

Inspection of Stepping Stones Day Nursery

c/o ASDA Distribution Centre, Staithes Road, Pattison Industrial Estate, District 8,
Tyne and Wear NE38 8NW

Inspection date: 10 January 2023

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 by a friendly and nurturing staff team. They come happily into a well-organised, safe and homely environment. Staff provide reassurance and comfort to children when they become upset, encouraging them to explore their emotions by talking to them about their feelings. Children have many opportunities to freely explore the resources and the environment. They greet their friends as they begin to play, making paint, scooping sand and pouring pasta. Children have excellent relationships with staff. They enjoy engaging and initiating conversations with staff as they eat their healthy snack and use their imaginations in the home corner.

Children are excited and motivated to learn. They enjoy getting ready for outdoor play and help each other to put on their waterproofs and wellington boots. They make the most of being outside and develop good gross motor skills. Children build resilience as they climb, negotiate space on bicycles and cars and balance on stepping stones. Children feel valued. Their achievements are praised and their excellent behaviour is celebrated. Children are able to share and take turns extremely well. For instance, children pass the flour to one another as they make play dough, and listen to each other at group time.

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

- Children with special educational needs and/or disabilities are very well supported. The special educational needs coordinator is highly proactive in recognising concerns and supporting children. Staff work closely as a team to create individualised support plans for children. They also work with families and other professionals to build targets and support. As a result, children make good progress across all areas of learning.
- Children's communication skills are encouraged throughout the nursery. They chat confidently with their friends and staff throughout the day. Staff model conversation skills well. They introduce new words to children in context, such as 'fluoride', when children clean their teeth. Babies' language skills are supported well. Staff babble with them, use simple words and introduce musical instruments as they experiment with sounds. However, at times, staff do not consistently provide children with sufficient time to respond during conversations, so that they can fully think out the solutions to their problems and questions.
- From an early age, children have access to books. Staff foster children's love of books and reading. Babies sit with staff and independently use lift the flap books. They giggle with delight when they find the animal and staff use these activities to introduce sounds for children to copy. Older children enjoy favourite stories, which they confidently retell. They use a range of reading materials in all

aspects of their play. For instance, children follow recipe cards in the modelling area for making dough. While in the home area, they look at magazines and books.

- When children first start the nursery, staff gather detailed information from parents on children's care routines and developmental progress to date. This enables staff to plan activities to support children's next stage of development from the very start.
- Staff complete detailed observations and assessments of children's progress. This allows them to quickly identify if there are any gaps in children's learning. However, occasionally, staff do not make a clear link between the intended learning and the delivery of planned activities. This means that, at times, children's learning opportunities are not maximised.
- Partnership with parents is a strength of the nursery. Staff ensure that parents are kept informed about their children's progress. They support parents through the lending library to extend their children's learning at home. Parents are highly complimentary about the nursery. They comment on the excellent relationships that their children have with the staff and peers. Parents say that their children are keen to attend and are positive about the high-quality information sharing.
- Staff feel that their well-being is supported at this nursery. There are systems in place for staff supervision meetings. Staff are confident they can speak to leaders at any time if they need support. Staff access regular training online and externally, and the impact of training is evaluated.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

The manager and staff know how to identify the signs that might indicate a child is at risk of harm, including signs of extreme views. They are knowledgeable about the procedures to follow in reporting any concerns to relevant agencies to protect a child's welfare. There are robust whistle-blowing procedures in place. Staff undertake rigorous vetting and recruitment processes to ensure that they are suitable to work with children. They receive induction training to help them understand their roles and responsibilities. Staff deployment is effective. This enables staff to supervise children at all times, to keep them safe and secure.

What does the setting need to do to improve?

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

- consider the length of time young children need to respond during conversations, so that they can fully think out the solutions to their problems and questions
- support staff to make a clear link between the intent and delivery of planned

activities to enable them to shape all activities to children's learning needs.

Setting details

Unique reference number	318602
Local authority	Sunderland
Inspection number	10262942
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	98
Number of children on roll	112
Name of registered person	Stepping Stones Nurseries Limited
Registered person unique reference number	RP535314
Telephone number	01138 268376
Date of previous inspection	11 April 2017

Information about this early years setting

Stepping Stones Day Nursery registered in 1998. The nursery employs 21 members of childcare staff. Of these, 14 hold appropriate early years qualifications at level 3, including one who holds qualified teacher status. The nursery opens all year round from 7.30am until 6pm, Monday to Friday. It provides funded early education for two-, three- and four-year-old children.

Information about this inspection

Inspector

Eileen Grimes

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 the inspector completed a learning walk together of all areas of the nursery and discussed the early years curriculum.
- The inspector observed the quality of education being provided, indoors and outdoors, and assessed the impact on children's learning.
- The manager and the inspector carried out a joint observation of an activity.
- Parents shared their views of the setting with the inspector through written feedback and through discussions.
- The inspector looked at relevant documentation and reviewed evidence of the suitability of staff working in the nursery.

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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