

Inspection of Stepping Stones Day Nursery

17 Whitehall Road, Thornton Heath, Surrey CR7 6AF

Inspection date: 12 October 2021

Overall effectiveness

Inadequate

The quality of education

Inadequate

Behaviour and attitudes

Inadequate

Personal development

Inadequate

Leadership and management

Inadequate

Overall effectiveness at previous
inspection

Good

What is it like to attend this early years setting?

The provision is inadequate

Children's safety is compromised as the provider does not meet several of the safeguarding and welfare requirements. Staff qualifications and deployment are not adhered to, which leaves children at potential risk. The management team has failed to ensure that there are sufficient staff with the appropriate qualifications to meet the required adult-to-child ratio. Leaders do not recognise that this is a risk to children's safety. Children who speak English as an additional language are not well supported as staff are unaware of what language children speak at home. Staff have limited knowledge and skills to provide experiences for children to use their home language in their play and learning.

The leaders fail to provide an exciting and challenging curriculum that builds on what children already know. For example, staff do not ensure that the activities and resources enhance the development of children and extend their learning.

To protect children's health and safety during the COVID-19 pandemic, parents do not enter the premises. Nonetheless, most children arrive at the nursery happy. Most staff are welcoming and engage with children at their level, giving cuddles and reassurance. Children have some positive experiences at the setting. For instance, they enjoy playing the musical instruments and rolling the ball down guttering in the garden. Staff praise children's behaviour and efforts. They praise children by saying 'well done' when children complete a task, such as watering the seeds in the garden. This helps to boost children's self-esteem.

What does the early years setting do well and what does it need to do better?

- The leadership of the setting is weak and does not offer a broad and balanced curriculum. The provider does not monitor the setting effectively. They have failed to ensure that staff-to-child ratios and qualifications are followed. This impacts on the quality of care provided for children.
- The key-person system is not effective. For example, new children do not have an allocated key person until they settle. This prevents parents from being able to build relationships and work together with their child's key person. As a result, children who have difficulty settling are not supported effectively. On occasion, they are left in the corridor unengaged in purposeful activities as staff have insufficient knowledge of their interests.
- The children enjoy the praise they receive for completing activities, such as knowing their numbers and colours. However, staff do not build on the children's future learning nor maximise their learning. Consequently, all children, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities and those who learn English as an additional language, do not develop sufficient skills to fulfil their potential in readiness for school.

- The manager talks about how they intend to support children's communication skills, such as by singing songs and reading stories. In practice, this support is not effective. During a water play activity with ducks, staff sing parts of the 'Five little ducks' nursery rhyme. However, opportunities to further extend children's language and mathematical concepts, such as early subtraction, are not explored. Children use some simple words, such as 'wee wee' to ask for the toilet. However, staff fail to extend their vocabulary further.
- The manager describes the importance of using body language and visual supports to communicate with children and parents. However, this is not used effectively and consistently. Some children are therefore unable to follow instructions and engage in the activities with the other children.
- Staff have limited knowledge of how to support children to learn about other cultures, traditions, stereotypes and beliefs. There are inadequate resources and activities available to further develop children's understanding of diversity.
- Children do not receive an adequate level of challenge to enable them to develop further. Staff do not give them the opportunity to think critically. They do not ask questions that would enable children to develop new ideas or concepts.
- Most parents spoken with are happy overall with the nursery, and they say that their children like attending. However, parents are not given information about what their child is learning at nursery or how they can support their children's learning at home. This results in poor partnerships with parents.
- Staff teach children suitable hygiene practices, such as wiping their own nose and washing their hands before mealtimes. The setting has an outdoor area that children have regular access to. This is resourced with equipment such as a climbing frame, bats and balls, which support children's physical development.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are not effective.

Weakness in the management of the nursery means that children's safety is compromised. The deployment of staff does not always support children's safety. Procedures are in place to respond to concerns about a child's life at home. However, they are not always implemented. Staff have insufficient knowledge of how to recognise signs and symptoms of abuse. Therefore, children's safety cannot be assured. They have inadequate knowledge to be able to identify signs of possible abuse, neglect, extremism and radicalisation. These gaps in staff's knowledge compromise children's safety and welfare.

What does the setting need to do to improve?

To meet the requirements of the early years foundation stage, the provider must:

	Due date
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ensure that at least one member staff working directly with children holds an approved level 3 qualification	04/11/2021
ensure staff are deployed effectively to supervise children and keep them safe	04/11/2021
ensure all staff have the knowledge and skills to support language development, including those children who speak English as an additional language	04/11/2021
improve staff's knowledge of safeguarding issues so they can identify signs of abuse, neglect, extremism and radicalisation, and follow the appropriate procedures to safeguard children	04/11/2021
ensure that each child is assigned a key person and their parents are informed so children settle and their individual care and learning needs are met	04/11/2021
provide experiences for children to use their home language in their play and learning	04/11/2021
implement an exciting and appropriately challenging curriculum that builds on what children know and can do so that they make good progress	04/11/2021
develop an effective two-way flow of communication with parents to keep them updated and involved in their children's learning.	04/11/2021

Setting details

Unique reference number	EY298689
Local authority	Croydon
Inspection number	10208857
Type of provision	Childcare on non-domestic premises
Registers	Early Years Register
Day care type	Full day care
Age range of children at time of inspection	1 to 4
Total number of places	25
Number of children on roll	10
Name of registered person	Quinary Ltd
Registered person unique reference number	RP525207
Telephone number	0208 689 8001
Date of previous inspection	31 August 2018

Information about this early years setting

Stepping Stones Day Nursery opened in 2004 and is located in Thornton Heath, in the London Borough of Croydon. The nursery opens each weekday from 8am to 6pm for 51 weeks of the year, and is closed on public bank holidays. It receives funding for the provision of free early education to children aged two, three and four years. There are four members of staff who work with the children, including the manager. Of these, three staff hold relevant early years qualifications. The manager has early years teacher status and the owner has early years professional status.

Information about this inspection

Inspector

Shirley Chapman

Inspection activities

- This was the first routine inspection the provider received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. The inspector discussed the impact of the pandemic with the provider and has taken that into account in their evaluation of the provider.
- The manager and inspector completed a learning walk together and discussed the early years curriculum.
- The inspector spoke with staff and children at appropriate times during the inspection.
- The inspector carried out a joint observation of an activity with the manager.
- Parents shared their views with the inspector, which were fully considered.
- The inspector looked at relevant documentation and reviewed evidence of the suitability of staff working in the nursery.
- The inspector observed the quality of teaching and the impact on children's learning.

We carried out this inspection 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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