

Stepping Stones Nursery & Preschool

6 Arundel Avenue, Liverpool, Merseyside, L17 3DA

Inspection date	30/06/2014
Previous inspection date	29/01/2009

The quality and standards of the early years provision	This inspection:	4
	Previous inspection:	3
How well the early years provision meets the needs of the range of children who attend		4
The contribution of the early years provision to the well-being of children		4
The effectiveness of the leadership and management of the early years provision		4

The quality and standards of the early years provision

This provision is inadequate

- There are inadequate systems in place to ensure that staff have been appropriately vetted and checked, to ensure their suitability to work with children. As a result, children are not fully safeguarded and their welfare is compromised.
- The provider is not consistently meeting the adult-to-child ratio requirements. This means staffing arrangements do not always meet the needs of children at all times.
- Babies do not have enough suitable resources to support their needs. There are very limited natural materials, to support their need for exploratory play.
- Practitioners do not adequately support communication and language skills. This results in children not being sufficiently challenged in this area of learning.
- Systems to supervise and mentor practitioners are weak. This results in their training and professional development needs not being identified or met.

It has the following strengths

- Practitioners are good role models and treat children with kindness and respect. This ensures that children's behaviour is good and they play happily with their peers.
- Practitioners encourage children to develop self-help skills, which means that they are making progress in getting ready for school.

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 checked all relevant documentation and scrutinised requested policies and procedures including those for safeguarding and recruitment of practitioners.
- The inspector looked at children's records, learning journals, observation, assessment and planning documentation.
- The inspector checked evidence of practitioners' suitability to work with children, the provider's self-evaluation and action plans in place, to secure continued improvement.
- The inspector toured the premises and observed children learning indoors and outdoors.
- The inspector took into account the views of parents spoken to on the day and from their written comments.

Inspector

Lynnette Kobus

Full report

Information about the setting

Stepping Stones Nursery and Preschool was registered in 2003 and is on the Early Years Register. It is privately owned and situated in the Aigburth district of Liverpool. Children have access to an outside play area. The setting employs six practitioners, all of whom have appropriate early years qualifications at level 3. There are currently 35 children on roll in the early years age group. The setting is open from Monday to Friday all year round, from 8.15am to 5.30pm. Children attend from the local area. The setting supports children who speak English as an additional language and children who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. The setting provides funded early education for two-, three- and four-year-old children.

What the setting needs to do to improve further

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

- ensure practitioner arrangements meet the needs of all children, at all times of the day, and that the staff-to-child ratio requirements set out in the safeguarding and welfare requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage are consistently maintained
- ensure that robust recruitment procedures are always implemented, including the taking up of written references for new practitioners
- develop practitioners' teaching skills so that activities meet children's individual needs and interests, also provide suitable challenge to encourage good progress, with particular regard to developing children's communication and language.
- ensure that there are suitable resources for babies to support their needs, so that they are best supported to make good progress in their learning and development
- develop a robust system for supervising and mentoring practitioners, to ensure that their training and professional development needs are met.

Inspection judgements

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

Teaching is often weak because some practitioners have a poor understanding of how to implement the learning and development requirements of the Early Years Foundation

Stage. For example, they do not always consider the different ways that children learn and reflect these in their practice. The impact of this is that children's learning and development needs are not always met. This is particularly evident for babies, where there are limited natural resources indoors. This means that babies' exploratory play needs are not given high enough consideration. Furthermore, the layout of the room, which is too cluttered, means that free-flow play is limited, which impacts upon babies to develop their physical skills.

Individual learning and development records are in place for children, and these are shared with parents to help engage them in their children's learning at home. Practitioners provide children with activities that cover all areas of learning, although they do not always fully extend and challenge the children's learning. For example, they do not ask children questions, to help them to make connections in their thinking, or help children with their problem solving. This limits opportunities for children to develop the characteristics of being effective learners. A range of planned activities for toddlers and pre-school children help them to develop their physical skills. For example, children use large arm movements outdoors, as they paint the walls with water and brushes, ride bikes and use the climbing frame.

Procedures are in place to support the language and communication skills of children who speak English as an additional language, and for children who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. Parents are included in their child's learning, for example, practitioners gain key words from parents and use these to help support their communication skills. However, some practitioners are not as skilled in engaging children during activities, and do not adapt their teaching style to meet children's individual needs and interests. This means that they are not fully supporting children in making progress, especially in communication and language skills.

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

Children are warmly welcomed on arrival to the setting, which helps them to settle quickly. Children form suitable emotional attachments with their key person, which provides a solid foundation to develop children's self-confidence. Practitioners act as good role models, helping children to learn about the importance of good hygiene routines, such as washing their hands before lunch and after toileting. Children are able to manage their own self-care appropriate to their age because practitioners provide good guidance and give them time to complete tasks. For example, children are able to individually serve themselves a range of foods and use cutlery independently. Practitioner arrangements do not always meet the legal adult-to-child ratio requirements. As a result, children are inadequately supervised and supported and so their learning, safety and emotional needs are not consistently met. Furthermore, practitioners spend time cleaning the rooms after lunch, which means that they are not engaging appropriately with children during this time.

Children's behaviour is generally good and practitioners encourage polite interactions between the children. Practitioners speak calmly to the children and model the use of manners, such as using 'please' and 'thank you'. Children are encouraged to help with putting away their toys and art resources. This means that children are learning to look

after their environment and be considerate towards others. Children have access to a suitably resourced outdoor area, where they challenge themselves to climb higher and complete obstacle courses. Therefore, children learn to take manageable risks and gain confidence as their skills improve. Generally, good transitions are in place and children are supported as they prepare for change. For example, as children prepare for school, the setting shares tracking information with schools, and completes a transition document to inform teachers about each child's level of attainment. Practitioners also talk positively to children about the schools they will be starting in September. This helps children to prepare emotionally for school.

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

Leadership and management are inadequate because the manager has insufficient understanding of the safeguarding and welfare requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage. This has a significant impact on children's safety and well-being. A stable and appropriately qualified practitioner team is employed. However, those in charge do not have a record to confirm all practitioners have been vetted and checked regarding their suitability to work with children. Furthermore, the manager does not always take a reference for new practitioners. This is a failure to meet legal requirements and potentially places children at risk. In addition, practitioner arrangements do not always meet the legal adult-to-child ratio requirements. As a result, children are inadequately supervised and supported and so their learning, safety and emotional needs are not consistently met. Overall, practitioners have a basic understanding of child protection procedures and can talk about early signs of possible abuse or neglect. A safeguarding policy is in place, which includes guidance on the appropriate and safe use of mobile telephones and cameras. Risk assessments are carried out for the playrooms and all other areas in the setting used by children, so that any hazards in the environment are identified and minimised.

Ineffective monitoring of practitioners means that the variable quality of practitioner practice is not identified or addressed by managers. Weak aspects of teaching and learning are not recognised, and so are not being challenged. Although practitioners have appropriate qualifications, they do not use their knowledge and experience well to promote children's learning and development, in particular, how to provide appropriate opportunities to support communication and language development. There is also insufficient understanding of what resources could be provided to support babies' all-round learning and development. Practitioners have not had sufficient training to support their understanding of how to meet children's learning needs, which means that children are not being challenged effectively. The management team monitor the delivery of the education programme and the overall provision. They have identified some areas for development and have put in place action plans to improve the provision. However, this has not been sufficient to ensure that key weaknesses are identified and promptly addressed.

Practitioners maintain suitable relationships with parents, and children's experiences are shared with parents verbally on a daily basis. Parents spoken to at the time of the

inspection state that practitioners are friendly and approachable. They feel that their children's needs are addressed, and as a result, children settle quickly and are content and happy. Links with other settings are in place as the setting is fully aware of the importance of liaising with other professionals, if necessary, to ensure the continuity of care and help to prepare children for school.

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	EY274200
Local authority	Liverpool
Inspection number	877648
Type of provision	
Registration category	Childcare - Non-Domestic
Age range of children	0 - 5
Total number of places	33
Number of children on roll	35
Name of provider	Stepping Stones Nursery & Preschool Partnership
Date of previous inspection	29/01/2009
Telephone number	0151 734 2676

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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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