

Stepping Stones Nursery

322 Coleshill Road, Birmingham, West Midlands, B36 8BG

Inspection date	26/06/2014
Previous inspection date	09/07/2010

The quality and standards of the early years provision	This inspection:	3
	Previous inspection:	2
How well the early years provision meets the needs of the range of children who attend		3
The contribution of the early years provision to the well-being of children		3
The effectiveness of the leadership and management of the early years provision		3

The quality and standards of the early years provision

This provision requires improvement

- Babies and children are happy and settled. They grow in confidence and develop a sense of belonging because staff are encouraging, adapt their support to cater for children's differing ways of learning, and follow up their interests.
- Managers and staff skilfully work with parents and other agencies to assess and meet the needs of children who are vulnerable or who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. They confidently agree and implement well-targeted, timely support for children and regularly contribute to reviews to ensure their intervention continues to promote each child's health, well-being and development.

It is not yet good because

- Arrangements for monitoring the safety and security of the main outdoor play area are not consistently thorough so some hazards are not promptly addressed, to ensure that children's safety is fully underpinned at all times.
- The quality of teaching is variable. There are inconsistencies in how effectively staff plan for babies' and children's next steps in learning and interact with them. This means that they do not always successfully build on their understanding and skills. Staff do not make the best use of resources and equipment outdoors, which means that some activities lack interest and challenge.

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 compulsory part of the Childcare Register. This report includes a judgment about compliance with the requirements of that register.

Inspection activities

- The inspector observed activities in the four playrooms and the outdoor areas.
- The inspector carried out a joint observation with one of the nursery managers.
- The inspector held meetings with the provider, other director and manager.
- The inspector spoke to children and staff throughout the inspection.
- The inspector looked at children's assessment records and planning documentation.
- The inspector checked evidence of suitability and qualifications of staff working with children.
- The inspector discussed the provider's monitoring and evaluation procedures and plans for improvement.
- The inspector looked at a sample of records and policies relating to children's welfare, health and safety.
- The inspector took account of the views of parents and carers spoken to on the day and from their written response to the provider's parent survey.

Inspector

Rachel Wyatt

Full report

Information about the setting

Stepping Stones Nursery was registered on the Early Years Register and the compulsory part of the Childcare Register in 2010. It is one of two nurseries run by the same company. The nursery operates from a converted house in Hodge Hill, Birmingham and children are looked after in four playrooms on the ground and first floors. There are enclosed areas for outdoor play. The nursery employs 20 members of childcare staff, including a director, who shares the management of the nursery with another manager. They both have Early Years Professional status. Of the remaining staff, 13 have appropriate early years qualifications from level 2 to level 5. The nursery opens Monday to Friday for 51 weeks of the year, from 7.30am until 6pm. Children attend for a variety of sessions. There are currently 91 children on roll who are within the early years age range. The nursery provides funded early education for two-, three- and four-year-olds. It supports children with special educational needs and/or disabilities.

What the setting needs to do to improve further

To meet the requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage the provider must:

- improve arrangements for assessing risks and for monitoring the safety and security of the main outdoor play area, so that grassed areas and other surfaces are well maintained and free from hazards, equipment is clean and well presented and the security gate can be easily opened in an emergency
- improve the accuracy of staff's planning for children's next steps and the quality of their teaching, so they effectively interact with children and consistently consolidate and extend their understanding and skills in order to ensure children make good progress.

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

- make better use of toys, equipment, resources and spaces in outdoor areas to provide babies and children with good quality learning experiences which keep them motivated and encourage their exploration, creativity and coordination and control in movement.

Inspection judgements

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

Babies and children enjoy being at nursery. They soon settle and most of them are keen to join in activities. For example, a group of toddlers relish a fun foot painting activity,

confidently choosing colours, carefully painting the soles of their feet and making prints. Children are absorbed and show great delight when staff join in, resulting in plenty of excited conversation. Staff are generally receptive to those children who find it more difficult to take part, for instance, in a group activity. They often organise appropriate alternative activities for these children, such as playing a game or looking at books, so that staff can continue to promote their listening, attention and conversation.

While the nursery's educational programmes cover the areas of learning, overall, the quality of planning and teaching varies so that not all children make good progress. Although staff seek parents' views about their children's abilities and complete regular observations and assessments, their planning is not always precisely focused on children's learning and development needs. There are inconsistencies in how well some staff interact with babies and children so they do not always successfully build on, and extend, children's skills and understanding. Some activities are mundane, lack resources and are not well managed. This is particularly the case with regard to children's learning outdoors. Staff are not consistently making the best use of equipment, toys, resources and space outdoors in order to motivate children and to offer them a good level of challenge.

Overall, most children are working within the typical range of development expected for their age. Staff ensure children develop the skills they need for the next stage in their learning, including going to school. For example, toddlers and pre-school children are usually encouraged to be attentive, to listen carefully and to take turns in speaking, for instance, during group discussions and story times. Most three and four year old children are confident, articulate speakers, expressing their ideas, talking about what they are doing, recalling events and asking and answering questions. Staff extend these children's expressive language and their language for thinking, for instance, during a fun game when children are encouraged to identify a hidden object from another child's description of its shape and texture. When children are ready, staff further extend their mark making and recognition of letters and sounds. As a result, many pre-school children identify and form individual letters and words, such as their name.

The provider, managers and special educational needs coordinator have considerable expertise and experience of working with children with special educational needs and/or disabilities. They sensitively work with parents and effectively liaise with other professionals to accurately assess the needs of children with special educational needs and/or disabilities or those with developmental delay. In partnership with other agencies, they implement well-targeted support and strategies to help these children to make suitable progress in relation to their starting points.

Parents' and carers' views about their child's interests, backgrounds and abilities are encouraged and followed up by staff at nursery. They give parents and carers regular feedback about their children's daily activities and achievements. Parents welcome opportunities to more formally review their child's progress, for instance, during parents' evenings, which are held twice a year. Parents are given ideas for their children's learning to follow up at home and tell staff about what their children have enjoyed and achieved at home.

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

Children's safety is not fully promoted in the main outdoor play area. Weaknesses in assessing risks result in some hazards not being removed, such as an uncovered container, which is full of water. Limited maintenance of the grounds results in potential trip hazards caused by vegetation and uneven surfaces. A newly fitted gate is secure but cannot be opened easily, posing difficulties in an emergency. Some outdoor equipment is worn or grubby. Other parts of the nursery premises, including the decking area used by babies and toddlers, are safe and secure and adequately maintained. Staff complete regular safety and hygiene checks and keep areas clean. The provider also employs a pest control contractor who carries out regular checks. Babies and children are looked after in rooms which are welcoming and generally well equipped, and where they can help themselves to books and some resources.

Other aspects of babies' and children's well-being are effectively promoted. Each child has a key person with whom they form close attachments. Key persons support babies and children in settling when they first start at nursery. They take account of information provided by parents about their children's backgrounds and interests to help them to get to know and reassure children. Thereafter, staff effectively foster babies' and children's confidence and positive relationships. As a result, they are prepared emotionally and socially for moving within the nursery and for starting school. For example, staff promote children's good behaviour by talking about what is happening next and what is expected of them. During activities and routines, adults encourage children to cooperate, take turns, share and be helpful. Babies and children are keen to do well because staff often praise their efforts. For example, pre-school children talk about and celebrate each other's achievements. During sessions, staff ensure babies and children have time to socialise, for instance, at mealtimes and have opportunities to learn together during group activities. When children find it difficult to relate to others, managers and staff work sensitively with them to help them to understand boundaries and to support them in mixing with other children. Babies and children behave well, and are often attentive and respond to staff's requests.

Staff foster babies' and children's good health. Most staff conscientiously follow babies' and children's care, hygiene and sleep routines and confidently manage their individual and sometimes quite complex medical needs. During hand washing routines, nappy changes and toileting, staff teach children about the importance of good hygiene. They help them to become more independent in seeing to their personal care. For instance, toddlers quickly take off their shoes and socks unaided, in readiness for a foot painting activity. With regard to children's comfort and hygiene, the provider and staff ensure babies' and toddlers' nappies are changed regularly and they give parents daily feedback about these and other aspects of their child's care. Children also have plenty of fresh air as they regularly play outside. However, the quality of physical play activities is variable as staff do not always make the best use of equipment or focus their support on developing children's good balance, control and coordination in large movements. Therefore, teaching in this area is not as strong as it could be.

The effectiveness of the leadership and management of the early years

provision

The provider, other director and senior managers aspire to improve. They have appropriate systems for monitoring and evaluating all aspects of the nursery provision, including the quality of teaching and children's learning. From their observations and reviews of staff practice and procedures they have identified relevant priorities for improvement. For example, information from tracking of children's progress, reviews of assessment and planning records and observations of staff's practice, have enabled leaders and managers to assess the quality of teaching and of the educational programme and of teaching. As a result, they have identified the need to improve consistency and accuracy in staff's planning for children's future learning, and to raise the quality of their interactions with children. The provider and other leaders have planned in-service training and mentoring for staff, but these have not yet been fully implemented. This means planning and teaching still require improvement to ensure all children make good progress and so that the provider fully meets the learning and development requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage.

The provider and her colleagues recognise that the organisation and management of the main outdoor area requires improvement to ensure it is well maintained and so that children can take part in good quality learning experiences outside. However, they and the staff have not been consistently thorough in monitoring safety in this area. As a result, children's safety is not fully underpinned as hazards have not been noticed, although the provider has taken steps to ensure the new perimeter gate is repositioned to improve security. This means that requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage and the compulsory part of the Childcare Register have not been met.

Arrangements for performance management are in place and staff attend regular training. This includes in-service training, for instance, about different aspects of safeguarding and opportunities for staff to discuss and review their practice and the nursery's procedures. The provider involves parents, carers and staff in self-evaluation of the nursery's strengths and weaknesses, for instance, through parents' surveys and staff's review of policies and procedures and audits of practice in their rooms.

The provider, managers and staff continue to effectively safeguard children. The provider and managers are proactive about ensuring they and staff have a sound understanding of local safeguarding procedures and current issues relating to child protection. Leaders and managers who have lead responsibility for safeguarding have attended relevant training and they effectively involve staff in discussions about signs of abuse and to consider how they would respond to different scenarios, including how they would react to a colleague's inappropriate conduct. The provider and other managers take prompt, appropriate action to make referrals when there are concerns about a child's welfare. They work professionally and conscientiously with families and other agencies to promote the welfare of vulnerable children. There are clear complaints and whistleblowing procedures to enable parents and staff to pass on any concerns to the provider or the Local Safeguarding Children Board and Ofsted. Staff show that they are confident to alert the provider or senior managers if they are worried about a child's welfare or about any aspects of a colleague's conduct. Staff are suitably deployed to ensure babies and children

are supervised and not left unattended.

Partnerships with parents and carers and other agencies are well established and make a strong contribution to meeting children's needs. Staff and parents regularly exchange information about babies' and children's care, learning and development. Parents appreciate the good quality information they receive about how the nursery operates and about their own child's routines, activities and achievements. Strong links with different agencies enable managers and staff to seek advice and to work with other professionals to accurately assess and plan for the individual needs of children who are at risk of harm or who have additional needs. Managers and staff also have effective relationships with other providers and schools. This ensures continuity for children who attend more than one setting and helps children make smooth transitions into full-time education. Key persons pass on appropriate information about children's progress to the schools they are moving on to and help to prepare children for different aspects of school life and learning in new surroundings.

The Childcare Register

The requirements for the compulsory part of the Childcare Register are

**Not Met
(with
actions)**

To meet the requirements of the Childcare Register the provider must:

- ensure that the premises and equipment used for the purposes of the childcare are safe and suitable for that childcare (compulsory part of the Childcare Register).

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. We re-inspect nurseries and pre-schools judged as requires improvement within 12 months of the date of 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		There were no children present at the time of the inspection. The inspection judgement is that the provider continues to meet the requirements for registration.
Not met		There were no children present at the time of the inspection. 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

Unique reference number	EY405710
Local authority	Birmingham
Inspection number	979474
Type of provision	
Registration category	Childcare - Non-Domestic
Age range of children	0 - 8
Total number of places	62
Number of children on roll	91
Name of provider	Smarteenies Birmingham Ltd
Date of previous inspection	09/07/2010
Telephone number	0121 748 6666

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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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