

Stepping Stones Day Nursery and Nursery School

5 Edington Square, Witney, Oxfordshire, OX28 5YT



Inspection date	13 December 2017
Previous inspection date	18 October 2016

The quality and standards of the early years provision	This inspection:	Inadequate	4
	Previous inspection:	Good	2
Effectiveness of the leadership and management		Inadequate	4
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment		Inadequate	4
Personal development, behaviour and welfare		Inadequate	4
Outcomes for children		Inadequate	4

Summary of key findings for parents

This provision is inadequate

- An insufficient number of qualified staff work with the children. Children are not supervised adequately. The owner does not monitor the manager's and staff's practice, and fails to address weaknesses in staff's performance. The quality of staff's interactions with children is variable and very poor in the older age range.
- Children, particularly those who are older and those learning English as an additional language, do not make the progress they should or gain the skills they need for school.
- Some staff do not assess children's learning accurately or have an adequate knowledge of what their key children can do or what they need to learn next.
- Self-evaluation is not accurate. The manager demonstrates a poor understanding of how to monitor the educational programmes. Staff do not sufficiently identify or address gaps in children's learning.

It has the following strengths

- Staff demonstrate a secure understanding of the procedure to follow if they are worried about a child's welfare or the behaviour of another adult.

What the setting needs to do to improve further

To meet the requirements of the early years foundation stage and the Childcare Register the provider must:

	Due Date
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ ensure that the required adult-to-child ratios are maintained at all times 	31/01/2018
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ ensure that there are sufficient, suitably qualified staff working with the children, and that staff are deployed effectively to supervise and meet children's care and learning needs and promote their safety at all times 	31/01/2018
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ implement arrangements for staff supervision and ensure effective all staff receive the support, coaching and training they need to improve their practice and raise the quality of teaching 	31/01/2018
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ plan challenging and enjoyable experiences for older children that cover all the areas of learning and development effectively, taking into account the individual needs, interests and abilities of each child, including those who need more support 	31/01/2018
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ ensure staff use observation and assessment accurately identify where children are in their learning and what they need to learn next, and keep parents regularly informed about children's progress 	31/01/2018
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ monitor the educational programmes effectively to identify and target any weaker aspects of each child's learning, in particular for those children who speak English as an additional language and children of pre-school age. 	31/01/2018

Inspection activities

- The inspection took place following Ofsted's risk assessment process and was conducted by two inspectors.
- The inspectors observed children's indoor play.
- The inspectors looked at samples of children's assessment folders and discussed children's learning with staff, the manager and the owner.
- The inspectors spoke with the staff, parents and children at appropriate times during the inspection. The inspector held a meeting with the owner and manager.
- One inspector conducted a joint observation of a water play activity in the toddler room with the manager.

Inspector

Melissa Cox / Tracy Bartholomew

Inspection findings

Effectiveness of the leadership and management is inadequate

Safeguarding is ineffective. The owner and manager fail to ensure staffing arrangements keep children safe and meet their learning needs. Although they are taking some steps to tackle the shortage in staffing, this is not done swiftly enough to benefit the children and ensure their well-being. On the day of inspection, there were insufficient qualified staff working with the children to meet the required ratios when children arrived in the morning. Due to staff shortages children were left to wander on their own and some were observed eating dried pasta, unnoticed by staff. In addition, later in the morning, a member of staff was left in sole charge of a large group of pre-school children on her own, while an additional member of staff walked an older child to school. The owner has been set an action regarding effective deployment of staff at a previous inspection. Despite addressing the action set by Ofsted at the time, the owner has failed to sustain the improvements. The owner fails to meet the requirements of the Early Years Register and the Childcare Register. The manager fails to monitor staff's practice effectively. For example, he was unaware that some staff have failed to complete any assessments on some of their key children. In addition, some staff are ill-prepared to carry out their roles and responsibilities and do not receive adequate supervision or effective support. For example, staff new to their roles in the pre-school room have not been sufficiently supported by the manager. Assessment and tracking arrangements are poor and systems to monitor children's progress are weak. There are occasions when staff share confidential assessment information with parents pertaining to other children, including children's names and observations of their individual learning. Children do not receive sufficient support to reach expected levels of development for their age or gain the skills needed for their move to school. This lack of robust monitoring and support places some groups of children at a significant disadvantage. Despite the significant weaknesses across the provision, the deputy, who is also the designated lead for safeguarding, works very effectively in partnership with other agencies to support children's health and welfare. Staff make timely referrals and act on advice when they have any concerns about a child.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment is inadequate

The quality of teaching is inconsistent. Children, particularly those in the older age room, do not experience good-quality teaching. Despite staff being qualified, they offer an uninspiring and limited selection of resources and often leave children to occupy themselves. When they plan activities they fail to ensure their success. For example, staff leave children alone at the computer without finding an appropriate program for them to use, despite their repeated requests for help. During group time, for example, staff incorrectly match the letter sounds to the objects children bring in for their letter of the week activity. Staff in the younger age rooms use their qualifications and experience to guide children's learning more effectively. For example, staff in the baby room readily respond to children's babbles and model new language. Toddlers become excited by the music during a music and movement session where they dance. Staff who work with the younger age ranges provide effective levels of support for children who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare are inadequate

Staff do not guarantee children's well-being due to the weaknesses in ratios and staff deployment. For example, younger children were observed eating half-eaten and discarded food, as they were unsupervised by staff. Some staff fail to model good safety practice to the older children. For example, they repeatedly stand on chairs in front of the children. They do not support children to use equipment, such as scissors, safely and children run across the room unchallenged, holding these in an unsafe manner. Staff limit older children's independence. They often do tasks that children can do for themselves. For example, at mealtimes they limit children's opportunities to serve their own food or get items out of their own lunchboxes. Staff ensure that fire evacuation routes are kept clear and that they can evacuate quickly should the need arise. Staff suitably respond to children's health, medical and care needs.

Outcomes for children are inadequate

Weaknesses in staff deployment and performance management have a significant impact on the progress children make, particularly for groups of children who are learning English as an additional language and older children. Some children, including those who are due to move to school, do not have the confidence or speaking skills to make their needs known, develop friendships or to join in activities. Older children are not motivated and fail to sustain their concentration at any of the provided activities. Younger children count readily as they play and listen intently to stories. Babies shake bells in time to the music.

Setting details

Unique reference number	EY258333
Local authority	Oxfordshire
Inspection number	1119252
Type of provision	Full-time provision
Day care type	Childcare - Non-Domestic
Registers	Early Years Register, Compulsory Childcare Register, Voluntary Childcare Register
Age range of children	0 - 5
Total number of places	75
Number of children on roll	94
Name of registered person	Stepping Stones Day Nursery & Nursery School Limited
Registered person unique reference number	RP908150
Date of previous inspection	18 October 2016
Telephone number	01993 708822

Stepping Stones Day Nursery and Nursery School registered in 2003. It operates from purpose-built premises over two floors, in a residential area of Deer Park in Witney. The nursery accepts funding for the early education of children aged two, three and four years. It is open each weekday from 7.30am to 6pm all year round, excluding bank holidays. The nursery employs 16 staff. Of these, 11 staff have relevant childcare qualifications.

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.

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