

Stepping Stones Day Nursery

74 Eling Lane, Totton, Southampton, Hampshire, SO40 9GF

Inspection date	29/10/2014
Previous inspection date	28/10/2009

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

- Children are offered a substantial range of challenging activities and highly stimulating resources that engage their interest and which cover all areas of learning to a high standard.
- Staff are enthusiastic and put the children at the heart of all that they do. Children thrive under the care of this inspiring staff team, so their needs are met exceptionally well, their welfare is protected and they make excellent progress.
- Staff have an extensive knowledge of how young children develop and learn which allows them to plan an exceptional range of experiences that help every child reaches their full potential.
- The enthusiasm and passion of all the staff is evident, team work is strong and teaching is of a consistently high quality. Monitoring and evaluation drive improvement successfully, for the children's benefit.

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 the interaction between the staff and children.
- The inspector undertook a joint observation with the deputy manager.
- The inspector spoke to children, parents and staff to ascertain their thoughts on the nursery.
- The inspector sampled some paperwork which included records kept on the children.
- The inspector spent time in all the rooms and in the garden.

Inspector

Amanda Shedden

Full report

Information about the setting

Stepping Stones Day Nursery opened in 1997 and registered with Ofsted in 2001. It operates from a converted house in a residential area of Eling in the Totton area of Southampton. The house is divided into units for children under and over two years old. Children have access to an enclosed rear garden for outside play. Children attending come from a wide surrounding area. The nursery is registered on the Early Years Register. It currently has 72 children on roll. This includes two-, three- and four-year-olds who are funded for free early education. The nursery supports children for who learn English as an additional language and children who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. The nursery is open from 8am to 6pm on Monday to Friday, for 50 weeks of the year. The nursery operates occasionally on a Saturday for special events. There are 17 staff working with the children. All staff hold recognised 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:

- reconsider the organisation of snack times to have the highest expectations of children in developing their independence, such as by encouraging each child to prepare their own food as often as possible, and by considering whether the time available for snack can be extended so that all children can take their snack when they wish, to avoid waiting.

Inspection judgements

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

All children have access to a wide range of interesting indoor and outdoor activities that stimulate their interest and help to develop enquiring minds. Provision is outstanding because it is accurately tailored to meet each child's individual needs so that they make excellent progress in all aspects of their learning and development. Parents are engaged in their children's assessment as soon as they join the setting and continue throughout their time at nursery including for the check on progress for two-year-olds. This results in the parents being fully involved with the key persons who plan their children's progression.

Staff have a comprehensive understanding of the Early Years Foundation Stage, which they use productively in their planning to ensure that all aspects of learning are covered. To achieve this they carefully track each child's progress through detailed observations and keep comprehensive records, including notes, samples of work and photographs.

Babies are affectionately supervised by caring staff who constantly talk to them to stimulate their language and understanding. They are content, happy and confident. They

are offered a purposeful range of varied activities which promote quick development. Staff provide babies with rich experiences, such as encouraging them to use their senses as they explore a pumpkin. Staff support them by holding them and talking to them quietly as they touch and smell it expanding the language they hear as they describe how the pumpkin feels and smells. Staff allow babies to do this at their own pace. Some are very keen, while others stand back at first but with gentle encouragement start to engage in the activity. The high staff to child ratio in the room results in young children being fully supported and extremely well stimulated.

Older children thrive in the rich learning environment available to them. It means children are very enthusiastic and they initiate many of the activities. Staff are diligent in supporting their learning. They use effective conversations to help to develop and extend children's communication skills. Children talk confidently to adults and to each other. They enjoy beginning to count and make early attempts at writing, gaining valuable skills for their future lives. Staff do not always have the highest expectations of children, particularly at snack time in regard to gaining personal skills.

In story time children show that they listen well and are beginning to ask questions. Children are in charge of deciding where they would like to play, outside or in one of the three extensively resourced rooms. The effective deployment and engagement of the enthusiastic staff results in children always having an adult who is happy to engage with them. Staff use skilful questioning to encourage children to think for themselves and contribute their own knowledge and ideas. They motivate and challenge children well across all areas of learning, which helps them to make links in their learning and be ready for their next stage of development.

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

The nursery uses allocates each child a member of staff who takes special care of them and this approach is fully integrated across the nursery. It is highly effective and has a significant impact on children's well-being and development because it helps children to form secure attachments with staff, It builds children's confidence and self-esteem, resulting in them being emotionally extremely well prepared for their next stage of learning.

Staff teach children about healthy lifestyles and staying safe through the well established nursery routine, and through engaging experiences. For example, children grow a range of vegetables and they often eat the produce they have grown. Children enjoy eating freshly cooked food each day. The nursery chef ensures that their meals are healthy and meet any dietary requirements; clear systems are in place so that children are prevented from accessing foods they should not have. Children have named water bottles readily accessible to them so they can help themselves if thirsty. Some children help prepare food for snack, such as cutting up the banana and counting how many pieces they have. They choose when to have snack and their independence encouraged as they pour their own drinks. However, staff do not make the most of snack time by having the highest expectations of children and promoting their independence as well as possible, such as

encouraging everyone to prepare their own food. While children choose when they would like to have snack, some have to wait owing to the way this time is organised. Exercise is encouraged throughout the day and children have plenty of time to play outside. They start each session with a Wake and Shake activity to energise the children to be ready for the busy day ahead.

Children's behaviour is outstanding. Children respond well to adults expectations, and interact cooperatively with each other. Staff are extremely sensitive to the needs of the children. They listen carefully to any upset children, acknowledge their feelings and help them move on from their distress, so children learn to trust staff. Each day the older children sit and discuss the nursery's rules, calling them out, including the one that must not be forgotten which is to 'have fun'. Innovative strategies are in place to build on the children's self-esteem. For example, staff send 'happy notes' home for children to share their successes with their parents.

Staff plan the nursery environment to provide children with highly stimulating spaces, indoors and out. The garden is a child's wonderland of readily accessible varied resources, which include a range of natural materials, such as logs to balance on. There are displays for example of the types of wild life they may see in the garden, to encourage learning. There are sheltered areas within the garden so that even the babies can be outside in bad weather and enjoy exploring the good quality resources. Indoors the children have different rooms which have been thoughtfully resourced offering children variety. Rooms are designated for particular play types, such as messy activities, so that excellent use is made of the available space. Staff are effectively deployed so there is a constant focus on the learning and well-being of all children, while maintaining their safety.

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

The leadership and management of the nursery is inspirational. Leaders have an excellent understanding of the Early Years Foundation Stage and of their responsibility to ensure that they meet all the requirements. This they achieve to an excellent standard. The senior management team works exceptionally hard to oversee, encourage and develop the service they provide. They inspire excellent team working throughout the nursery which includes not only staff but parents and children. All the staff and the senior management team are passionate and knowledgeable about their work. The owner has extremely high aspirations and all aspects of the provision are carefully monitored.

All staff have an accurate understanding of their responsibility to ensure that children are safeguarded. All staff undertake safeguarding training on a regular basis. This, together with their comprehensive understanding of the policy, ensures they know what to do should they have a concern about the welfare of a child or the behaviour of a member of staff. Staff have ready access to the contact numbers of external agencies, so know how to raise any concerns with them, including if unhappy with management's handling of a situation. Children play in a secure environment and staff carry out meticulous daily risk assessments to ensure that hazards are minimised to keep children safe. Robust

recruitment procedures check that only suitable staff are appointed. Each new member of staff has a thorough induction, which includes all aspects of provision.

Management has high expectations of staff. There are highly effective systems to support the staff, whether they are still in training or are fully qualified. Staff are encouraged to undertake regular training to develop their skills and knowledge further. Senior management observe and evaluate staff practice regularly to ensure that they achieve the highest standards. There is a clear focus on raising the quality of teaching and checking its consistency across the nursery through careful monitoring

Management has extensive and precise knowledge of the learning programmes that the staff plan for the children and they track the progress carefully of every child. This enables them to effectively check the education programme and identify any gaps in children's learning or experiences immediately.

Staff, parents and children contribute to the nursery's self-evaluation. Members of the management team use this information, as well as their own checking systems, to analyse strengths and weaknesses and to create detailed action plans. They continually look at their practice and the service they offer to families and make many improvements throughout the year. Recently, they have added mud experiences in the outdoor area and expanded the sensory experiences for the young children. The staff continually evaluate their practice. Any changes in the nursery, such as new activities, are assessed in terms of the outcomes for children. Staff members feel a sense of ownership because they take responsibility for an area of development to improve the outcomes for children in it.

Partnership with parents and others is exceptional and is a significant strength of the nursery. Extensive ongoing information is exchanged between the nursery staff and parents promoting continuity of care and learning. Daily discussions with the child's key worker share worthwhile information between the nursery and home. Parents are offered a wealth of information about child development, activities to do at home with their child, resources to help them with different stages, such as moving on to school, or weaning.

Parents are extremely happy with the nursery and state that their children, 'love coming here'. They are fully aware of their child's progress and state the staff are excellent. They are kept fully informed about many aspects of the nursery life. The menu is displayed so they can see what meals their children will be offered, and can tell staff if children do not like something, so children always have something to eat. Parents are invited in twice yearly for meetings with staff, to information evenings and to Saturday stay and play sessions during the year. Such communication helps parents understand what staff do and why, so they can help their children at home.

The staff team has effective communications with other agencies involved with the children or for children who attend elsewhere. They access help and support for those children with any additional needs, so they receive the aid they need and progress quickly.

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. We re-inspect nurseries and pre-schools judged as requires improvement within 12 months of the date of 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		There were no children present at the time of the inspection. The inspection judgement is that the provider continues to meet the requirements for registration.
Not met		There were no children present at the time of the inspection. 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	509576
Local authority	Hampshire
Inspection number	842308
Type of provision	Full-time provision
Registration category	Childcare - Non-Domestic
Age range of children	0 - 5
Total number of places	30
Number of children on roll	72
Name of provider	Tracy Anne Griffiths
Date of previous inspection	28/10/2009
Telephone number	023 80866763

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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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