

Stepping Stones Co-op Nursery Ltd

Unit 26, Werdohl Business Park, No 1 Industrial Estate, Consett, Co Durham, DH8 6TJ

Inspection date	24/04/2014
Previous inspection date	06/10/2009

The quality and standards of the early years provision	This inspection:	2
	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

- Children are motivated to learn because staff are skilled at teaching and following children's interests and facilitating their ideas. As a result, children are continually absorbed in purposeful play and make good progress in their learning.
- Staff form close and caring relationships with all children and parents, which ensures children settle successfully. Consequently, children are happy, content and have good levels of confidence.
- Children are well safeguarded. This is because staff are very knowledgeable about their role and responsibility to keep children safe and the premises are kept secure.
- The partnerships with parents are strong with regard to sharing information that supports staff in meeting children's care and learning needs effectively.

It is not yet outstanding because

- Performance management is not yet fully embedded and personalised in order to fully support staff in understanding what they need to do to develop their already good practice even further, so that children consistently achieve the very highest levels of attainment.
- There is room to improve the speed in which information is sought from other professionals who are working with children.

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.

Inspection activities

- The inspector observed activities throughout the nursery in both indoor and outdoor spaces.
- The inspector looked at children's records, observation and assessment files, planning documentation and a selection of policies.
- The inspector spoke to the deputies, staff and children throughout the inspection.
- The inspector took account of parents' views through discussion and information from the setting's self-evaluation.
- The inspector carried out a joint observation with the deputy.

Inspector

Janet Fairhurst

Full report

Information about the setting

Stepping Stones Co-op Nursery Ltd was registered in 2006 and is on the Early Years Register. It is situated in purpose-built premises situated on a business park on the outskirts of Consett, and is managed by a committee comprised of staff and parents. Children are accommodated across three rooms and there is an enclosed outdoor play area. The nursery serves the local area and is accessible to all children. The nursery opens Monday to Friday all year round. Sessions are from 7.30am until 6.15pm. Children attend for a variety of sessions. The nursery employs 10 members of childcare staff. Of these, all hold appropriate early years qualifications at level 2 and above, including one with Early Years Professional Status. There are currently 65 children on roll who are in the early years age group. The nursery provides funded early education for three- and four-year-olds.

What the setting needs to do to improve further

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

- develop staff performance management even further, for example, by providing more frequent personalised peer observations that identify specific targets, so that staff know exactly what they need to do to be even more effective early educators
- enhance further the arrangements for sharing information and partnership working with other professionals to obtain a fuller picture of how they are working with children, in order to fully support their learning and development.

Inspection judgements

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

Children make good progress towards the early learning goals as staff have a secure understanding of the Early Years Foundation Stage. This is reflected in all areas of learning being covered in the child-initiated planning. Children's achievements are recorded in individual files which include colourful photographs and examples of their work linked to the areas of learning. Effective procedures are in place to monitor children's starting points. As a result, records show a clear picture of children's development and achievements. Staff meet regularly to discuss children's progress and their emerging interests, and they use this information well in providing learning activities. Detailed information about how children learn and progress is shared with parents, helping them to become actively involved in their child's learning within the nursery and at home. For instance, parents receive regular progress reports which detail their children's recent achievements and their next steps in learning, ensuring continuity in children's learning. Key persons working with the toddlers discuss with parents the most suitable time to

complete the short written summary in time for children's health visitor check before they are three years old.

The quality of teaching is good because staff have high expectations and plan activities that engage and sustain the interest of the children. Children's communication and language skills are promoted as the environment is rich in language and children have many opportunities to engage in meaningful discussions with staff, which supports their developing vocabulary and speech. Teaching is effective in the way staff question and talk to the children about what they are doing. This deepens children's thinking and develops their language and communication skills. Children make good progress in literacy. For example, when a group of pre-school children settle at the computer, an adult immediately goes to them and asks a series of questions that result in the children picking out letters to represent their names. Very quickly they begin to increase their knowledge of letter sounds and spelling. When children are being read to, they are very interested in the story and ask many questions about what they are hearing. Staff model being thinkers as they demonstrate that they do not know all the answers to the children's questions but discuss how they think they could find the answer. As a result, children are learning well. Children have regular opportunities to make marks and practise their writing skills in a variety of different ways. Staff effectively take every opportunity to develop children's mathematics and number skills in all nursery activities. For example, the pre-school children are challenged to find record and name the numbers they find in the outdoor play area. Armed with their clipboards, they enthusiastically search the garden for the number cards, calling out with glee once they have located them. From this they demonstrate their skills in making marks as they record the numbers using their clipboards. Most children identify the numbers with ease, however, those who are unsure demonstrate good problem-solving skills by counting out the dots on each of the cards.

Babies are sensitively supported in their sensory and exploratory play. For example, staff sit with them on the floor as they play in the water tray. Various sized containers are introduced that encourage the toddlers to engage, while the babies enjoy splashing, demonstrating their enjoyment. Children benefit from good opportunities to develop skills in information technology. They confidently use the computer, developing their fine motor skills as they use the mouse to work through the simple programmes. Their natural inquisitiveness is encouraged as they make scientific discoveries while playing with the large magnets. They learn about nature and how things grow, with the help of staff. They collaborate to plant and water cauliflowers and harvest their crops, which are they are then able to cook and eat. Children are encouraged to be imaginative and express themselves freely. They become absorbed in role play and enjoy dressing up as doctors and nurses. Opportunities for children to explore expressive arts and design are promoted very well. They become engrossed in designing their own traffic light system, and the characteristics of effective learning are clear to see. Children engage well with the activity and have a go at coming up with their own ideas. Staff provide good opportunities that promote children's physical development. For example, babies have space to crawl and use sturdy furniture to pull themselves up and coast around the room. Toddlers' natural instinct to climb and explore are fostered well through appropriate climbing equipment in the room. Pre-school children get very excited when it is time to play outside, where they effectively negotiate the large-scale play apparatus, dig in the sand and build using the large outdoor blocks. As a result, children's physical skills are developing well.

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

Staff provide a secure and loving environment in which babies and children feel comfortable, safe and secure. Effective settling-in arrangements are in place and both children and parents are well prepared when children join the nursery. A wealth of good quality information is shared to ensure individual routines and needs are well met, particularly for babies and toddlers. Children are equally well prepared for the transitions they make within the nursery because they know all the staff well and spend time in different rooms before they move into them permanently. Detailed information is shared to ensure there is continuity in their learning, development and welfare. Teachers from the schools children will be moving to are invited to visit the nursery. This provides an opportunity for children to meet them in a secure and familiar environment, and also enables staff to share with them children's achievements. As a result, children are well prepared for their next stage in learning.

Staff have successfully created a learning environment that encourage children's interests and enables them to make choices in their learning. All resources are stored in easily accessible containers. Consequently, children are encouraged to make decisions about what equipment they want to use. Staff in the baby room place treasure baskets on the carpet. These are filled with various sensory objects so that babies can easily reach out and touch them as they explore independently. Staff model positive behaviour towards the children, fostering a culture of respect and consideration towards others. Children get on well together and the nursery is a harmonious place to be, resulting in equality of opportunity for all. Their good behaviour is promoted by staff, who encourage manners and kindness. Children are learning to share and cooperate with each other and these are skills they will take with them when they move on to school and the next stage in their learning. They respond positively to sensible safety rules, such as walking carefully indoors so as not to trip or hurt themselves or others, developing a good understanding of safe behaviour. Visitors, such as police, fire fighters, animal encounter companies and road safety officers, are used to enhance children awareness of their own safety. These provide children with first-hand experiences which make learning fun and interesting.

Children learn about the diverse world through a variety of activities and projects which help them to understand the meaning of different beliefs and traditions. For example, they nursery have made links with a school in Jamaica and donated art resources. In return they received photographs from the school which led to the creation of displays and discussions around the different culture and how people live. Staff help children to develop a good understanding of the importance of healthy lifestyles and independence in their personal hygiene. For instance, older children follow good hygiene routines by washing their hands at regular intervals throughout the day. Younger children become increasingly aware of their own toileting needs, receiving prompt support from staff to assist in their next stage of development. For example, nappy changing takes place according to children's individual needs, and these times are sensitively and hygienically managed. Children have daily opportunities to play outdoors and enjoy fresh air and exercise, and this contributes to their health and well-being. Mealtimes are sociable occasions where children in each room sit together in small groups with a member of staff, increasing their

personal, social and emotional development. Staff have created cosy areas which are accessible to children when they wish to rest, sleep and relax. Babies and toddlers go to sleep happily with staff close by to help them settle.

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

The management team have a very good understanding of their responsibility to ensure that the nursery meets the safeguarding and welfare requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage. Staff demonstrate a very secure knowledge of child protection procedures and are clear with regard to their individual and collective roles and responsibilities. Robust recruitment and vetting procedures are in place, which ensures the continuing safety of the children. Children are cared for in a safe environment that is free from hazards. This is due to the risk assessments that staff conduct as well as their vigilant supervision of children. All visitors to the premises have their identification checked and they sign the visitors' book. Consequently, children are very effectively safeguarded. The deployment of staff is good, with an appropriate ratio of adults to children, which means that the support children need is successfully provided.

The manager and her deputies work directly with children during the beginning and end of the day, and this provides some useful insight into quality of practice. The manager has established a system for observing practice within each room. However, there is scope to develop this even further by increasing the frequency of the monitoring and to focus more on individual practice so that any areas for development are clearly identified and personalised. This will help staff fully understand what they need to do in order to be highly effective teachers, so that children are best supported to achieve the highest levels of attainment. There is a staff appraisal system in place and management make good use of local authority early years training workshops and courses to develop staff's skills and practice. Overall, good systems are in place to monitor progress for each individual child attending. This generally ensures that any gaps in children's learning are quickly identified and intervention is received at the earliest possible stage. However, very occasionally staff lack sufficient information regarding how other professionals, such as speech therapists, are working with children. This has the potential to hinder the good support that can be offered to help children become fully ready for school.

High emphasis is put on partnerships with parent to support children's well-being. Parents receive information booklets when they first start and are actively encouraged to get involved in their child's learning. For example, they make good use of communication books to pass information between parents and the nursery. This, combined with verbal feedback, regular parents' evenings and the book lending library, ensures that they remain involved and up to date with their child's care and learning. Parents support the nursery exceptionally well notably through the highly successful 'Friends of Stepping Stones' a group formed and managed by the parents. Parents comment with enthusiasm as to how they are supported and their children nurtured. Effective procedures are in place to support children who attend other early years settings and for those moving on to primary school, which ensures continuity and consistency of care and learning. The nursery has a very strong commitment towards continuous improvement, which is shown through the

rigorous self-evaluation detailing the well-targeted plans for the future improvement of the nursery. Parents' and children's views are actively sought to support staff in continually making improvements. For example, staff talk to children about what they like to play with and what new toys they would like to try. Managers then review them and, if appropriate, implement changes to their practice to benefit children.

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

Unique reference number	EY334496
Local authority	Durham
Inspection number	862612
Type of provision	
Registration category	Childcare - Non-Domestic
Age range of children	0 - 5
Total number of places	43
Number of children on roll	65
Name of provider	Stepping Stones Co-Operative Nursery Ltd
Date of previous inspection	06/10/2009
Telephone number	01207 580006

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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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