

Inspection of Little Steps Montessori Nursery School

The Ken Hogan Pavilion, Berrydown Sports Ground, London Road, Overton,
BASINGSTOKE, Hampshire RG25 3BT

Inspection date: 3 July 2025

Overall effectiveness	Inadequate
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The quality of education	Inadequate
Behaviour and attitudes	Inadequate
Personal development	Inadequate
Leadership and management	Inadequate
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Outstanding

What is it like to attend this early years setting?

The provision is inadequate

Leaders do not fully understand their roles and responsibilities to protect and care for children. This has resulted in breaches of the statutory safeguarding and welfare requirements that impact on the quality of children's welfare and education. Leaders do not keep up to date with current early years legislation. For example, they have not made sure safeguarding policies and procedures are robust, in line with local safeguarding partnership guidance, and understood by all staff. In addition, the systems to check suitability of volunteers to work with children are not effective, so children are not always cared for by vetted adults. This means children's safety and welfare are not assured.

Leaders have a vision for what they want children to learn. However, they do not ensure all staff, including temporary and bank staff, have the knowledge and skills to implement an ambitious, high quality curriculum that provides all children with the challenge and engagement. Generally, learning opportunities do not build effectively on what children already know and need to know next, as staff's expectations for what children can achieve are often too low. At times, staff do not always support children to stay focused in learning, and let them quickly move on to another activity or wander around with little purpose. That said, there are times when children enjoy exploring the resources on offer, such as with building blocks. They remember to build a secure foundation on which to build their tall structures. They enjoy knocking them down and constructing them again. As they do this, they giggle and show their excitement. Staff who are with these children, share in their delight by celebrating their achievements.

What does the early years setting do well and what does it need to do better?

- Leaders have not maintained compliance with the early years foundation stage requirements since the last inspection, resulting in multiple breaches. They have not followed essential safeguarding procedures to ensure children are fully protected. For example, leaders have not made sure staff have up-to-date contact details available for reporting concerns about a child's welfare. They have not ensured that staff are familiar with the full process to follow if they have concerns about the conduct of colleagues. Alongside a lack of regular safeguarding training for staff, this leaves staff uncertain about the correct steps to take to safeguard children should they have child protection concerns.
- Leaders do not carry out the necessary suitability checks robustly enough to ensure any volunteers who are regularly at the setting are suitable to work with children before they commence their role and have access to children. This does not promote children's welfare.
- Leaders do not monitor staff practice effectively to ensure staff understand their responsibilities. New staff and volunteers who support individual children do not

receive a robust induction that sufficiently equips them for their role. Furthermore, leaders do not provide staff with effective, personalised support, coaching and training to help them make continuous improvements to the quality of education provided across the setting.

- Staff's understanding of the curriculum and their delivery of it is inconsistent. Staff, particularly those who work on an ad hoc basis, do not have an appropriate understanding of each child's existing knowledge or what they need to learn next. Consequently, they do not know how to link planning and teaching in a coherent, sequenced way. For example, the youngest children often spend a lot of time wandering around aimlessly with minimal staff interaction. Older children collect stones, call them 'dinosaur teeth' and count them incorrectly, but staff do not recognise how to support accurate counting or extend children's imaginative thinking. Therefore, children are not appropriately challenged, to help them reach their full potential and develop positive attitudes to learning.
- Leaders and staff do not demonstrate a secure understanding of how to effectively support children with SEND. Key persons do not consistently implement the strategies designed to meet their individual needs. Leaders and key staff lack awareness of what these children have already learned and what they are capable of achieving. Furthermore, poor communication with parents of children with SEND, results in an inconsistent approach between home and the setting. This lack of a shared approach hinders children's progress and leads to widening of gaps in development, which can put them at a further disadvantage.
- Despite some weakness at this setting, there are several positive aspects. For instance, children learn to understand and quickly learn to follow the routines of the day, such as independently serving their snacks, carrying their plates to the table and tidying them away afterwards. Staff's expectations are generally consistent and clear. This helps children's understand what to expect next.
- Group singing and storytelling sessions are particularly enjoyed by children. They enthusiastically join in with action songs, making a real effort to remember the accompanying actions to the words in the songs. These experiences contribute to the development of children's vocabulary and support their language acquisition.
- On the whole, leaders and staff want children to experience real-life opportunities to develop their understanding of the world around them. For instance, staff help children grow vegetables and plants in the setting's garden. Children proudly recall what conditions are needed for plants to grow, such as sunlight and water. Children talk enthusiastically about their plants at home and their responsibility to tend to them. This shows that when links between the setting and home happen, children's learning continues.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are not effective.

There is not an open and positive culture around safeguarding that puts children's interests first.

What does the setting need to do to improve?

To meet the requirements of the early years foundation stage and Childcare Register the provider must:

	Due date
ensure safeguarding policies and procedures, including management of allegations against staff, are regularly reviewed and updated, and that anyone working with children at the setting consistently implements them	25/07/2025
implement robust vetting procedures to check the suitability of volunteers to work with children	25/07/2025
ensure all staff receive an effective induction and ongoing supervision, training and support to help them develop a clear understanding of their roles and responsibilities, as well as targeted opportunities for professional development focused on improving the quality of children's experiences	25/07/2025
implement effective arrangements for supporting children with SEND, with a focus on collaboration with parents and external agencies, to help all children make progress and narrow gaps in their development	25/07/2025
improve all staff's understanding and delivery of the curriculum to ensure staff provide children with precise support that challenges and engages them in meaningful learning that builds on what they know and can do already.	25/07/2025

Setting details

Unique reference number	EY458183
Local authority	Hampshire
Inspection number	10399172
Type of provision	Childcare on non-domestic premises
Registers	Early Years Register, Compulsory Childcare Register
Day care type	Full day care
Age range of children at time of inspection	2 to 4
Total number of places	26
Number of children on roll	13
Name of registered person	Sampson, Brenda Anne
Registered person unique reference number	RP513927
Telephone number	07786294574
Date of previous inspection	21 November 2019

Information about this early years setting

Little Steps Montessori Nursery School registered in 2013. The nursery operates from The Ken Hogan Pavilion in Overton, Hampshire. It is open Monday to Thursday, from 8am to 3pm, during term time. The nursery receives funding to provide free early education for children aged two, three and four years. The nursery follows the Montessori philosophy and EYFS. There are five staff who work with children. Of these, four hold relevant qualifications from level 3 to level 6.

Information about this inspection

Inspector

Sonia Panchal

Inspection activities

- The manager and inspector completed a learning walk together of all areas of the nursery and discussed the early years curriculum.
- Children spoke with the inspector during the inspection.
- The inspector talked to staff at appropriate times during the inspection and took account of their views.
- The inspector observed the quality of education being provided, indoors and outdoors, and assessed the impact that this was having on children's learning
- The inspector and the manager carried out a joint observation of an activity.
- Parents shared their verbal and written views of the nursery with the inspector.
- The inspector looked at relevant documentation and reviewed evidence of the suitability of staff working in the nursery.

We carried out this inspection 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.

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