

Inspection of Stepping Stones

Blossomgate, Ripon, North Yorkshire HG4 2AJ

Inspection date: 28 July 2025

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

There are significant weaknesses in the safeguarding and welfare requirements, which put children's safety at risk. During the inspection, Ofsted took steps to suspend the provider's registration. The provider has not ensured that staff, including those with designated safeguarding lead responsibilities, have received suitable training to help them identify, record and respond to concerns about children's welfare. Several significant concerns about children's safety have not been reported to the relevant agencies over a period of time. In addition, the fire exit is obstructed by resources and equipment. This means children cannot exit the premises swiftly in the event of a fire. The arrangements for staff supervision are not effective.

Some children do not have an assigned key person and assessments of children's progress are inaccurate. This means staff are unable to fully support children in their learning and information passed on to parents is not accurate. In addition, some children with identified gaps in their learning are not supported, and gaps have widened over a period of time. This does not help children to build secure foundations for future learning or help them prepare to move on to school. That said, the interactions between staff and children are caring and responsive. Staff prepare some activities for children to explore and can meet their care needs effectively. For instance, they provide children with comfort items to sleep with and know about the things they enjoy doing. Children are content to sit with staff and play independently throughout the day. Staff encourage children's positive behaviour using gentle words of encouragement.

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

- Staff do not recognise basic signs of potential abuse and are not familiar with child protection issues, including sexual abuse and the impact of domestic violence. In addition, the provider has not ensured that staff with lead responsibilities for safeguarding children are suitably trained to fulfil their role. This means staff are not supported or advised correctly when they have concerns about children.
- The procedures to record and report concerns about children are not in line with the guidance of the local safeguarding partners' procedures. Staff have noted concerns about children's welfare, however, they have not responded to these concerns swiftly or effectively, which puts children at risk of potential harm.
- Staff prepare the indoor and outdoor environments with some resources for children to access independently. Older babies enjoy washing the push-along car and other children explore the sand tray.
- Although the resources are suitable to be used by children, the fire exit inside the premises is blocked on both sides, which is a fire safety hazard. This does

not ensure children's safety in the event of an emergency evacuation.

- The setting is prepared for children to freely play and explore. Children move around activities outdoors and are happy to sit and chat with staff. Some children sit happily filling buckets in the sand, older children sit with the dough, babies wash the car. However, leaders and managers do not have a clear curriculum in place to support children's learning. Staff are unclear on their plans for children's learning and, as a result, teaching lacks purpose. For instance, staff chat to children as they play, but this is random conversation, rather than purposeful questions to encourage speech or a focus on mathematical concepts as they fill and empty the buckets in the sand. Other children play with dough and show an interest in colour mixing, however, staff stop them from doing this but do not provide an alternative to extend their interests and learning.
- Staff do not gather detailed information from parents and families about children's development. This means that staff are not aware of children's stages of development when they start the nursery or the progress children make at home. Information shared with parents on the online platform is not accurate. For example, staff do not ensure assessments of children's progress accurately reflect their current stage of development and some are several months out of date. Although some staff identify areas of children's learning that may be focused on, this is not shared with parents or other professionals in a timely manner. In addition, staff do not always complete the progress checks for children when they are aged between two and three years.
- The provider and leadership team do not effectively support staff. Staff do not receive effective supervision to help them continually improve their practice. They do not have time to access opportunities to attend training and professional development. On occasion, staff take home confidential information about children to complete work-related tasks and share this with parents on personal social media platforms.
- The arrangements to support children with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are variable and inconsistent. For instance, some children with a diagnosis have targeted plans to support their development, but staff are unsure where they are. Leaders have worked in partnership with other professionals to support these children. In contrast, other children who have had identified delay in some areas of their learning for a significant period of time, have not been assessed and no action has been taken to prevent gaps from widening even further. The provider has not ensured that staff who take the lead in this role are suitably trained to do so.
- Although every child does not have a key person, children show they are happy to be with staff in the nursery and ask for help if they need it. Staff are kind and caring towards children. They promote social skills and good manners. Staff show awareness of how to promote diversity and inclusion. For instance, they have sensitive discussions about differences between themselves and others with older children as they colour in. Older children are very kind to younger children in the nursery and behaviour is positive.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are not effective.

There is not an open and positive culture around safeguarding that puts children's interests first.

What does the setting need to do to improve?

The provision is inadequate and Ofsted intends to take enforcement action.

We will issue a Welfare Requirements Notice requiring the provider to:

	Due date
provide the lead practitioner with suitable child protection training that enables them to identify, understand and respond appropriately to signs of possible abuse and neglect	29/08/2025
improve staff's knowledge of safeguarding issues and ensure they receive training which enables them to identify signs of possible abuse and neglect at the earliest opportunity, and to respond in a timely and appropriate way	29/08/2025
ensure that all concerns about children's safety and welfare are recorded and reported immediately and in line with local reporting procedures	08/08/2025
ensure that fire exits must be clearly identifiable, and fire doors are free of obstruction	08/08/2025
improve the arrangements for staff's supervision to ensure staff are provided with effective support and coaching to promote continuous improvements, and provide them with opportunities to confidentially discuss sensitive information	29/08/2025

ensure every child in the early years age range has a key person and when that person is absent, there are suitable arrangements in place to support children effectively	08/08/2025
improve the arrangements to support children with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) and ensure the special educational needs coordinator is suitably qualified and knowledgeable to fulfil the role	29/08/2025
ensure that confidential information and records about staff and children must be held securely and only accessible and available to those who have a right or professional need to see them, including if they are kept off site.	08/08/2025

To meet the requirements of the early years foundation stage and Childcare Register the provider must:

	Due date
develop and implement an ambitious curriculum, to ensure children develop strong foundations for future learning	29/08/2025
improve staff's teaching so they stimulate children's interests and respond to each child's emerging needs to guide their development	29/08/2025
ensure that parents and/or carers are kept up to date with their child's progress and development, and that any concerns about children's development are shared with them and any other relevant professionals	29/08/2025

<p>improve staff's understanding of how to complete the progress check when children are aged between two and three years, specifically in relation to the focus on areas of concern and the strategies and activities staff plan to use to address this.</p>	<p>29/08/2025</p>
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Setting details

Unique reference number	EY221441
Local authority	North Yorkshire
Inspection number	10415005
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	1 to 10
Total number of places	40
Number of children on roll	35
Name of registered person	Blakey, Jayne Nadine
Registered person unique reference number	RP910001
Telephone number	01765 692402
Date of previous inspection	10 February 2023

Information about this early years setting

Stepping Stones registered in 2002 and is located in Ripon, North Yorkshire. It opens Monday to Friday, all year round. Sessions are from 7.30am until 6pm. The setting employs seven members of childcare staff. Of these, five hold appropriate early years qualifications at level 3 or above, including the manager. The out-of-school club caters for children aged four to ten years. Sessions are from 7.30am until 9am and 3pm until 6pm, during term time and from 7.30am until 6pm during school holidays. The nursery provides government funded early education places.

Information about this inspection

Inspector

Michelle Lorains

Inspection activities

- We carried out this inspection as a result of a risk assessment, following information we received about the provider.
- The inspector viewed the provision and discussed the safety and suitability of the premises.
- The inspector observed the quality of teaching during activities indoors and outdoors and assessed the impact this has on children's learning.
- A joint observation was completed by the manager and inspector, outdoors during a planned activity.
- The inspector held a discussion with the manager in relation to the leadership and management of the nursery. She looked at relevant documentation, such as evidence of recruitment, staff's qualifications and their suitability to work with children. She discussed children's learning and development with the staff team and nursery manager.

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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