

Inspection of Stepping Stones Nursery

Mondeor, Hoddlesden Road, Hoddlesden, Darwen, Lancashire BB3 3LR

Inspection date: 8 November 2021

Overall effectiveness	Good
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The quality of education	Good
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Behaviour and attitudes	Good
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Personal development	Good
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Leadership and management	Good
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Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Good
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What is it like to attend this early years setting?

The provision is good

Children are warmly welcomed into this inclusive, caring and supportive nursery. They thrive on the positive relationships they develop with the staff and other children. Older children are eager to help. They happily, and often spontaneously, give support and assistance to others. They help younger children to pour their own drinks and they open doors so that children with restricted mobility have the space they need to move from one area to another. Children enjoy a wide range of activities and experiences that help them develop the skills and attitudes they will need for school and life in modern Britain. They make meaningful choices about how they spend their time. They value the resources and equipment they use and take pride in their work. There is a firm can-do approach throughout the setting, and children demonstrate a very strong sense of belonging. Children warmly welcome visitors. They are eager to talk about what they are doing and what they have learned. Older children confidently recall and explain what they have learned about Remembrance Day and the reason people wear a poppy.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, the staff team has worked hard to minimise any disruption to the curriculum and children's care and learning. Staff are mindful of the impact the pandemic has had, particularly on children's social and emotional development. To help address this, staff throughout the setting prioritise children's emotional well-being.

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

- Staff have high aspirations for all children and provide lots of support and encouragement. They work with other professionals to implement strategies for children with special educational needs and/or disabilities. This helps children of all abilities persevere with appropriately challenging tasks and learn new skills.
- Children make good progress in their learning and development. Overall, children enjoy a rich well-sequenced curriculum that is tailored to meet their individual needs. Their curiosity, eagerness to learn and willingness to try new things are supported by the provision of a wide range of accessible, well-presented play materials. Children independently select additional or alternative resources to extend their learning. For example, they select different tools to use when making marks, patterns and shapes in the dough.
- Staff are positive role models. They use stories, images and discussions to help children learn about their own feelings and how their behaviour affects others. Children are successfully learning to recognise, understand and manage their own behaviour. Children are very familiar with the nursery routine. They enjoy all aspects of the day, moving confidently between different rooms and the outdoor area. Pre-school children show genuine delight as they enthusiastically and very effectively tidy up when they have finished playing.

- The curriculum for communication and language is strong. Staff model language and introduce new words to extend children's vocabulary. In the main, staff talk very confidently about how they support language acquisition. Staff have undertaken training to help them identify children who may be falling behind with their speech and language. This means they are able to provide additional support as early as possible to help children to catch up.
- Children are learning to assess risk and to keep themselves safe. For example, they carefully consider how far apart they think the stepping stones should be so they can safely step from one to another. Children show increasing control and coordination as they balance on the stepping stones before attempting to cross the raised obstacle trail with balancing boards.
- Mealtimes and snack times are used well to encourage independence. Older children confidently serve themselves and pour their own drinks. However, children are given cordial to drink every day with their lunch and at tea time. This does not help children learn about the importance of making healthy choices to promote their oral health.
- During the COVID-19 pandemic, the manager has provided a high level of support for her staff team. She worked tirelessly to review and update procedures to help ensure the safety and well-being of all concerned. Staff discuss training needs at regular supervision sessions. They access online training to gain some of the knowledge they need to help children make good progress. However, some staff are less confident in their ability to support children to gain a deeper understanding of mathematics.
- Parents comment positively on the care and quality of education their children receive. They feel well informed about their children's time and talk positively about the online system used to exchange information. However, parents who prefer a verbal exchange feel that, on occasion, the current doorstep handover means they do not receive as much information as they would like. This includes ways to support their children's learning at home.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Staff are alert to the possible indicators of abuse. They have completed relevant training and understand their roles and responsibilities regarding child protection. Staff are clear that they would respond quickly if they had any concerns about a child's welfare. Information is prominently displayed which provides all staff with immediate access to relevant contact details for their local safeguarding partners. Staff implement effective risk assessments to help ensure children can move and play safely. Clear explanations help raise children's awareness of risk and develop their understanding of how to keep themselves and others safe.

What does the setting need to do to improve?

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

- support staff to develop their understanding and confidence to teach children mathematics
- help children understand how to make healthy choices that support their good oral health
- ensure that all parents are fully informed about all aspects of their children's day and are able to engage fully in supporting their children's learning at home.

Setting details

Unique reference number	301673
Local authority	Blackburn with Darwen
Inspection number	10206192
Type of provision	Childcare on non-domestic premises
Registers	Early Years Register, Compulsory Childcare Register, Voluntary Childcare Register
Day care type	Full day care
Age range of children at time of inspection	0 to 4
Total number of places	34
Number of children on roll	43
Name of registered person	Stepping Stones Nursery (Hoddlesden) Limited
Registered person unique reference number	RP908066
Telephone number	01254 702 013
Date of previous inspection	29 May 2019

Information about this early years setting

Stepping Stones Nursery registered in 1994 and is situated in Hoddlesden, Darwen. The nursery employs six members of childcare staff. Of these, three hold appropriate early years qualifications at level 3 and one holds a qualification at level 6. The nursery opens Monday to Friday, all year round, from 7.45am until 5.30pm. It provides funded early education for two-, three- and four-year-old children.

Information about this inspection

Inspector

Vickie Halliwell

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.
- We carried out this inspection as a result of a risk assessment, following information we received about the provider.
- The inspector observed the quality of education being provided. She assessed the impact these activities had on children's learning. She completed a learning walk with the manager to discuss how the curriculum is planned and implemented.
- The nursery manager and the inspector completed two joint observations of adult-led learning activities. They discussed how the teaching observed extended children's understanding and linked into the learning intentions for the children.
- The inspector held a meeting with the nursery manager. She looked at relevant documentation and evidence of the suitability of staff working in the nursery.
- A number of parents spoke to the inspector during the inspection. The inspector took account of their views.
- The manager, staff and children were spoken to by the inspector during the inspection. Staff explained why they were undertaking some activities and how they worked with individual children.

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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