

Stepping Stones Nursery

Inspection report for early years provision

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Inspection date	25/11/2009
Inspector	Adelaide Griffith
Setting address	12 Stoney Road, COVENTRY, CV1 2NP
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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.

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Description of the setting

Stepping Stones Nursery is run by Smartenies Ltd. It opened in 1989 and re-registered in 2006. The nursery operates from a converted house close to Coventry city centre. The nursery is open each day from 8.15am to 5.30pm for 51 weeks of the year, except for one week at Christmas.

The nursery is registered on the Early Years Register. A maximum of 53 children may attend the nursery at any one time. There are currently 65 children aged from 11 months to under five years on roll, some in part-time places. The nursery currently supports children with special educational needs and/or disabilities. It also supports children who speak English as an additional language. The nursery offers a facility for children aged over five years to eight years during the school holidays. The nursery is also registered by Ofsted on the compulsory part of the Childcare Register.

There are 18 members of staff, all of whom hold appropriate early years qualifications to at least NVQ Level 2. One member of staff holds Early Years Professional Status. The nursery receives funding for children aged three and four years. The nursery also receives support from the local authority.

The overall effectiveness of the early years provision

Overall the quality of the provision is outstanding.

Children are flourishing in this child-centred nursery that provides an inclusive environment in which they are totally at ease. Children's welfare is comprehensively safeguarded and their diverse needs are extensively addressed. The productive partnerships with parents and other agencies ensure that children receive the support they need and all are making significant progress in their learning and development. Owing to systematic implementation of the self-evaluation process, many changes have resulted in effective outcomes for children. There are plans for further development of the nursery in order to maintain improvements for the benefit of children and their families.

What steps need to be taken to improve provision further?

To further improve the high quality early years provision the registered person should consider:

- increase the provision of resources that help children to learn about disability.

The effectiveness of leadership and management of the early years provision

There is a very strong emphasis on safeguarding children, with robust policies and procedures that are understood by staff. They are well-informed about child protection issues. Rigorous recruitment and vetting procedures ensure that all adults are suitable to work with children. The environment, both indoors and outside, is subject to thorough risk assessments that ensure that all potential hazards to children are effectively minimised.

The management has a commendable sense of purpose about what they want to achieve with their staff. For this reason there is a comprehensive personal development programme that provides opportunity for all staff to extend their knowledge and understanding of the early years sector. For example, several members of staff are working towards further qualifications that include degree courses. Staff are supported in their practice through positive monitoring activities. This is a cohesive team that shares the vision of the managers to ensure that all children achieve their potential and have a real sense of belonging within the nursery. Staff are effectively deployed to support children individually or in small groups and they ensure that resources are accessible to children at all times.

The managers reflect consistently on the feedback received from staff, parents and external agencies. They have made significant changes that promote children's care and learning effectively. For example, they focus on different areas of learning as a rolling programme and make necessary changes. In response to parental requests for changes in the written communication about children's experiences, learning journals are used to provide information about developmental progress. In addition, a raft of effective changes, such as a free-flow system for all age groups, have been made since the last inspection to improve outcomes for children substantially. The managers demonstrate a strong capacity to make necessary improvements recommended at the last inspection. There are plans to make further improvements, outside and indoors, for the benefit of all children.

There is a successful partnership with parents based on the managers' willingness to take on board issues that are raised. A wide variety of methods are used to maintain the flow of communication. Parents comment on the professionalism and warm attitude of staff and their ability to make each child feel special. When children first start, information is obtained about routines and aspects of their development. Parents are actively invited to participate in activities by taking home books for reading and learning journeys for recording perceptions of their child's development. The relationship with other agencies is well-established. For example, the staff have worked consistently with local authority personnel to improve aspects of the provision. Information is shared through diaries and summaries of children's development with other early years providers.

The nursery has a convincing ethos of promoting children's individuality. Signing is used to enhance communication with babies and toddlers. For children who speak English as additional language, resources including talking pens are available and a wide selection of attractive flash cards provide images with the spoken word.

Children are highly valued and for this reason staff go to some length to note their emotional and social skills in order to identify hidden issues that may affect their learning and behaviour and to put in place effective strategies that overcome these barriers. They unreservedly promote the wide ranging cultures of all children through activities, an interesting selection of music, meals and toys. Although procedures are in place to review how children's understanding of diversity is promoted, there are relatively few resources to raise their awareness of disability.

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

Children are making substantial progress in their learning and development because staff are extremely competent in stimulating interest. Naturally occurring situations, such as a plane flying overhead, are used to capture children's attention and discussions evolve about the rate at which it travels. Enthusiastic staff join in with children's role play activities by pretending to buy items in the shop and this effectively supports their understanding of some daily routines. Owing to the staff's experience they are able to extend learning considerably. Having talked with children about the life cycles of insects seen on the window ledge, all are provided with an opportunity to look closely and to draw representations of what they have perceived.

Staff are very adept at working with children's preferences in order to raise achievement. For instance, owing to children's fascination with light, a projector is used to focus on toy animals about which they are apprehensive. This sensitive approach is very effective in helping children to see animals from a different perspective and to develop their confidence. There is a strong belief in promoting children's self-esteem. For instance, a wealth of photographs is used to display children and their families on coat pegs, maps, during daily registration and in accessible profiles books throughout the nursery. This means that children's identity is successfully nurtured within related contexts, such as making links with home experiences and their growing understanding of the wider world.

The staff have high expectations of children and they provide fitting challenges to stimulate learning precisely. Through successive observations, they have identified that a group of children, mainly boys, have a real interest in superheroes. Staff have innovatively planned a wide range of activities to promote learning and, specifically, to encourage numerical skills for those children who need extra support. Also, children are encouraged to label drawings that they have made by using some recognisable letters. Children participate in activities across all the areas of learning. For this purpose a fantastic mural painted on the wall outside brings to life images that children encounter in their daily lives. For example, they are accessing bikes more to ride alongside the realistic street depicted in the mural. Similarly, the quarry with a vibrantly painted digger at the other end stimulates play in the soil. This means that children's awareness of the environment is substantially promoted.

Children enjoy their time at the nursery immensely and they participate in music to movement in the soft-play room, where physical exercise is enhanced by

appropriate lighting. Children are learning about the effects of physical play outside. After running around for a considerable period, some return indoors to sit for a while because 'it is cold outside'. Children demonstrate fully their understanding of making healthy choices by explaining that all vegetables served must be eaten 'to make you big' and they talk about drinking lots of water. They are acquiring precise knowledge of personal hygiene as they state that they must wash their hands following play with paints.

Children are developing an awareness of maintaining their own safety and that of others due to reminders to avoid stepping on their peers when moving around. They feel secure in the nursery because staff respond promptly to their discomfort or requests for help. They are praised consistently for good behaviour, for effort and for achievement and this contributes to children's ability to maintain concentration when engaged in activities. At times they play with their peers or on their own and they remain focussed even without adult intervention. Furthermore, they share and take turns appropriately. Skills for the future are linked to visits from people in the community, for example, policemen helps children to learn about the world around them. In addition, the staff talk and listen to children constantly. Their problem solving abilities and capacity for critical thinking are well-promoted due to challenges when staff ask for solutions to extract tools from a hollow tube. Owing to prolific strategies used by knowledgeable staff, children are making strides in their progress towards the early learning goals.

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

How well does the setting meet the needs of the children in the Early Years Foundation Stage?	1
The capacity of the provision to maintain continuous improvement	1

The effectiveness of leadership and management of the early years provision

How effectively is the Early Years Foundation Stage led and managed?	1
The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	1
The effectiveness with which the setting deploys resources	1
The effectiveness with which the setting promotes equality and diversity	1
The effectiveness of safeguarding	1
The effectiveness of the setting's self-evaluation, including the steps taken to promote improvement	1
The effectiveness of partnerships	1
The effectiveness of the setting's engagement with parents and carers	1

The quality of the provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage

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Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage

Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	1
The extent to which children achieve and enjoy their learning	1
The extent to which children feel safe	1
The extent to which children adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which children make a positive contribution	1
The extent to which children develop skills for the future	1

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Annex B: the Childcare Register

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

Met