

Stepping Stones Montessori Childcare Limited

Inspection report for early years provision

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| Unique reference number | EY415263 |
| Inspection date | 23/11/2010 |
| Inspector | Sue Birkenhead |
| Setting address | The Old School, Village Road, Waverton, CHESTER, CH3 7QN |
| Telephone number | 01244 332 270 |
| Email | |
| Type of setting | Childcare on non-domestic premises |

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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).

The setting also makes provision for children older than the early years age group which is registered on the voluntary and/or compulsory part(s) of the Childcare Register. This report does not include an evaluation of that provision, but a comment about compliance with the requirements of the Childcare Register is included in Annex B.

Please see our website for more information about each childcare provider. We publish inspection reports, conditions of registration and details of complaints we receive where we or the provider take action to meet the requirements of registration.

Description of the setting

Stepping Stones Montessori Nursery was registered in 2010 under the current ownership of Stepping Stones Montessori Childcare Limited. It is situated in the village of Waverton, near Chester and operates from three main areas in a converted school building. A maximum of 55 children may attend the setting at any one time of whom 47 may be within the early years age group. The setting is open each weekday from 7.30am to 6.00pm throughout the year. Out of school care is provided before and after school and during the school holidays for a maximum of eight children. All children share access to secure enclosed outdoor play areas.

The nursery is registered on the Early Years Register and the compulsory and voluntary parts of the Childcare Register. There are currently 52 children on roll, of these five attend before school or during the holiday club, the remainder are within the early years age group. The setting also provides funded nursery education for 17 children and supports children with learning difficulties and children who have English as an additional language. Children attend from a wide catchment area. There are 10 members of staff, of these eight hold appropriate early years qualifications, one is a qualified teacher and one support staff includes the cook. The nursery operates in line with Montessori philosophy. An early years consultant provides support to the nursery.

The overall effectiveness of the early years provision

Overall the quality of the provision is good.

Overall the provision is good. The nursery provides a very welcoming and inclusive environment where children are happy, secure and settle well. Staff work well as a team to ensure that the welfare, learning and development requirements of the individual children are generally met. Consequently, they make positive progress towards the early learning goals. However, there is a minor breach in the welfare requirements because not all written risk assessments are in place. Effective procedures ensure good relationships between parents, carers and outside agencies are maintained, which significantly contribute to the children's care and learning. However, procedures for maintaining links with other settings children attend is recognised as an area for future development. Through the enthusiastic leadership and the developing systems for self-evaluation a strong commitment to the continuous improvement of the setting is clearly demonstrated.

What steps need to be taken to improve provision further?

To meet the specific requirements of the EYFS, the registered person must:

- ensure the written risk assessments identify aspects of the environment that need to be checked regularly (suitable premises, environment and equipment).

07/12/2010

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

- develop a programme of regular staff appraisals
- enhance further the children's learning in the outdoor environment
- improve the children's assessments by obtaining information regarding their developmental starting points on entry to the setting and date entries made to the monitoring systems of their developmental progress.

The effectiveness of leadership and management of the early years provision

Children are positively safeguarded because the staff have a clear understanding of the indicators of abuse. They understand the written procedures for reporting concerns and the robust recruitment procedures ensure the suitability of all staff employed. Through the use of necessary safety equipment and the development of some comprehensive risk assessments, positive systems ensure children's safety. However, there is a minor breach in the welfare requirements because some written risk assessments are being developed. As a result, information was not available for the inspection, although this does not compromise children's safety. All staff employed are qualified and show a positive commitment to extending their knowledge and skills through additional training to promote better outcomes for children.

The management team and staff work together well and, as a result, effective systems for monitoring and evaluating nursery practices are developing well. For example, they begin to use the Ofsted self-evaluation form; the local authority "Moving On" document and they obtain parents' views through questionnaires and the suggestions box. The enthusiasm of the management team and staff supports the positive commitment to the continuous development of the setting highlighted in the action plans. In addition, management value the advice and guidance they receive from the early years consultant. Regular meetings with the management team provide opportunities to reflect on nursery practices. However, regular staff appraisals have not yet been introduced, although this is part of the setting's ongoing development programme. On the whole required documentation that contributes to the safe and efficient operation of the nursery is consistently completed, well organised and respects a confidential approach. "All about me" records document children's individual needs to ensure a consistent approach to their care. Written policies underpin the good nursery practice and are shared with parents initially.

Good relationships develop with parents and many opportunities encourage their involvement in the setting and the children's learning. They receive regular interesting newsletters which update them on events and nursery practices, such as the success of the Grandparents day held in October. The planned parent's appointments during the year encourage parents to become involved in their children's learning. Information is on display and many parents receive the day book which outlines the children's well-being and activities. Parents say they are

very happy with the service and support. They highlight many positive changes since the setting was re-registered under the current ownership. For example, the information shared the provision of meals and the independence children develop. Responses to the questionnaires outline many positive aspects, which include the good education and superb team of staff. In some instances good systems encourage the development of positive links with other settings children attend and ensure a complementary approach to the delivery of the Early Years Foundation Stage. However, this is an ongoing area of development because such links have not been established with all the settings children attend.

The quality and standards of the early years provision and outcomes for children

Children are happy, confident and secure within the nursery where they develop positive friendships and develop good social skills. The displays throughout the nursery contribute to the welcoming and inclusive environment where children's sense of belonging is effectively promoted. Staff continually assess the learning environment and deploy resources well. As a result, children from a young age are able to make decisions about their play, follow their interests and instigate their own learning, as well as take part in adult-led activities. Staff positively interact with children to extend and challenge their learning and enjoyment. Activity planning is consistent throughout the nursery and approached with greater flexibility for babies. Staff take account of the children's individual interests and next steps in learning, which are used to inform the planning. The child's individual "learning journeys" incorporate photographic evidence and regular observations, these are generally linked to the areas of learning and clearly reflect their next steps. Staff monitor the children's developmental progress using the documents taken from the early years practice guidance, however, areas of achievement are not always dated and the children's developmental starting points are not obtained on entry to the setting to act as a baseline from which to monitor their progress. A summative assessment of their development progress is completed twice yearly for individual children and sent home to parents before the parents evening is planned. In addition these contain aspects parents can further promote to encourage their learning at home individual to each child.

The development of children's self-help skills is a strength of the setting. They competently remove and put on their indoor and outdoor shoes and their coats when going out to play. The recent development of the outdoor play areas provide secure environments where children can play. They access outdoors in all weather wearing splash suits and Wellingtons the nursery provide. As a result, children have regular access to outdoors to enable them to develop their physical skills and explore the natural world. Plans are in place to further develop the outdoor area to ensure all areas of learning are incorporated. Children's understanding of number and problem solving is incorporated into all activities. For example, children of all ages take part in number action rhymes and older children successfully match the rows of beads and accurately place them on the hook to represent the corresponding number from one to nine. Babies post shapes into the corresponding holes with support as older children spontaneously explain shapes

they see and talk about the round plate and the triangle when tidying items away. They count the numbered boxes on the computer screen to four and know that five comes before six. By exploring play materials younger children are learning to operate simple interactive resources to create music and flashing lights. Older children develop the necessary skills for operating the Dictaphone, the digital camera, programmable toys and the computer. They enjoy exploring various textures which include more natural materials as well as the jelly solution, the sand, water daily and a range of different media for collage from a young age. Older children learn about letters and sounds associated with their own names and make attempts to write their name using the templates available. Younger children make marks in a variety of ways, indoors and outside, and begin to give meaning to the marks they make as seen on the pictograms on display. The continuous provision of writing materials allows children to explore and develop their hand writing skills independently and with support. Older children are attentive when listening to the story tapes and positively interact during stories and all children can access books independently. This effectively contributes to the children's literacy skills and enjoyment of books. Outcomes for children are positive, therefore contributing to the development of their future skills.

Young children indicate they feel safe by holding out their arms to familiar staff for comfort when they are tired or upset. They are happy to leave the side of the staff to explore their surroundings from a young age. They learn about safe practice through the emergency evacuations they complete and positive staff direction. For example, when older children go into the outdoor play area they assemble and staff ask "can you see anything dangerous" before they go off to play and wear hi-visibility waistcoats during outings. They develop a positive understanding of personal hygiene from a young age through the daily routines and learn the importance of hand washing. The rotating menus reflect the very healthy, balanced diet children receive, which includes fresh fruit, vegetables, daily and cultural variations. The experienced cook freshly prepares all meals daily and effectively caters for the children's dietary needs. Children competently access snacks and pour their own drinks during the rolling snack programme. Older children assist by setting the tables before lunch and enjoy taking turns to serve meals to others, which they complete impressively. This approach builds on the development of children's self-help skills, positively promoting their independence and skills for the future. Children have access to a range of resources and activities to positively promote diversity and acknowledge cultural differences and, where necessary, activities are adapted to promote inclusion. Positive techniques for the effective management of children's behaviour foster the development of their self-esteem and confidence. As a result, children are responsive to staff intervention and minor conflict is diffused, therefore children behave well.

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

The overall effectiveness of the early years provision

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| How well does the setting meet the needs of the children in the Early Years Foundation Stage? | 2 |
| The capacity of the provision to maintain continuous improvement | 2 |

The effectiveness of leadership and management of the early years provision

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| The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage | 2 |
| The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement | 2 |
| The effectiveness with which the setting deploys resources | 2 |
| The effectiveness with which the setting promotes equality and diversity | 2 |
| The effectiveness of safeguarding | 2 |
| The effectiveness of the setting's self-evaluation, including the steps taken to promote improvement | 2 |
| The effectiveness of partnerships | 3 |
| The effectiveness of the setting's engagement with parents and carers | 2 |

The quality of the provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage

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| The quality of the provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage | 2 |
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Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage

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| Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage | 2 |
| The extent to which children achieve and enjoy their learning | 2 |
| The extent to which children feel safe | 2 |
| The extent to which children adopt healthy lifestyles | 2 |
| The extent to which children make a positive contribution | 2 |
| The extent to which children develop skills for the future | 2 |

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Annex B: the Childcare Register

The provider confirms that the requirements of the compulsory part of the Childcare Register are:

Not Met (with actions)

The provider confirms that the requirements of the voluntary part of the Childcare Register are:

Not Met (with actions)

The registered provider does not meet the requirements of the compulsory and or voluntary part/s of the Childcare Register.

To comply with the requirements of the compulsory part of the Childcare Register, the registered person must take the following action/s by the specified date:

- take action as specified in the early years section of the report (Suitability and safety of the premises and equipment). 07/12/2010

To comply with the requirements of the voluntary part of the Childcare Register, the registered person must take the following action/s by the specified date:

- take action as specified in the early years section of the report (Suitability and safety of Premises and Equipment). 07/12/2010