

A Step Ahead Children's Nursery

Leechpond Hill, Lower Beeding, West Sussex, RH13 6NR

Inspection date	10/03/2014
Previous inspection date	30/09/2011

The quality and standards of the early years provision	This inspection:	1
	Previous inspection:	1
How well the early years provision meets the needs of the range of children who attend		1
The contribution of the early years provision to the well-being of children		1
The effectiveness of the leadership and management of the early years provision		1

The quality and standards of the early years provision

This provision is outstanding

- The nursery staff follow robust procedures which give the highest priority to the safety, welfare and well-being of children. Staff are very vigilant in their supervision of children, while at the same time allowing them the freedom to explore their environment safely.
- The key person system works extremely effectively to ensure the assessment and recording of children's progress and the identification of children's specific needs are comprehensive.
- Partnerships with parents are very strong, which supports continuity of children's care routines, learning and development.
- Ongoing monitoring and self-reflection is robust and includes high quality supervision based on rigorous evaluation. Targeted professional development is highly focused on identified areas for continual improvement.

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 children's play and staff interaction.
- The inspectors spoke to parents and children present on the day and took account of the nursery's improvement plan.
- The inspector examined documentation including a representative sample of children's records, policies, staff training records and staff suitability records.
- The inspector talked with available staff and held discussions with the manager and provider.
- The inspector looked at arrangements for keeping children safe and maintaining the premises and equipment.

Inspector

Nadia Mahabir

Full report

Information about the setting

A Step Ahead Children's Nursery opened in 2000. It operates from a purpose built building in Lower Beeding, West Sussex. Children have access to various base rooms and a secure outside play area. The nursery is open each weekday from 7.30am to 6.00pm all year round. The pre-school is registered on the Early Years Register and the compulsory and voluntary parts of the Childcare Register. There are currently 82 children in the early years age group on roll. The nursery receives funding for the provision of free early education for children aged two, three and four years. The nursery supports children who speak English as an additional language. Sixteen staff work with children, of whom fourteen hold early years qualifications. One members of staff hold Early Years Professional Status, and one is working towards the qualification.

What the setting needs to do to improve further

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

- enhance the outdoor area further so that there is a more varied range of activities that continue to develop the children's already good understanding of the world.

Inspection judgements

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

Children are highly motivated and show great enthusiasm as they play and learn. Staff provide a well-resourced indoor environment which they organise effectively. They do this by creating an environment where children may easily choose from an excellent range of toys and resources that meet their developmental needs. Pre-school children are learning to be independent in their play. They make their own decisions about the activities they wish to engage in and move confidently between the different resources, rooms and indoor and outdoor areas. As a result, children find the equipment they require and make independent choices from the wide selection available. This approach helps children become independent as learners in readiness for their eventual move to school. Children make excellent progress in their personal, social and emotional development. The staff place extremely strong emphasis on building relationships with children and their families from the outset, so that they know precisely how to meet their individual needs.

Staff have successfully created an environment which is rich in signs and symbols, and their inspiring enthusiasm for stories and books has a very positive impact on children's learning. For example, younger children show great interest in books, will independently select and often imitate reading behaviour in preparation for their own development in

future reading and listening skills. Staff recognise the importance of children's language development and use a range of teaching strategies to build children's vocabularies and confidence in speaking. They promote children's communication and language skills very successfully and as a result, children engage in meaningful conversations with adults and friends. They clearly know when to listen and pay attention, for example, during stories and group discussions. They articulately express their ideas, describe what they are doing or making, and readily respond to questions. They develop control and coordination when using pencils and crayons in readiness for mark making and recognise and use letters and sounds. Staff teach children excellent mathematical skills through practical play experiences. They teach children early mathematical language. For example, children often refer to objects by size and shape, and regularly count spontaneously during their play. Children complete a range of puzzles. They build using a wide range of construction and fit shapes into the shape sorter.

Activities are presented in different ways to suit the needs of all children. Babies have a strong exploratory impulse, moving to sounds and sights that intrigue them. Staff demonstrate how toys work so that babies press buttons to repeat the experience. Babies who are not yet walking gain confidence as they move around holding onto furniture to reach the toys that fascinate them. They enjoy exploring their environment using their senses as they access a wide range of natural play materials. Provision for sensory play is a key strength of the educational programme for children aged under two. A well-stocked treasure basket of everyday objects and materials, which all look and feel different, keeps them enthralled for ages. They explore diverse creative media, such as coloured paint mixed with cereal. They use shaving foam, experimenting with their hands and feet. They use toy cars to create patterns and marks. Furthermore, babies squeal with delight as staff praise them for their achievements. This promotes their self esteem and encourages them to continue to develop their physical capabilities, such as learning to stand.

Children of all ages make excellent progress in their learning in relation to their starting points. Profiles clearly show how each child will be challenged appropriately across all areas of learning. This system monitors how well children are progressing in each development area. Staff complete the progress check for two-year-old children to identify children's strengths and areas where they make less than expected progress. Parents and carers actively contribute to their children's learning and development at the pre-school and at home. This information helps staff to get to know children and to plan for their starting points and next steps. Staff give transfers into, and out of, the nursery the highest priority because they recognise their importance in children's development. Children, therefore, settle easily and are prepared extremely well in readiness for the move to school.

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

The nursery offers a very stimulating and well-resourced environment with good quality resources that are organised attractively. This is an exciting learning space and it gives good access for the children to choose what they want to do. Arrangements to help children settle into the nursery and build secure emotional attachments with the staff are

highly effective and relationships are strong at all levels. Babies and toddlers seek out their key staff for a special cuddle demonstrating strong emotional attachment. The staff place extremely strong emphasis on building relationships with children and their families from the outset, so that they know precisely how to meet their individual needs. Successful implementation of the key person system helps to ensure children feel safe and secure in the setting. Families say they feel warmly welcomed at the nursery.

Staff show a very secure understanding of how to positively respond to children's different behaviour. Children learn about boundaries, and how to share with their friends, in a way that they understand. Consequently, children's behaviour is exemplary. Children follow good personal hygiene routines which are promoted by the staff's good role modelling and teaching. Children benefit from a wide range of experiences that help them to learn about healthy lifestyles. They eat freshly prepared meals and snacks that are well-balanced nutritionally. At meal times children self serve and pour their own drinks, demonstrating their developing control and co-ordination as they make healthy choices from the nutritious fruits and vegetables on offer. These skills prepare children for their move on to school. Children's confidence in their physical abilities is encouraged inside and outdoors as well as in how they learn. For example, children competently use the 'climbing wall on the frame' and other climbing and balancing adventure play equipment. Staff skilfully coach and encourage the children so they all show improved confidence, coordination and balance during these very well-managed, increasingly challenging and much enjoyed activities. Their learning is considerably enhanced by many outdoor activities. However the use of natural and investigative materials in their play in the garden is not as well developed.

Staff are proactive in ensuring they are fully aware of the individual needs of the children and care for them accordingly. They help babies to feed themselves and drink from their cups, so they are prepared for the next stage in learning too. Sleep arrangements for children are well-managed and all children are monitored very closely during sleep times to ensure their safety and comfort. Staff show they have a good understanding of the care needs of individual children and parents' preferences are met. Clear daily structure and well established routines enable children to be fully aware of what to expect. The environment is well thought through to support confidence in making independent choices. Children receive much praise and encouragement, which further supports their self-confidence and esteem and contributes to their feelings of security. This effectively enables children to make decisions, understand risks and learn about safety. Children take part in regular emergency evacuation procedures and are provided with very good examples of how to keep safe on outings. This further promotes their feeling of safety both indoors and out. Staff deploy themselves highly effectively to supervise the children extremely well and provide excellent interaction.

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

Children are extremely well safeguarded in the setting as the premises are secure and

there are highly detailed and effective policies and procedures in place. The provider makes sure that the manager and staff team have a clear understanding of their responsibility to meet the requirements of the Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage. Staff regard children's safety and security as paramount. They are vigilant in carrying out regular risk assessments and daily safety checks. Rigorous recruitment procedures ensure that all staff are suitable to work with children, have appropriate childcare qualifications and are highly committed professionals. Children are supervised well and staff deployment is effective to ensure ratios are maintained.

The management team use robust procedures to consistently monitor new staff and there are highly effective systems in place for ongoing supervision and appraisals. These help highlight areas for professional development. There are regular opportunities for staff to promote their skills and development and they are encouraged to take responsibility for areas of curriculum and the environment. The staff team have great enthusiasm and commitment towards their professional development and have widened their knowledge and experience through training with a number of staff working to further improve their qualifications. In addition to attending core training such as first aid, safeguarding and behaviour management, they often access courses to help them better understand and support the individual circumstances and needs of pre-school children and families. As a result, the staff team is motivated, skilled and enabled to offer excellent quality provision for all children.

The provider and staff are totally dedicated to offering children and families a high quality early years provision that meets their needs. To this end, they carefully monitor and evaluate all aspects of the nursery and are highly motivated and successful in driving and sustaining improvement. For example, the provider and staff have embedded rigorous monitoring of children's learning and development, and of the effectiveness of their teaching and of the educational programme. This means that at any given time they have a precise assessment of how well each child is progressing and know whether their planning, organisation and layout of activities and resources are fully promoting all areas of children's learning. The provider and staff have a very precise knowledge of each child's starting points and ongoing learning and development needs and ably reflect these in their planning. This information is achieved as a result of their interactions with children, their thorough observations and assessments, and from regular discussions with parents and others working with children.

Partnerships with parents and others are exceptional. They are involved with their child's welfare and learning every step of the way. Parents comment positively on the excellent communication. They receive regular newsletters, as well as verbal and written information on their child's development on a daily basis and at the more formal meetings. They hold the staff in very high regard and welcome their expertise and all the advice and support they receive. Exemplary links are made with other professionals and schools to support children's welfare and help children to make to the best possible progress in their all-round development. The manager demonstrates a high level of commitment to the nursery and is inspired to drive forward improvements. Self-evaluation and well-targeted action plans are developed in conjunction with staff, parents and children, which demonstrate the management's determination to drive continuous improvement.

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

Unique reference number	EY243714
Local authority	West Sussex
Inspection number	953241
Type of provision	Full-time provision
Registration category	Childcare - Non-Domestic
Age range of children	0 - 8
Total number of places	54
Number of children on roll	82
Name of provider	A Step Ahead Ltd
Date of previous inspection	30/09/2011
Telephone number	01403 891012

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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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