

# Stepping Stones

76 Marsden Street, Kirkham, PRESTON, PR4 2TJ

## Inspection date

20/11/2014

Previous inspection date

09/11/2009

## The quality and standards of the early years provision

**This inspection:**

2

Previous inspection:

2

|  |   |
|--|---|
| 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

- Staff provide a creative, welcoming and stimulating environment. The enthusiastic and caring practitioners ensure that children are supported to make good progress in their learning and development.
- The educational programmes provide a broad range of experiences that help children make good progress towards the early learning goals. The accurate monitoring of children's progress and practitioner's secure understanding of the areas of learning means children are extremely well prepared for their next stage in learning, including school.
- The key-person system is very well established and fosters very good partnerships with parents and, therefore, children form secure attachments and their well-being and independence are further promoted.
- Safeguarding procedures are good. Practitioners effectively support children's understanding of how to keep themselves safe.
- Self-evaluation is good. The management team continually strive to improve this already very good nursery.

### It is not yet outstanding because

- Occasionally, some practitioners do not use a range of teaching strategies, such as open-ended questions, to support all children's critical thinking.

## 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 activities in the two base rooms and the outside learning environment.
- The inspector carried out a joint observation with the manager.  
The inspector looked at a range of documents including children's records, learning journals and observations, assessment and planning documentation, written policies, training certificates, the self-evaluation form and a selection of other documents.
- The inspector interacted with children and practitioners throughout the inspection.
- The inspector checked evidence of the suitability and the qualifications of practitioners working with children, including first-aid certificates.
- The inspector took account of the views of parents and carers spoken to on the day.

## Inspector

Jacqueline Midgley

## Full report

### Information about the setting

Stepping Stones was registered in 2009 on the Early Years Register. It operates from a single-storey building in Kirkham, Preston. There are two main base rooms and outdoor play areas to the side and rear of the building. The nursery is open from 7.30am to 6pm, for 51 weeks of the year. It provides funded education for two-, three- and four-year-old children. There are currently 44 children on roll. There are nine practitioners employed, eight of whom hold recognised childcare qualifications. Three practitioners hold a qualification at level 4, four practitioners hold a qualification at level 3 and one practitioner holds Early Years Professional Status. The nursery receives support from 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 use of a wider range of teaching strategies, for example, by encouraging all practitioners to use even more open-ended questions in order to promote children's critical thinking skills.

## Inspection judgements

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

Teaching is good and, in some instances, outstanding. Practitioners have effective skills and knowledge of the learning and development requirements, and a comprehensive understanding of how children learn. As a result, children thrive and are well motivated to learn. For example, children delight in signing and singing along to familiar songs with the visiting professional musician. Practitioners provide a stimulating and well-organised environment, both indoors and outside. Children fully engage in their activities and experience varied and imaginative learning opportunities. For example, children investigate animals that live in cold places, such as penguins. Therefore, practitioners enhance the activities to include resources, such as artificial snow, photographs, books, soft toys and lots of print. This ensures that children make good progress in all areas of learning. Children consistently demonstrate the characteristics of effective learning. However, not all practitioners always support children's critical thinking skills. For example, while encouraging children to draw pictures of animals that live in cold places, not all practitioners consistently extend children's learning, for example, by using open-ended questions.

Practitioners support children to make good progress in their learning by gathering accurate information from parents to assess children's starting points. This information is then skilfully used by the children's key person to plan, in order to meet their individual needs. For example, the key person uses information from the All about me form,

completed by parents to inform planning and support the children to settle well. This incorporates children's current interests and achievements, by providing activities they enjoy, such as delightful sensory baskets. Consequently, practitioners are able to respond well to individual children to plan for and meet their learning and development needs, so they make good progress given their starting points. Assessment is focused and precise because practitioners form close relationships and know children well. The progress check for children between the ages of two and three years is completed in timely manner, meaning early intervention can be sought should this be needed. Children are ready for school when the time comes because they have a wide range of skills to support their future education. For example, children's independence is well supported as they serve themselves breakfast cereal and then wash their own bowl, spoon and cup.

Partnerships with parents are good. Parents' contributions are highly valued and play an important part in helping practitioners to gain the most accurate picture of children's all-round development. Children's learning at home is very well supported. Practitioners share activity ideas and the planning for individual children with parents to help them promote children's learning at home. Consequently, there is a consistent approach to children's learning in nursery and at home.

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

The key-person system is effective and provides maximum benefit to both the children and their families, as both develop highly positive relationships with practitioners. Parents comment that they find all practitioners extremely friendly and supportive. This effectively supports children's emotional well-being and provides firm foundations for their learning. Practitioners ensure that all children form secure bonds and attachments by having tailor-made, settling-in procedures. For example, children are settled in at the pace that is right for them and, therefore, less confident children are welcomed into nursery in their own time and in a very gentle manner. Practitioners ensure children are happy and enjoy their time, by finding out about their needs, likes and dislikes and by talking to parents on an ongoing basis. They provide a warm and welcoming environment to help children feel at home, safe and secure, so that they have a firm basis on which to enjoy the activities on offer.

Children independently follow good hygiene routines and are reminded of the importance of washing their hands before snack and mealtimes. Snacks are available for children to self-select throughout the day. Healthy and nutritious meals are provided, such as vegetable quiche, new potatoes and salad. The range of food provided gives children good opportunities to try new tastes and is varied enough to encourage children to be interested in what they eat. Children's behaviour is managed very well. Practitioners get down to children's level and calmly communicate with them. Therefore, the focus is on a positive atmosphere of mutual respect and trust, where practitioners frequently praise children's efforts and achievements. Consequently, children's behaviour is good overall and their self-esteem is well supported.

Children are helped effectively to make the move on to other settings, such as when they move to the local schools. They practise getting changed for physical activities, which

builds their confidence and develops their self-help skills. Local school teachers visit the children at nursery and practitioners provide resources and experiences that help children to learn about their new school environment. Children see examples of school uniforms and photographs of local schools. Books and stories about going to school are enjoyed at circle time. This supports children's emotional well-being as they adjust to periods of change. There is a strong emphasis on safety. For example, children are supported to use appropriate tools and scissors safely. Consequently, children are kept safe and learn how to assess danger and manage risks for themselves.

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

Safeguarding procedures are good. Practitioners prioritise children's safety and have a very good awareness of safeguarding issues. They understand the procedures to follow and who to contact in the event of any safeguarding concerns about children or any allegations about a colleague. Practitioners are fully aware of the designated child protection managers and their role. Managers monitor practitioner's performance within the nursery rooms. They ensure that practitioners are deployed effectively according to qualifications, including first-aid, and experience with specific age groups of children. All practitioners follow strict procedures and policies to protect children at all times. An extensive range of policies and procedures successfully underpin daily practice and regular reviews are carried out. Extensive risk assessments for all areas of the building, the outdoor area and resources ensure that any hazards are minimised and children's safety remains paramount. Robust recruitment and vetting systems help to ensure that all adults working with children are suitable to do so. These include vetting and reference checks for all staff and annual checks regarding continued suitability to work with children.

Extensive support and liaison with a wide range of professionals enables practitioners to implement the requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage with confidence. As a result, practitioners have an excellent understanding of the requirements to effectively monitor all children's skills, abilities and progress. Interventions are sought in a timely manner to support any child falling behind expected levels of progress. This results in children's needs being met effectively and relevant support services being involved, when necessary.

Leadership is strong and self-evaluation is well documented and highlights the emphasis on continuous improvement and maintaining high levels of achievement for all children. Strengths and weaknesses are clearly identified and focused improvement plans are in place to secure continuous improvement. For example, the action and recommendation raised at the previous inspection have been fully addressed. The process for self-evaluation incorporates the views of practitioners, children and parents. The practitioner team share a vision to provide an excellent service for the children and their families and, therefore, make a positive difference to their lives. Practitioners are highly motivated to continue their professional development and are continually seeking ways to improve. There are strategies in place to improve quality on an ongoing basis, including practitioner observations and a wealth of internal training opportunities. Highly effective partnerships between parents, external agencies and other providers are evident and are well

established. These contribute to meeting children's individual needs effectively. This is because effective relationships are well supported for example at parents' evenings and coffee mornings. Consequently, there is continuity in children's care and learning and they are well supported to reach their full potential. Feedback from parents is overwhelmingly positive. For example, parents state that their children settle well and that they have made very good progress in their learning and development.

## 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

|                                    |                          |
|------------------------------------|--------------------------|
| <b>Unique reference number</b>     | EY393726                 |
| <b>Local authority</b>             | Lancashire               |
| <b>Inspection number</b>           | 873998                   |
| <b>Type of provision</b>           |                          |
| <b>Registration category</b>       | Childcare - Non-Domestic |
| <b>Age range of children</b>       | 0 - 5                    |
| <b>Total number of places</b>      | 32                       |
| <b>Number of children on roll</b>  | 44                       |
| <b>Name of provider</b>            | Estelle Louise Noblett   |
| <b>Date of previous inspection</b> | 09/11/2009               |
| <b>Telephone number</b>            | 01772683117              |

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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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