

Stepping Stones

Mondeor, Hoddlesden Road, Hoddlesden, Darwen, Lancashire, BB3 3LR

Inspection date

26/06/2014

Previous inspection date

19/08/2013

The quality and standards of the early years provision

This inspection:

2

Previous inspection:

4

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

- Parent partnerships are strong. Parents are involved in children's assessment and learning, which ensures that children's needs are well met.
- Teaching is good because staff have a good knowledge and understanding of how young children learn. This means they plan a range of activities that help children to make good progress in their learning and development.
- Babies and children's emotional well-being is well promoted. Staff sensitively help children to form secure attachments and this enables children to develop and increase their confidence and independence.
- There are robust safeguarding policies and procedures in place which are fully understood by everyone in the team. Children are therefore safeguarded well at the nursery.

It is not yet outstanding because

- There is scope to provide more opportunities outside for older children to experiment with numbers and become more familiar with numerals, in order to strengthen their interest in mathematics.
- Opportunities to further promote children's independence at mealtimes are not always encouraged.

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 interaction with staff.
- The inspector spoke with the registered provider, the nursery manager, individual staff and children at appropriate times throughout the inspection.
- The inspector carried out a joint observation with the manager.
- The inspector observed children's activities throughout the visit both inside and outside.
- The inspector checked evidence of suitability and qualifications of staff working with children, the policies and procedures for the nursery and the documented self-evaluation systems that support the service.
- The inspector took into account the views of parents and carers on the day.

Inspector

Sue Rae

Full report

Information about the setting

Stepping Stones is an established nursery and was registered in 1994. It is registered on the Early Years Register and the compulsory and voluntary parts of the Childcare Register and is situated in Hoddlesden, Darwen. The nursery serves the local area and is accessible to all children. It operates from three main rooms and a fourth library room, in converted premises and there is an enclosed area available for outdoor play. The nursery employs nine members of childcare staff. Of these, seven hold appropriate early years qualifications at level 3 and one at level 6. There is also an Early Years Professional employed. The nursery opens Monday to Friday, all year round, from 8am until 5.30pm. Children attend for a variety of sessions. There are currently 50 children attending, all of whom are within 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 Early Years Quality Development team at 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 stimulating learning environment outside to enable older children to extend their understanding of mathematics and experiment with matching numbers, numerals and objects, for example, by further reflecting numbers and numerals as labels
- review and develop procedures at mealtimes in the pre-school room to ensure that children are able to be as independence as possible, for example, by providing opportunities for children to self-serve and pour their own drink.

Inspection judgements

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

Children are welcomed into the friendly and warm environment where they show that they feel safe and secure. They clearly enjoy learning through play, eagerly choosing what they wish to do from the varied range of resources offered. Children demonstrate a positive approach to learning, supported by the cheerful interactions of the staff caring for them. Attentive staff play alongside the children offering gentle support and encouragement, extending children's learning with individual attention. Information gathered by the key person when children first attend provides a good base for establishing children's starting points in learning. This enables staff to plan for individual children's progress from their earliest days in the nursery. As a result, children settle quickly because staff understand their needs well and meet them consistently. Staff have a secure knowledge of how children learn. Through individual planning and identification of children's next steps in

learning by staff, children make good progress considering their starting points, age and capabilities. This information is also used to inform the required progress check for children between the ages of two and three years is shared with parents. Staff plan activities and opportunities together as a team, taking into consideration the children's interests. Good quality information regarding children's needs and the activities they take part in is shared. Parents are actively involved in contributing to their children's development through daily discussions and parents' evenings. Parents questionnaires are provided to encourage parents to share their likes or dislikes about the nursery and anything they would like to change.

All areas of the nursery are well organised to allow children to select activities for themselves. Inspiring displays of children's work give them a sense of being valued resulting in their confidence and esteem being promoted. A well-organised balance of adult- and child-led activities means children learn to explore, to think and learn to play together. Through social occasions, such as lunchtime children develop their personal, social and emotional skills. Children enjoy the social aspect of their time at the nursery, becoming independent and confident individuals. However, there are fewer instances at mealtimes to enable pre-school children to be more independent. For example, they do not help prepare their snack or hand it out, or pour their own drinks. Babies and young infants are effectively supported during mealtimes and are provided with opportunities to feed themselves using their fingers and spoons. Children are able to move around freely and have access to a well-resourced secure outside space where they can use a wide range of toys and equipment to promote their physical development, which is progressing very well. They show confidence and an awareness of safety in exploring the outside space, balancing, climbing and riding bicycles. Children clearly enjoy taking part at story time as they enthusiastically talk about who has been on an aeroplane and discuss who is going where on holiday. Access to a range of writing materials allows all children to explore their early writing skills. Children confidently explore and experiment with the flour, water and colouring. They investigate the feel and touch of the ingredients as they mix them together and watch what happens. Staff introduce new words to describe the textures they make, for example, 'gooey', 'sticky', 'sloppy', developing their vocabulary. Children share the resources and discuss what they are making with each other. Children count confidently as they build and construct making towers and designing their own creations. Therefore, their mathematical skills of shape, space and measure are promoted.

Staff are committed to ensuring that all children within the nursery receive the highest standard of care and learning. Children are secure in communicating their needs and preferences and they confidently approach the staff to ask for help when needed. Babies move freely and confidently explore their environment. They use furniture to support their standing and the emergence of early walking skills. Babies have plenty of sensory opportunities to learn about their world. They freely explore and investigate the boxes of resources, fascinated as they push the beads along the wire, developing their coordination. These activities support children's early physical development and promote their knowledge and understanding of the world around them. Children are active and animated learners, who are developing the skills and attitudes needed to prepare them for their next stage of learning, such as moving on to school.

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

Staff are positive role models, who are calm and caring in all their interactions with children. They have a good understanding of expectations of children's behaviour, taking account of their individual needs and stage of development. They support children exceedingly well in developing their understanding of differences and promote caring attitudes. Staff recognise and offer praise for their kindness and their very positive behaviour. The key-person system is successful and ensures that children feel secure and safe, enabling them to confidently explore and develop their independence. The environment in each of the children's areas provides a good range of age-appropriate toys, games and resources which are easily accessible to children to promote their learning. All children show an extremely strong sense of belonging within the nursery and are developing a good understanding of how to manage risks and challenges relative to their age. For example staff support children to stay safe when using the bicycles. They explain where it is safe to ride their bicycles, to keep themselves and others safe. Children's physical development is supported very well. Staff support younger children as they take their first steps or refine their skills using furniture and soft play equipment. All children benefit from access to an outdoor play area. Here they enjoy a good range of activities, such as, a mud kitchen, wheeled toys, balancing on tyres and digging and planting activities. However, there is scope for the outdoor area to be further enhanced to allow older children opportunities to develop further their understanding of mathematics, for example, by reflecting numbers and numerals as labels. Their self-esteem, confidence and emotional security are well supported through staff acknowledging their individual needs and traits.

Behaviour across all age ranges within the nursery is excellent. Staff ably teach children from an early age about the importance of sharing and turn taking. They gently guide children as they talk about this, supporting them through distraction and encourage them to join in with other toys. Older children demonstrate their understanding as they take turns and listen to each other. They work together showing effective negotiating skills as they cooperate to share the role play resources. Other children show how they work extremely well independently as they engage in practising their skills, colouring and designing their pirate hats. Children show a significant understanding of responsibility within the nursery as they confidently follow routines. They wash their hands before snack and eagerly and expertly tidy up at suitable times.

Children relish the home-cooked meals which are prepared onsite. Appetising, nutritionally balanced meals take account of children's allergies and dietary requirements so that only suitable foods are offered. Snacks are equally healthy and ensure that children's energy levels are topped up as the day progresses. All children have access to drinks throughout the day helping to keep them hydrated. Children learn excellent self-care skills as they learn to be independent by putting on their own coats and choosing to play outdoors. Nappy changing procedures for babies and young children are unique to each child and staff are sensitive with them. For children at the potty training stage, staff work exceptionally well with parents and at the child's pace, sensitively assisting them to adjust to new routines. Staff skilfully support children's transition both within the nursery and to school. Transition within the nursery is at children's pace, working with parents. Regular

visits to the new room with their key person enable children to form a bond to develop with the new key person. Staff support this as they make the move gradually, enabling children to feel comfortable and at ease. This means their emotional well-being is truly supported. Parents and children are well prepared for the next stage in their learning and development as the nursery supports them in making the move to school. They develop confidence in various social situations, which prepares them for moving on. Good links with local schools ensures that children's interests and needs are effectively met. Links with other outside agencies are well established.

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

Staff are confident of their responsibilities to safeguard children. They know the procedures to follow and fully understand, who to report any concerns to. The designated safeguarding officer provides leadership in this field. All staff complete first aid and safeguarding training and this is regularly updated. High priority is given to children's safety. Staff ratios are good and children are well supervised. Staff are sufficiently deployed throughout the nursery to ensure children's needs are effectively met. Since the last inspection, the nursery has made significant improvements. For example, the accident recording system had been updated to ensure that each report is signed by a manager. Each week a policy is reviewed by the whole staff team to ensure that all staff are up-to-date with any amendments. The nursery has comprehensive policies and procedures in place that successfully underpin the nursery's daily practice. A robust recruitment and vetting process is in place to check and monitor staff's suitability to work with children. All staff and students receive induction training and a checklist monitors they have been informed of all the relevant policies and practices. A written risk assessment is reviewed annually and comprehensive individual risk assessments are carried out for new activities and for each outing outside the nursery. Legally required records for children's welfare are accurately maintained, such as children's attendance records and medical records.

The management team have a detailed understanding of their roles and responsibilities with regard to meeting all requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage. Through effective monitoring of the educational programmes, the management team ensures that children are provided with a wide range of challenging experiences to support their good progress towards the early learning goals. The staff team are continually reflecting on what they do to improve the quality of the provision. Appraisal and self-evaluation sessions offer staff support and identify opportunities for professional development. Staff have good opportunities to pursue training and develop their professional skills. The self-evaluation processes identify the nursery's strengths and target plans are in place to secure further improvements. Children and parents are involved in the process their views are actively listened to and their ideas and suggestions implemented.

Partnerships with other agencies are well embedded. Positive relationships with parents are effectively established, ensuring each child's needs are met. The owner and manager recognises the importance of these partnerships and continually strives to find new ways

to encourage parent involvement. For example, the introduction of social media provides parents a daily update on the activities their children have been involved in. Parents spoken to on the day of the inspection indicated that they are 'very happy with the nursery' and that 'their children love their time in the nursery'.

The Childcare Register

The requirements for the compulsory part of the Childcare Register are	Met
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The requirements for the voluntary part of the Childcare Register are	Met
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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	301673
Local authority	Blackburn
Inspection number	936303
Type of provision	
Registration category	Childcare - Non-Domestic
Age range of children	0 - 17
Total number of places	26
Number of children on roll	50
Name of provider	Stepping Stones Nursery (Hoddlesden) Limited
Date of previous inspection	19/08/2013
Telephone number	01254 702 013

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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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