

Stepping Stones Day Nursery (Bolton Ltd)

Methodist Church, Chorley Old Road, Bolton, Lancashire, BL1 6AH

Inspection date	13/11/2014
Previous inspection date	13/06/2011

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 warm welcome from staff effectively underpins the children's sense of belonging.
- Staff have a secure understanding of their responsibilities and implement appropriate procedures for protecting children.
- Parents speak positively about the care and education their children receive. Therefore, children's care needs are appropriately met.

It is not yet good because

- Children are not being fully challenged in their learning. Staff do not always ask questions to further extend children's learning, thinking and understanding.
- Children do not make the best possible progress. Assessments do not identify children's current learning and development or clear next steps in their learning on which to base future planning.
- The procedure for monitoring staff practice is not robust enough to identify and address inconsistencies in teaching.
- Staff sometimes miss chances to encourage children's developing independence skills and mathematical development through routines.

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 compulsory part of the Childcare Register. This report includes a judgment about compliance with the requirements of that register.

Inspection activities

- The inspector had a tour of the nursery.
- The inspector observed teaching and learning activities in all of the playrooms, dining area and the outdoors.
- The inspector looked at a selection of children's assessment records and the planning documentation for all age groups.
- The inspector conducted two joint observations with one of the providers.
The inspector checked evidence of the suitability and the qualifications of all staff working with the children, a selection of documentation related to children's learning and welfare and the provider's self-evaluation.
- The inspector took account of the views of children, staff and parents spoken to on the day of inspection.

Inspector

Joanne Parrington

Full report

Information about the setting

Stepping Stones Day Nursery (Bolton Ltd) was registered in 1996 and is on the Early Years Register and the compulsory part of the Childcare Register. The nursery operates from a large converted church, close to the town centre of Bolton, Lancashire. Children are cared for in four main playrooms and have daily access to a large hall and dining area. There is an outdoor area and children under the age of two years have a separate outdoor area. The nursery serves the local area and the wider community. It operates Monday to Friday, between the hours of 8am and 6pm, all year round with the exception of public holidays and one week at Christmas. Children can attend for a variety of sessions. There are currently 88 children attending 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 children who speak English as an additional language. The nursery employs 18 members of childcare staff, all of whom have appropriate early years qualifications at level 2 to level 6. The nursery also employs administrative staff and a full-time cook. The nursery receives support from the early years team.

What the setting needs to do to improve further

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

- develop the ability of staff to use a wider range of teaching strategies, for example, by consistently using open-ended questions, to ensure that all children are sufficiently challenged, in order to support children's thinking skills and extend their learning

- use information gained from observations and assessment to identify children's next steps in learning in order to plan challenging activities that meet individual children's needs to enable them to make the best possible progress.

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

- review daily routines, such as lunchtime, to further support children's mathematical development and independence skills

- improve the monitoring of staff practice to ensure that all staff develop the quality of their interactions with children in order to improve teaching and consistently promote children's good progress across all areas of learning.

Inspection judgements

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

The quality of learning and teaching is inconsistent and requires improvement. Consequently, children's progress is satisfactory rather than good. Staff have a sound knowledge and understanding of the requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage and provide an environment which includes activities that cover the seven areas of learning adequately. Children access resources independently, as these are stored at a low level and have supporting pictures and words displayed so children can easily see what is available. Children enjoy their time as they learn to socialise and make friends. Staff engage in child-initiated play and at times, some staff support children's play well. For example, children in the toddler room make biscuits out of malleable materials. Staff talk to children about what they are making and ask them how they might cook the biscuits. Children delight in answering and take their creations over to the role-play area and place them in the oven. Staff further support the children's play experiences by asking them how long the biscuits will take to cook, children respond by saying five minutes. Staff begin to count and the children join in. This supports children's early understanding of number and their counting skills. When they reach the number five, one of the children grabs the oven gloves and delights in saying, 'The biscuits are ready'. Staff question why they have the gloves on, to which they respond, 'Because the tray will be hot'. Staff praise children and ask further questions but are careful not to disrupt the flow of the children's play. However, while staff appear more relaxed in supporting children's choice of play, it is the planned adult-directed play experiences that are weaker. Many of the activities are not well planned and often do not meet the learning intended. Children are also not given time to put their thoughts into words or to learn through trial and error. For example, children decorate the cupcakes. Staff provide a small selection of resources, which limits children's choice of decoration. All children are instructed to decorate their cupcake with icing. There are very few opportunities for children to have their own ideas or to take the lead in their learning. Staff direct the children to pour water into the icing, which results in the icing being the wrong consistency. Instead of asking children skilful questions to ignite their thinking skills, staff take away the bowl and start the mixing again with little involvement from the children. The focus is more on the end product rather than the children being given opportunities to learn through trial and error. Through other planned activities staff at times intervene and miss opportunities to allow the children time to think and respond.

Staff routinely complete assessments of children's learning and observe children while playing. However, the current systems in place are not sufficiently robust and do not clearly focus on what the children can already do, nor highlight where children may need further support in their development. This means that staff do not always plan purposeful and challenging experiences for all children, as many staff members are unclear of children's current development age bands or their next steps in learning. In the main, children are working within the typical range of development expected for their age. Children are gaining some basic skills they will need for their next stage in learning and when the time comes to move on to school. Staff support children who speak English as an additional language. They obtain basic words, key phrases and correct pronunciation

from parents and use picture cards to assist when needed. This is particularly effective in the pre-school room.

Staff work in partnerships with parents and value their contributions. At the initial visits, staff gather information about children's likes and dislikes, and some information regarding their development. This gives staff a starting point to begin to plan individual learning experiences. Staff engage parents and share information on a daily basis. Individual learning journals are accessible to parents and are available to be viewed at any time. Parents are encouraged to share information regarding children's further development at home and contribute to the progress check for children between the ages of two and three years. Parents speak highly of the nursery and the staff, particularly when children are new to the nursery. Partnerships with other professionals are formed and the staff team welcome their input, particularly when children have any special educational needs and/or disabilities. This cohesive approach means that staff are supported and can provide more targeted learning experiences.

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

The nursery is safe and welcoming and all of the play rooms are adequately resourced. However, staff do not always provide good quality learning experiences for all children and keep them motivated, engaged and challenged. Children and their families are welcomed into this friendly nursery. As children arrive they settle well and confidently begin to explore the range of activities. As a result, children demonstrate that they are feeling emotionally secure within the environment. The gradual and flexible admissions process in place allows children and parents to build warm relationships. Children demonstrate secure attachments to staff and confidently interact with visitors, which shows they feel safe and self-assured. The key-person system in place is effective. Lists of key groups are displayed within all of the rooms for parents to see. Babies and younger children enjoy snuggling up to their key person, demonstrating they feel emotionally secure and happy in their care. Babies' emotional development is further supported by staff as they share photograph books containing pictures of staff, the other babies and parents. Parents and children are generally emotionally prepared for the next stage in their learning and development. Staff share their knowledge with the new key person and teachers are invited in to meet the pre-school children in a familiar environment. Pre-school staff talk to the children about the imminent move to school and they share their experiences of school visits during circle time. This gives children the opportunity to build their self-confidence and raise any questions they may have.

Children learn to keep themselves healthy through daily routines, such as washing their hands before meals. Pre-school children describe the importance of washing their hands and the need to use soap. As a result, children are developing an understanding of the reason for these routines, for example, 'to get rid of bugs'. Dietary needs and preferences are discussed with parents and are adhered to carefully to maintain children's health and well-being. There is a designated cook who prepares freshly-made meals, which are balanced and nutritious. Babies and young infants are effectively supported during mealtimes and are provided with opportunities to feed themselves using their fingers and

spoons. Staff in the Tweenies' room support children who are less confident in trying foods that are not familiar to them. They offer encouragement and praise and the children are rewarded with stickers, which they are proud to share with their parents. However, opportunities are missed through this routine. Younger children are more than able to serve some parts of their lunch themselves, with the support and guidance from staff, which would further support their developing independence skills. Pre-school children do serve their own lunch and some children serve each other. However, children are not involved in the setting up of lunch. This is a missed opportunity for children to develop knowledge and skills, such as what equipment they need for lunch and early mathematical skills, through counting cups, plates and cutlery. Children access the outdoors in all weathers and participate in physical activity on a daily basis. Pre-school children have direct access to the outdoor area throughout their session and babies and younger children have a separate area, whereby they can use a range of age-appropriate resources.

Children demonstrate good behaviour, which is influenced by the positive role modelling of staff. Children's behaviour is managed effectively because staff provide clear boundaries. On the rare occasion staff do have to intervene they get down to children's level and talk to them calmly, explaining the importance of being kind to friends. Staff talk to children throughout the session. Older children learn to negotiate and compromise as they learn to share, take turns and make the right choices about their behaviour. Staff recognise children's good behaviour, kindness and achievements through the use of stickers. As a result, children's confidence and self-esteem is promoted effectively. Children learn about their own safety and that of others. For example, as they take part in a cutting and sticking activity, staff support them to use scissors safely. Children also take part in the evacuation drill, so they know how to keep themselves safe in an emergency.

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

The safeguarding and welfare requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage are understood by the management team. Staff have a secure knowledge of the safeguarding policy and the procedures to follow should they have a safeguarding concern or be concerned about a child's welfare. Safeguarding training is undertaken by staff. Staff supervise children well, consequently, children are suitably protected. Procedures regarding the safe use of mobile phones and cameras are clear and are implemented effectively by the staff. Safer recruitment and selection procedures are followed including identity checks, qualification verification, reference checks and clearance checks to assess an applicant's suitability to work with children. Staff induction processes are in place. Some staff have current paediatric first-aid training and they are deployed effectively through the nursery to ensure they can act quickly if needed in an emergency.

The learning and development requirements are understood by the management team. The senior managers monitor the staff's assessments of children and discuss their development. However, teaching practice requires improvement because of

inconsistencies in practice. This is particularly with regard to their interactions with the children and use of questioning in order to challenge children and ensure that they begin to make good progress. Monitoring systems are not robust enough to identify where there are inconsistencies in teaching. This means that these inconsistencies are not addressed promptly and children do not always make the good progress in their learning. Planning of activities is not sharply focused on individual children's next steps to ensure all children make consistently good progress in their learning. Arrangements for performance management are in place.

The management team have some understanding of the strengths and aspects for further development of the nursery and have the knowledge to involve staff, parents and children as part of the process of reflection. The management team have addressed the recommendations set at the last inspection. Children, particularly babies' good health is now fully supported; staff ensure children and their parents feel valued and included and senior management are now responsible for monitoring the planning and assessment processes. However, this inspection found that the monitoring being carried out was not robust enough. Staff receive support from local authority advisers and staff value input from professionals, such as health visitors. Staff have formed links with other providers, in order to share information and support children effectively when they attend more than one setting, or when the time comes to move on to school. Sound links with parents mean that relevant information is shared and children's care needs are generally met.

The Childcare Register

The requirements for the compulsory 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. 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	315937
Local authority	Bolton
Inspection number	868329
Type of provision	
Registration category	Childcare - Non-Domestic
Age range of children	0 - 8
Total number of places	60
Number of children on roll	88
Name of provider	Stepping Stones Day Nursery (Bolton Ltd)
Date of previous inspection	13/06/2011
Telephone number	01204 456 778

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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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