

Inspection of Stepping Stones Day Nursery

Stepping Stones Day Nursery, 58-62 Wood Street, Maryport, Cumbria CA15 6LD

Inspection date: 24 May 2022

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

Leaders recognise that children, particularly babies and younger children, have spent much less time away from their family unit during the COVID-19 pandemic. They share photographs of the nursery with children before they start, to help them to gain a sense of what nursery is like. Settling-in procedures are tailored to children's needs. The use of special family books is helping children to feel more assured as they separate from family members on arrival. This contributes towards children's emotional security. Relationships between staff and children are positive. Children listen to staff and respond perfectly. For example, they show patience when waiting their turn to climb over complex physical equipment. Children are happy and settled in this calm and inclusive nursery.

Leaders and staff aim to ensure that children 'enjoy their learning'. Babies, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), use their senses to explore materials, such as bubbles. They express their excitement through actions, including making sounds with their voice and clapping their hands. Younger children use increasingly good physical skills when completing an obstacle course. They show resilience when learning to throw and catch balls outdoors. Older children enjoy listening to the sounds that different musical instruments make. They gain an understanding of some mathematical concepts, such as fast and slow, when tapping and shaking their instruments in time to music.

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

- Leaders value their staff team. They have significantly reduced the amount of paperwork that staff complete, to enable them to spend more time with the children. This is helping staff to find out more about what children know and enjoy and is contributing to the well-suited learning experiences that staff provide.
- In response to the impact of the pandemic, staff are placing a sharper emphasis on supporting children's communication and language development. They are beginning to introduce additional visual aids to help all children to communicate more freely. However, at times, staff do not use highly effective teaching strategies to build fully on children's skills. For example, occasionally staff do not repeat words and phrases precisely for children to hear and say, to build on their early pronunciation skills. Additionally, during stories, staff do not swiftly extend on the conversations that children initiate. This does not support children to make the highest rates of progress in their early language development.
- The proactive staff ensure that children with SEND receive the early help and support that they need. They thread advice from parents, carers and health professionals into children's individual support plans, to help to close any gaps in their learning. Children with SEND enjoy the positive interactions from their key

person. For example, they take interest in their key person rolling a ball up and down a ramp and begin to maintain attention for longer periods.

- Partnerships with parents are good. Staff keep parents informed about every aspect of their children's care and development. They invite parents to join them at specialist training events, to support children's care and learning needs at home. However, in contrast, staff do not form strong links with teachers from other settings that the children attend, to share information about children's ongoing progress. This does not support children's continued learning most successfully.
- Staff encourage children to share information about what makes them unique. For example, during songs children quickly define their favourite fruits. Additional funding is used well to encourage healthy lifestyles. For example, older children, including those with SEND, enjoy regular walks to local areas, such as the harbour. They use new exercise equipment, including balls and hoops, during outdoor play. This supports children to participate in regular physical activity and contributes towards their ongoing good health.
- Children demonstrate their understanding of the behaviour rules in place. Younger children respond well to staff and willingly share toys with their friends during water play. Staff use resources, such as puppets, to support older children to make links between facial expressions and feelings. Children express what makes them feel happy, surprised or frightened. They are considerate and know that actions, such as a hug, can help others to feel better.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders create a culture of vigilance across the nursery. They ensure that all staff complete a broad range of safeguarding training and have access to regular updates. This contributes towards staff's good knowledge of the procedures to follow to protect children's welfare. Staff take steps to minimise any potential risks. For example, during mealtimes, staff cut up foods such as fruit into small pieces and supervise children closely as they eat. This helps to prevent any risk of choking and helps to keep children safe. All staff hold a paediatric first-aid qualification. They know the procedures to follow in the event of an accident or emergency.

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 gain a greater understanding of the highly effective teaching strategies that they should consistently use to build on children's early language development further
- form stronger connections with practitioners from other settings that children attend, and share in-depth information about children's learning and progress, to

help children to make more rapid and substantial progress.

Setting details

Unique reference number	317402
Local authority	Cumbria
Inspection number	10219687
Type of provision	Childcare on non-domestic premises
Registers	Early Years Register, Compulsory Childcare Register
Day care type	Full day care
Age range of children at time of inspection	0 to 4
Total number of places	65
Number of children on roll	72
Name of registered person	Stepping Stones Day Nursery (Cumbria) Ltd
Registered person unique reference number	RP911309
Telephone number	01900 812773
Date of previous inspection	19 August 2016

Information about this early years setting

Stepping Stones Day Nursery registered in 2013. The nursery employs eight members of childcare staff. Of these, five hold appropriate early years qualifications at level 3 and two hold appropriate early years qualifications at level 2. The nursery is open Monday to Friday, from 7.30am to 5.30pm, all year round, except for the Christmas period and bank holidays. The nursery provides funded early education for two-, three- and four-year-old children.

Information about this inspection

Inspector

Charlotte Bowe

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 manager and has taken that into account in her evaluation of the provider.
- The manager led the inspector on a learning walk to show how the nursery is organised and to share information about the intent for the early years curriculum.
- A planned activity was jointly evaluated by the inspector and the manager.
- The inspector held discussions with the staff and children at appropriate times during the inspection. She held a separate meeting with the manager to discuss aspects of leadership and management.
- A sample of documents were viewed by the inspector. These included evidence of the suitability of staff, a record of staff's qualifications and training and some of the policies and procedures.
- The inspector spoke to a number of parents and took account of their views.

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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