children's learning at home to further enrich the planning for their ongoing learning at the nursery.

Staff are extremely skilled in working with children in a variety of situations. They successfully engage large groups of children in circle times and singing sessions and their enthusiasm and excellent teaching skills ensure all children are included and remain focused throughout the sessions. They also recognise that some quieter and less confident children benefit from interacting in smaller, more intimate groups. Therefore the staff have established 'nurture groups'. These are designed to fully enhance children's communication and language skills in a quiet environment in order to give them the extra support and help them to develop their confidence and self-esteem in a sensitive way. Some children requiring more individual support are provided with individual sessions. These different approaches are highly effective in meeting the individual learning needs of all children and demonstrates the flexibility and inclusiveness of this nurturing and welcoming nursery. The pre-school staff work extremely closely with staff at the adjoining nursery school. Regular meetings take place to discuss the progress of the children who attend both settings. Shared targets and next steps in their learning are agreed and displayed on the wall to ensure consistency and cohesion in their learning. They ensure the teaching methods, such as phonics are consistent in both settings, which fully supports children's excellent progress in their communication and language development.

Staff are extremely effective in asking children open questions and provide them with ample time to think and respond in their own time. They are encouraged to think critically and to problem solve. For example, staff place small objects into cubes of ice and ask the children to solve the problem of how they can get the objects out of the ice cubes. The children demonstrate excellent problem solving skills by trying different methods and utensils to break the ice. The activity evolves and children talk about their knowledge that when ice melts it turns to water. They realised that if they waited for the ice to melt, the objects inside the ice cubes would be accessible. This type of activity provides children with excellent learning opportunities to think critically and work together to solve problems and to gain an understanding of the natural world around them. It also demonstrates the staff's excellent approach to guiding children's play without taking over, resulting in children developing high levels of creativity and maintaining focus on the activity for some time. Children thoroughly enjoy helping themselves to resources in the craft area and develop their creativity. Some children enjoy taking powder paints outside and mix them

in puddles of water. They then begin to spontaneously make marks as they roll toy cars through the puddles of paint. The cosy reading corners are inviting and encourage children to have a keen interest in books. The excellent use of props enhance children's interest in story time even more. These activities along with the excellent links with local nurseries and schools thoroughly prepare children for the next stage in their learning.

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

The nursery is extremely stimulating, welcoming and bright. Children are warmly welcomed by the highly enthusiastic and friendly staff. All children have their own key person with whom they develop extremely close and affectionate bonds. This supports their emotional well-being exceedingly well. Staff are highly skilled and experienced in working with children and they sensitively support them to settle happily at nursery by using carefully planned introductions and settling-in sessions. All key persons take great care to make sure they forge close working relationships and excellent communication with parents. Key persons have an extremely good understanding of all children's individual care needs and routines. As a result, children are settled and exceptionally happy in their care. Consequently, they are extremely confident, independent and self-assured individuals. They very confidently explore the environment and happily make choices and decisions about their play from the extensive range of resources available to them. Staff have excellent procedures in place to support less confident and quieter children by use of nurture groups. They also provide excellent support for children in their transitions within the nursery and ensure that they are emotionally well prepared when it is time for them to move on to school.

Staff fully support children to gain excellent levels of confidence in social situations and in forming positive relationships with other children. They encourage positive behaviour by calmly explaining the importance of sharing and ensuring that all children develop skills in playing harmoniously with each other. Children thrive because of the positive praise the staff offer to support their confidence and well-being, therefore, children feel valued and respected. Children are taught from an early age to recognise and begin to understand emotions through stories and activities. Children learn to keep themselves safe and effectively learn to take risks in a safe manner. For example, staff encourage children to develop skills in using items, such as scissors during craft activities and they are taught to be careful so that they do not harm themselves or others. Children's all-round development is progressing exceptionally well, including their independent self-care skills. Staff have high expectations of the children which empowers them and builds their confidence to think for themselves and 'have a go' to do things for themselves. For example, they dress themselves before playing outside and they pour their own drinks at meal times requiring minimum assistance from staff. They have an excellent understanding of healthy lifestyles and hygiene practices. For example, they independently wash and dry their hands after using the toilet. Staff teach children about the importance of good hygiene practices as they follow thorough nappy changing routines. Children learn about where food comes from as they help to grow vegetables and herbs outside. Meal times are pleasant and sociable occasions when children learn good manners and engage in conversations with each other. For example, while enjoying their lunches they share stories with each other about their morning experiences. Children's physical health and

development is promoted exceptionally well as staff provide them with excellent opportunities to access fresh air and exercise in the wonderful outdoor play area.

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

The managers and staff have an excellent understanding and knowledge of how to meet the safeguarding and welfare requirements of the Statutory framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage. All staff have undertaken safeguarding training and have a thorough understanding of what to do should they have concerns about a child. The safeguarding policy includes procedures to be followed if there are allegations made against staff members and also regarding the use of mobile telephones and social network sites. When appointing staff to work at the nursery extremely robust vetting procedures are undertaken including Disclosure and Barring Service checks on all staff to ensure that they are safe to work with young children. The managers have extremely high standards and only appoint high quality, qualified, experienced and motivated staff. Excellent and established induction systems are effective in ensuring all staff fully understand and implement the nursery policies and procedures. Rigorous monitoring of staff performance and conduct is well established. Annual appraisals and regular staff supervisions and peer observations are undertaken to monitor the continued professional development and training needs of staff. Weekly staff meetings as well as regular training effectively support staff well in their daily work with the children. Managers have procedures in place to tackle under performance, which they do not hesitate to implement when necessary. Due to the vigilance and excellent care provided by the staff, children remain extremely safe and secure in the nursery and outdoor area. The managers ensure that the correct staff to child ratios are adhered to at all times and often exceed the requirements. Great care is taken to ensure that staff are effectively deployed so that children are always well-supervised and have their individual needs met extremely well. Robust risk assessments and rigorous daily safety checks undertaken inside and outside minimise hazards in order to reduce the risk of accidents to children. Thorough procedures for dealing with accidents are stringently followed. All staff are trained in paediatric first aid and are, therefore, prepared to deal with any accidents or medical emergencies should they arise.

The managers and staff have an outstanding understanding of the learning and development requirements of the Statutory framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage. The outstanding standard of teaching by all staff results in children being highly motivated and enthusiastic learners. Consequently, all children are making excellent progress in their learning and development given their starting points. The managers meet with the staff regularly to discuss their key children's progress and to monitor the children's learning journals. They check that staff plan for children's next steps in their learning and that these are consistently followed through thoroughly. The managers also monitor the progress of groups of children in order to identify patterns and close any gaps in their learning. The managers are extremely enthusiastic and motivated in their work and this has a positive impact upon the staff moral and attitude towards maintaining exceptionally high standards of care and education for their key children.

Partnerships between staff and parents are excellent. Parents' comments are extremely

positive and include examples, such as 'Staff are genuinely interested in my child's development and his language has developed brilliantly'. Many parents comment on how well their children are progressing and how involved they feel in their children's learning. The reception area has an abundance of useful information for parents to read. Partnership working with external agencies and professionals, such as, speech and language therapists, health visitors and staff based in the local schools and children's centre are extremely effective in ensuring that children are receiving the best possible, consistent care and education. Managers are constantly striving to provide excellence in the service they provide. They constantly and proactively seek the views of children and parents to contribute to their thorough evaluation and have a clear and well-targeted plan of action for future developments, which includes building an extension to create a separate '2-3s room'. The manager and staff work closely with the local authority advisors and are extremely receptive to any suggestions for future developments. This highlights the commitment and eagerness to strive for excellence at all times.

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	EY370536
Local authority	Cumbria
Inspection number	955382
Type of provision	
Registration category	Childcare - Non-Domestic
Age range of children	0 - 17
Total number of places	42
Number of children on roll	90
Name of provider	Millom Stepping Stones
Date of previous inspection	09/02/2009
Telephone number	01229 775 834

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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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