

Stepping Stones

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique reference number EY315335
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Type of setting Childcare on non-domestic premises

Introduction

This inspection was carried out by Ofsted under Sections 49 and 50 of the Childcare Act 2006 on the quality and standards of the registered early years provision. 'Early years provision' refers to provision regulated by Ofsted for children from birth to 31 August following their fifth birthday (the early years age group). The registered person must ensure that this provision complies with the statutory framework for children's learning, development and welfare, known as the *Early Years Foundation Stage*.

The provider must provide a copy of this report to all parents with children at the setting where reasonably practicable. The provider must provide a copy of the report to any other person who asks for one, but may charge a fee for this service (The Childcare (Inspection) Regulations 2008 regulations 9 and 10).

Description of the setting

Stepping Stones day nursery is one of a group of five privately owned nurseries. It opened in 1975 and transferred to its current ownership in 2006. It operates from a Victorian house in Fishponds, Bristol. The nursery serves the local area. The building is accessed up some steps and the baby rooms are on the first floor. There are two fully enclosed areas available for outdoor play.

The group opens Monday to Friday all year round except for a week at Christmas. Sessions are from 8am until 6pm. Children are able to attend for a variety of sessions. A maximum of 40 children may attend the setting at any one time. There are currently 72 children attending who are within the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS). The provision is registered on the Early Years Register. The setting provides funded early education for three and four year olds. It supports children with learning difficulties and disabilities and children who speak English as an additional language.

The setting employs 14 members of child care staff. Of these, 12 hold appropriate early years qualifications, 11 of them at level 3 or above. One member of staff has Early Years Professional Status and Qualified Teacher Status. The setting receives support from the local authority.

Overall effectiveness of the early years provision

Overall the quality of the provision is good. Children settle very well in the relaxed atmosphere of this friendly family oriented nursery. Children make good progress in their learning and development because staff throughout the nursery have a good understanding of the EYFS and plan appropriate activities. They observe children's learning and in most base rooms this information is used well to identify individual children's next steps in learning. There is an effective key person system in place throughout the nursery so staff have a good relationship with parents, they are aware of children's individual welfare needs and their practice is fully inclusive. The strong management team is committed to maintaining high standards and implementing ongoing improvements to the provision but there is a minor weakness regarding the frequency of fire drills.

What steps need to be taken to improve provision further?

To further improve the early years provision the registered person should:

- ensure that the identification of children's next steps in all areas of learning is consistent throughout the nursery
- improve the frequency of fire drills and record the details.

The leadership and management of the early years provision

Children are protected well because all staff have a secure knowledge of safeguarding procedures gained through external training courses and very effective in-house training. They understand the possible signs of abuse and know what action they must take if they have concerns about a child in their care. Clear procedures are in place regarding collection of children so parents sign the book in the morning if someone different is collecting their child. Robust employment procedures ensure that all staff are suitable to work with children. Children are supervised well at all times and procedures to ensure that the premises are safe and secure include regular risk assessments and daily safety checks. All required fire safety equipment is in place but staff and children do not have sufficiently regular opportunities to practise the fire drill. Therefore children do not develop their understanding of how to protect themselves in the event of a fire.

The nursery owner and manager work well together and lead a strong team of staff who are committed to providing high quality childcare. Ratios are met or exceeded at all times and children benefit greatly from the high level of expertise provided by a team of staff who nearly all hold Early Years qualifications at level 3 or above. There is no formal self-evaluation process in place but the management team is continually reviewing practice and initiating improvements. The recommendations made at the last inspection regarding employment procedures and obtaining consent from parents for emergency medical treatment have been met and procedures to identify children's learning needs are being implemented throughout the nursery in line with the requirements of the EYFS. Plans for future development include an application for a grant to develop the outdoor area.

Children thrive because staff work in close partnership with their parents or carers. There is an effective key person system in place and staff know their key children and their families very well. Although children have several changes of key person during their time in the nursery, staff manage the change effectively when children move to a new base room and new key person. Staff find out information about children's home backgrounds and the festivals that they celebrate and include relevant activities in their planning. Parents with children of all ages receive daily verbal feedback about their children's welfare and learning and they have regular access to children's observation diaries so children are able to continue their learning at home. When the nursery is aware that children also attend other EYFS provision the manager liaises with the other provider to support children's continuity of care effectively. Children with learning difficulties and disabilities progress well because staff work very closely with their parents and with outside agencies, such as speech therapists to ensure that children's individual needs are met.

The quality and standards of the early years provision

Children settle well in the nursery because there is a relaxed family atmosphere and they form close relationships with the staff. They make good progress towards the early learning goals during their time in the nursery because all staff have a

secure understanding of how to plan and provide activities that are linked to the interests of individual children in their base rooms and how to ensure that the activities have clear learning targets. They observe children's progress and staff in most base rooms have developed effective procedures to identify individual children's next steps in all areas of learning.

Children of all ages have regular opportunities for outdoor play. Most babies like to explore water and staff encourage those who are reluctant to get wet or messy to join in. They use sponges in the water and enjoy getting the sponges wet and letting the water drip out of them. They develop early role play because staff encourage them to wash the ride-on cars with the sponges. Then they decide to go for a ride in the car. They pull the steering wheel out and staff support their problem solving skills because they encourage them to try to put it back themselves.

Older children develop good technology skills. They competently use computer programs, such as 'Bob the Builder'. They learn to follow instructions, choose colours for the swings and the slide and operate the mouse to paint the toys in the park. They develop mark making skills by drawing crazy aliens and then use letter cards to make the letters of their name and try to copy it. More able children enjoy the challenge of learning to form the letters correctly. These activities support the development of children's skills for the future.

Children of all ages enjoy looking at books and listening to stories. The two year olds sit well to listen to a story about children learning to share and staff use this to encourage the children to think about how others feel when they do not want to share toys. Older children listen to the story of 'Handa's Surprise'. Books such as this support their understanding of healthy eating and their awareness of different cultures. They taste the different fruits that are mentioned in the story and talk about why fruit is good for them. They look closely at the fruit and count the number of segments in the orange. More able children try to write the names of the fruit. They talk about the culture and dress up in appropriate clothing. They work together cooperatively to make a big wall display to illustrate the story.

Children develop good awareness of most aspects of their personal safety. Staff make good use of spontaneous opportunities when children are playing to discuss issues, such as the danger of playing with matches when children are pretending to light candles on a birthday cake in the role play area. Older children learn not to talk to strangers when they are on outings and discuss what they should do if they ever get lost. They learn to express their emotions and to understand how others are affected by their actions.

Annex A: record of inspection judgements

The key inspection judgements and what they mean

Grade 1 is Outstanding: this aspect of the provision is of exceptionally high quality

Grade 2 is Good: this aspect of the provision is strong

Grade 3 is Satisfactory: this aspect of the provision is sound

Grade 4 is Inadequate: this aspect of the provision is not good enough

Overall effectiveness

How effective is the provision in meeting the needs of children in the Early Years Foundation Stage?	2
How well does the provision promote inclusive practice?	2
The capacity of the provision to maintain continuous improvement.	2

Leadership and management

How effectively is provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage led and managed?	2
How effective is the setting's self-evaluation, including the steps taken to promote improvement?	2
How well does the setting work in partnership with parents and others?	2
How well are children safeguarded?	2

Quality and standards

How effectively are children in the Early Years Foundation Stage helped to learn and develop?	2
How effectively is the welfare of children in the Early Years Foundation Stage promoted?	2
How well are children helped to stay safe?	2
How well are children helped to be healthy?	2
How well are children helped to enjoy and achieve?	2
How well are children helped to make a positive contribution?	2
How well are children helped develop skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being?	2

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