

# Inspection of Stepping Stones Day Nursery and Nursery School

5 Edington Square, Witney, Oxfordshire OX28 5YT

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Inspection date:

8 November 2021

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## **Overall effectiveness**

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## **Requires improvement**

The quality of education

**Requires improvement**

Behaviour and attitudes

**Requires improvement**

Personal development

**Good**

Leadership and management

**Requires improvement**

Overall effectiveness at previous  
inspection

Good

## What is it like to attend this early years setting?

### The provision requires improvement

The quality of education and children's overall experiences are variable. Although there are sufficient staff ratios, they do not meet the qualification requirements. This breach of statutory requirements does not adversely affect the children's safety due to the manageable low numbers of children attending. However, this does make a difference to the quality of teaching that the children receive. Sometimes, children do not receive enough high-quality interactions to challenge and help them build on what they already know. In addition, the required progress check for children aged between two and three years has not successfully been completed. This means any potential delays in children's learning may not be recognised. However, children enjoy their time at the nursery, where they develop confidence and independence.

Despite the weaknesses, children happily arrive and have their care needs met by welcoming, sensitive and enthusiastic staff. When teaching is of better quality, children are inspired and encouraged to follow their interests. Older children are imaginative and excited to use various construction materials to build a 'city'. Children show that they feel safe and build strong bonds with their key person. Overall, they behave well. Babies seek comfort from familiar adults. They regularly hear songs and develop their physical skills, for example when playing in the ball pit and climbing over the soft-play equipment.

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

- There have been a number of changes in staffing since the last inspection and the leadership team has failed to secure sufficient qualified staff working directly with the children. This has had an impact on the quality of interactions and expectations of what children can learn.
- Staff provide fun activities that interest the children. For example, children enjoy different themes on animals, sensory play, autumn changes and various construction activities. Overall, staff offer a varied curriculum. However, at times, it is not ambitious enough to support the progress children are capable of. At times, staff lead and dominate the activity. They do not give children time to explore their own ideas and to think for themselves.
- Staff do not complete the required progress check for children aged two years effectively. This means information is not shared with parents about the child's learning and any aspects where they may not be developing as expected. Nonetheless, parents have regular opportunities to talk to their child's key person at drop-off and collection times. Parents explain how the nursery's online app is also used to share information about their child.
- Children of all ages enjoy singing and listening to stories. Babies and toddlers cuddle into staff as they look at pictures in books. Staff model language and

introduce new vocabulary for young children to hear and repeat. Toddlers know the daily routine well as they hear and attempt to sing along to the familiar tidy-up song as they clear away the toys.

- Staff promote children's good health effectively. Children are encouraged to eat healthy meals and snacks. Staff talk to them about what food is good for them and how eating good food benefits their bodies and teeth. Children develop good physical skills. They learn they need to stay well hydrated and the importance of good hygiene routines.
- Children, including those who receive additional funding and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, are supported effectively. Staff work in close partnerships with parents and other professionals, to ensure that each child has appropriate individualised targets to support their care and learning.
- Overall, most children are beginning to manage their own behaviour. Staff remind them of the boundaries that keep them safe. However, some staff do not implement effective strategies to help children learn the effects of their actions, and unclear messages can lead to some minor disruption. Despite this, staff ensure that children receive praise and reassurance to support their self-esteem.
- Staff comment that they feel valued and supported by the new management team. They are confident to approach management for advice and help when they need it. Leaders meet regularly with staff to talk about how they are performing within their roles. Staff have good access to further training to improve their professional development.

## Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders and staff are vigilant to notice any changes in children's behaviour and well-being. They get to know families well and offer sensitive interventions according to each family's needs, working with other professionals when needed. Staff know how to refer concerns about a child's welfare and/or safety. All staff complete relevant training that helps them understand wider safeguarding issues, including extreme views. Staff know the procedure to follow if they have concerns regarding another adult working with children. Robust recruitment and vetting arrangements help to ensure that those working with children are suitable for their role.

## What does the setting need to do to improve?

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

	<b>Due date</b>
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ensure that there is at least one member of staff with a full and relevant level 3 qualification caring for children at all times, and that at least half of all other staff hold a full and relevant level 2 qualification	16/12/2021
improve the quality of teaching, so that staff's interactions consistently recognise the rich and spontaneous opportunities that arise during children's play, to challenge their thinking and learning even further	16/12/2021
ensure the required progress checks completed for two-year-old children provide parents with a summary of their progress in the prime areas of learning, including any areas where they may not be developing in line with expectations.	16/12/2021

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

- build on behaviour management strategies and provide children with clear messages about acceptable behaviour, to contribute to a positive learning environment.

## Setting details

<b>Unique reference number</b>	EY258333
<b>Local authority</b>	Oxfordshire
<b>Inspection number</b>	10207046
<b>Type of provision</b>	Childcare on non-domestic premises
<b>Registers</b>	Early Years Register, Compulsory Childcare Register, Voluntary Childcare Register
<b>Day care type</b>	Full day care
<b>Age range of children at time of inspection</b>	0 to 4
<b>Total number of places</b>	75
<b>Number of children on roll</b>	39
<b>Name of registered person</b>	Stepping Stones Day Nursery & Nursery School Limited
<b>Registered person unique reference number</b>	RP908150
<b>Telephone number</b>	01993 708822
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	14 May 2018

## Information about this early years setting

Stepping Stones Day Nursery and Nursery School registered in 2003. It operates from purpose-built premises over two floors, in the 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 11 members of staff. Of these, six hold appropriate early years qualifications from level 2 to level 6.

## Information about this inspection

### Inspector

Anneliese Fox-Jones

## Inspection activities

- This was the first routine inspection the setting received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. The inspector discussed the impact of the pandemic with the setting and has taken this into account in their evaluation of the setting.
- This inspection was carried out as part of a risk assessment process.
- The inspector observed activities in the three main base rooms and garden. She talked to staff about the progress individual children are making and what they want the children to learn.
- A joint observation was carried out by the inspector and the manager. The inspector observed interactions between staff and the children, and the impact these have on children's learning. The inspector checked evidence of the suitability and qualifications of staff working with children.
- The inspector reviewed relevant documentation, including staff qualifications, staff's records and evidence of paediatric first-aid training. The inspector had a discussion with leaders about the evaluation of the setting and plans for improvement.
- The inspector took account of the views of parents spoken to during the inspection.

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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