

# Stepping Stones Montessori Childcare Limited

The Old School House, Village Road, Waverton, CHESTER, CH3 7QN

<b>Inspection date</b>	16/04/2014
Previous inspection date	23/11/2010

<b>The quality and standards of the early years provision</b>	<b>This inspection:</b>	<b>2</b>
	Previous inspection:	2
How well the early years provision meets the needs of the range of children who attend		2
The contribution of the early years provision to the well-being of children		2
The effectiveness of the leadership and management of the early years provision		2

## The quality and standards of the early years provision

### This provision is good

- Teaching is good and the educational programmes provide an exceptional variety of play experiences enhanced by the Montessori philosophy. As a result, children are motivated, enthusiastic learners.
- The manager's overview of children's progress ensures play experiences interest children and support their good progress effectively.
- Safeguarding is a priority for managers, ensuring robust recruitment of staff, to provide a safe secure environment. This means that children feel safe and have confidence to independently play and explore their environment.
- Partnerships with parents and outside agencies are good and this makes a positive contribution to children's learning and supports the acquisition of new skills.

### It is not yet outstanding because

- Staffs' practice to skilfully question children during play and learning experiences differs throughout the nursery. As a result, children are not consistently encouraged to think critically and creatively in their learning.
- Resources and activities across the nursery areas do not consistently reflect diversity and the wider community, to ensure children receive positive messages about people's differences and similarities.

## Information about this inspection

Inspections of registered early years provision are:

- scheduled at least once in every inspection cycle – the current cycle ends on 31 July 2016
- scheduled more frequently where Ofsted identifies a need to do so, for example where provision was previously judged inadequate
- brought forward in the inspection cycle where Ofsted has received information that suggests the provision may not be meeting the legal requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage or where assessment of the provision identifies a need for early inspection
- prioritised where we have received information that the provision is not meeting the requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage and which suggests children may not be safe
- scheduled at the completion of an investigation into failure to comply with the requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage.

The provision is also registered on the voluntary and compulsory parts of the Childcare Register. This report includes a judgment about compliance with the requirements of that register.

## Inspection activities

- The inspector observed play activities and staff interaction with children in playrooms and in the outdoor environment.
- The inspector spoke to the management team, staff and children during the inspection.
- The inspector participated in a joint observation of a creative activity with the manager.
- The inspector examined a representative sample of children's records, nursery procedures and staff appraisal, recruitment and suitability documentation.
- The inspector took account of the views of parents spoken to on the day of inspection.

## Inspector

Patricia Pickens

## Full report

### Information about the setting

Stepping Stones Montessori Childcare Limited was registered in 2010 on the Early Years Register and the compulsory and voluntary parts of the Childcare Register 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. The nursery serves the immediate locality and also the surrounding areas. The nursery opens five days a week from 7.30am to 6pm, all year round, except for bank holidays and a week at Christmas. Out of school care is provided before and after school and during the school holidays. Children have access to an enclosed outdoor play area. There are currently 66 children on roll, of whom 50 children are in the early years age range. The nursery receives funding for the provision of free early education for two-, three- and four-year-old children. The nursery supports children with special educational needs and/or disabilities and children who speak English an additional language. There are currently 10 staff working directly with the children; of these, two hold an appropriate early years qualification at level 3, six at level 6, one holds Qualified Teacher Status and one holds Early Years Professional Status. The nursery receives support from the local authority. The nursery operates in line with Montessori philosophy.

### What the setting needs to do to improve further

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

- identify gaps in staff knowledge to improve the quality of teaching even further, so that children are helped to gain the highest levels of achievement possible, for example, by embedding a consistent approach to skilfully questioning children during play activities, to further enhance their critical thinking and creativity
- provide further opportunities for younger children to make sense of their physical world and their community through opportunities to explore, observe and find out about people, places and the environment.

### Inspection judgements

#### How well the early years provision meets the needs of the range of children who attend

Children are enthusiastic, highly motivated explorers of this warm, welcoming nursery and are confident learners who are able to make decisions. They are supported and encouraged by staff to develop their own ideas, to try new things and take risks to succeed. Children's knowledge and understanding of the world is enriched by their participation in a wealth of learning experiences and activities. For example, children enjoy participating in phonics, registration and news. They recognise their names on the whiteboard and take turns to locate objects with the same initial sound. Children are

inspired to consider one another and listen and learn, by being introduced to a soft toy named Lola. They pass her around, as they excitedly discuss their Easter holidays and anticipated time with their families. An absorbing activity follows as children participate in phonics, singing along with the rhymes and sounding out letters to music. Educational programmes have depth and breadth across all areas of learning, which is enhanced by an abundance of simple tasks to promote independence and resilience building on the Montessori philosophy. Staff provide an excellent blend of formal and free-flow play experiences as part of their school readiness programme for children. Parents are appreciative of this and say their children's education is excellent ensuring they are ready for school. A range of innovative resources provide stimulating, an exciting learning environment, both indoors and outdoors. Staff provide interesting and challenging experiences, which meet the needs of all children, based on an accurate knowledge and understanding of how to promote the learning and development of children. For example, in the after school club, older children are fully involved in planning their own activities, with an outstanding idea of themed evenings. Children plan a week ahead to engage in games night, science night, where they simulated a volcanic eruption or horrible histories and cooking night, allowing opportunities for children to cook their own tea. Although, older children have opportunities to find out about different cultures and religions; resources and activities across the nursery areas do not consistently reflect diversity and the wider community. This means that children do not receive as many positive messages about people's differences and similarities, during their play.

The play environment is colourful and inspirational and children are fully involved in initiating their own play experiences and organising resources, supported by staff who value children's preferences and interests. For example, during play in the outdoor courtyard, children experiment with a water feature, filling buckets of water and watching in fascination as the water flows down fluorescent coloured tubes. A group of children imagine an adventure on the high seas, as they haul in their nets, full of sparkling sea shells and pebbles in a large wooden boat. They search through their treasures with excitement. Children play in the sheltered classroom area, imitating their teachers as they write letters on small chalkboards and pretend they are at school. Musical instruments hung on strings, create a sensory experience as children pluck them from their strings and freely express themselves in song. A large goal and wickets have been sketched on the nursery walls and children have been encouraged to draw shapes to consolidate their learning and personalise their outdoor space. There are signs, letters, numbers and large chalkboards, to promote children's use of numbers and mark making in the outdoor environment, to enhance their understanding and use of numeracy and literacy in their play. A teacher encourages children to measure and calculate capacity as they fill containers with water to pour into an innovative water fountain. He praises children's efforts and extends more able children to count into double figures, based on prior assessment of children's individual skills, making the activity challenging and interesting. This promotes confidence and self-esteem as children smile when praised and show enjoyment in their achievements. However, staffs' practice to skilfully question children during play and learning experiences differs throughout the nursery. As a result, children are not consistently encouraged to think critically and creatively in their learning.

A key person system ensures staff carry out regular spontaneous and planned observations on children. They use this information to assess their progress and plan next

steps, tailoring activities to meet individual children's needs. Children's progress is shared with parents, which helps them to support their child's learning at home. Staff carry out the progress check at age two and the written summary is shared with parents. This ensures all children, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, are progressing well towards the early learning goals and any gaps are closing rapidly. Children are working within the typical range or exceeding levels of development for their age. Communication and language development is effectively supported through songs, stories and literacy. This also supports children who speak English as an additional language to develop their skills. One member of staff is sought out for her cooking skills by the younger children wanting to create Easter nests to take home. Staff and children gather round the table to stir, mix and blend melted chocolate and cereal into nests to independently place their tiny eggs. Children enjoying the activity, with added excitement, evident by the sound of their laughter. In the baby room, the younger children are engrossed in sand play; with shoes and socks cast aside, they sit in the tray and feel the sand between their toes. Children who have just woken, cuddle up close to staff and observe and listen to their peers, enjoying a little world of adventure as staff enthusiastically talk of the beach and the sea and make sandcastles to the babies delight, evident by their excitement and laughter. This promotes their personal and emotional development at an early age and strengthens attachments with adults. Children of all ages are developing confidence in key skills and independence needed for school.

### **The contribution of the early years provision to the well-being of children**

Settling-in procedures for new children are well embedded and effective, with discussions between parents and their child's key person, which ensures children's individual needs are met. This also means that children form happy, secure attachments with staff and each other. Parents are very complimentary about the 'warm, nurturing nursery' where their children are 'very well cared for by friendly staff who are always available' ensuring children settle quickly right from the start. Children demonstrate they feel a strong sense of belonging and security. They are actively encouraged to develop independence and to care for their environment. For example, younger children have access to a low-level sink in the playroom, enabling them to wash their own hands for mealtimes and after messy play activities. Children's lunches are cooked freshly on the premises by a nursery cook, who ensures a balanced diet with healthy tasteful menus. Children enjoy lunch time with their peers and they manage appropriate utensils to competently feed themselves.

Children are supported in keeping themselves and others healthy by learning to address their own personal needs. They are supervised in the safe use of toilets, encouraged to wash their hands, dress themselves and hang coats on their own pegs. This promotes well-being and limits cross-infection, instilling a healthy lifestyle for children. As a result, they develop self-help skills of independence and confidence in caring for themselves and others appropriate to their age and level of understanding. Children's behaviour is good. Staff model and consistently give clear guidance on expected behaviour, providing secure boundaries for children. As a result, minor conflicts are minimised, strengthening relationships among adults, children and their peers.

Children learn to manage risk through activities outdoors where they enjoy vigorous play

in the fresh air. In this way, staff actively promote physical development and a healthy lifestyle. In the outdoor area, a small group of children are fully engaged in caring for small animals. They feed and water the guinea pigs and sit comfortably on chairs, taking turns to cuddle and hold them, supervised closely by a caring member of staff. Children assemble a platform of large plastic crates and while balancing, they negotiate walking from one side to another successfully. Beyond the courtyard is a sensory garden and grassed areas, housing chickens and a large field accessed by children for a range of sports and field games, such as football and badminton. Children develop physical dexterity as they climb on a large wooden climbing frame. A variety of mature trees provide natural shade from direct sunlight, encouraging children to sit in small social groups to forge lasting friendships with their peers. In this way, children are prepared emotionally and socially for the next stage in their learning journey, including school.

### **The effectiveness of the leadership and management of the early years provision**

The safeguarding and security of children are a clear priority for the leadership and management team who ensure rigorous risk assessments, both indoors and outdoors, are in place daily to ensure children are safe and secure at all times. Staff demonstrate an excellent awareness and understanding of potential harm to children and are confident in dealing with any potential safeguarding issues or causes for concern. Children's behaviour shows they feel safe in the nursery, as they share concerns with familiar adults. Visitors are challenged and identity checked. Robust recruitment procedures ensure children are cared for by suitable staff. Security arrangements and effective procedures are in place to ensure children's safety. For example, parents sign their children into nursery and out on collection. Staff complete attendance registers, maintain close supervision of children at all times and ensure each child leaving the premises, are collected by parents and authorised adults. Safeguarding policies are in place and effectively implemented by staff ensuring children are kept safe.

The leadership and senior management team have an excellent understanding of their role and responsibilities within the Early Years Foundation Stage. They are inspirational leaders, who have a clear view of how to drive forward improvements for the benefit of the children entrusted to their care. Self-evaluation is reflective and there are clear plans in place as the whole team strive for continuous improvement. The action and recommendations from the last inspection, have been effectively implemented and further improved upon. For example, thorough risk assessments are in place to assure children's safety. This demonstrates the provider's commitment to provide high quality care and learning for children. Ongoing monitoring of staff performance identifies individual needs of staff, so that training and development is well supported. This results in children making good progress because of the high quality play and learning experiences they receive from staff. Managers have an excellent overview of the educational programmes in all areas of learning. Assessment of children ensures planning is extensive, offering a broad range of challenging and interesting learning experiences for all children.

Partnerships with parents, other agencies and the local school are robust, forging strong links with teachers, so that children are supported in their learning now and in the move

to school in the future. Parents speak highly of the nursery and feel their children are safe and cared for by 'very nice caring staff'. They also comment that 'staff provide a good balance between Montessori and the Early Years Foundation Stage curriculum, to give our children the most excellent start to school'.

### **The Childcare Register**

The requirements for the compulsory part of the Childcare Register are **Met**

The requirements for the voluntary part of the Childcare Register are **Met**

## What inspection judgements mean

### Registered early years provision

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	Outstanding provision is highly effective in meeting the needs of all children exceptionally well. This ensures that children are very well prepared for the next stage of their learning.
Grade 2	Good	Good provision is effective in delivering provision that meets the needs of all children well. This ensures children are ready for the next stage of their learning.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	The provision is not giving children a good standard of early years education and/or there are minor breaches of the safeguarding and welfare requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage. It will be monitored and inspected within twelve months of the date of this inspection.
Grade 4	Inadequate	Provision that is inadequate requires significant improvement and/or enforcement action. The provision is failing to give children an acceptable standard of early years education and/or is not meeting the safeguarding and welfare requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage. It will be monitored and inspected again within six months of the date of this inspection.
Met		The provision has no children on roll. The inspection judgement is that the provider continues to meet the requirements for registration.
Not met		The provision has no children on roll. The inspection judgement is that the provider does not meet the requirements for registration.



## Inspection

This inspection was carried out by Ofsted 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.

## Setting details

<b>Unique reference number</b>	EY415263
<b>Local authority</b>	Cheshire West and Chester
<b>Inspection number</b>	874327
<b>Type of provision</b>	
<b>Registration category</b>	Childcare - Non-Domestic
<b>Age range of children</b>	0 - 17
<b>Total number of places</b>	58
<b>Number of children on roll</b>	66
<b>Name of provider</b>	Stepping Stones Montessori Childcare Ltd
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	23/11/2010
<b>Telephone number</b>	01244 332 270

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## Type of provision

For the purposes of this inspection the following definitions apply:

Full-time provision is that which operates for more than three hours. These are usually known as nurseries, nursery schools and pre-schools and must deliver the Early Years Foundation Stage. They are registered on the Early Years Register and pay the higher fee for registration.

Sessional provision operates for more than two hours but does not exceed three hours in any one day. These are usually known as pre-schools, kindergartens or nursery schools

and must deliver the Early Years Foundation Stage. They are registered on the Early Years Register and pay the lower fee for registration.

Childminders care for one or more children where individual children attend for a period of more than two hours in any one day. They operate from domestic premises, which are usually the childminder's own home. They are registered on the Early Years Register and must deliver the Early Years Foundation Stage.

Out of school provision may be sessional or full-time provision and is delivered before or after school and/or in the summer holidays. They are registered on the Early Years Register and must deliver the Early Years Foundation Stage. Where children receive their Early Years Foundation Stage in school these providers do not have to deliver the learning and development requirements in full but should complement the experiences children receive in school.

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