

Stepping Stones Nursery Day Care of Children

56 Warrender Crescent
Dunbar
EH42 1LU

Telephone: 01368 865 444

Type of inspection:
Unannounced

Completed on:
3 June 2021

Service provided by:
Stepping Stones Nursery Dunbar Ltd

Service provider number:
SP2019013274

Service no:
CS2019373340

About the service

Stepping Stones Nursery registered with the Care Inspectorate on 28 November 2019. It is registered to provide a day care of children service to a maximum of 20 children at any one time aged from 3 months to not yet of an age to attend primary school.

The service is provided from renovated premises located within a housing estate in Dunbar. The building is detached with a secure garden area which is accessible from the two playrooms.

The aims of the service are:

At Stepping Stones Nursery, we aim to promote:

- An enquiring mind and love for learning
- Independence and self-confidence
- Respect for themselves, others and the world around them

By providing a welcoming, stimulating and supportive environment, full of interesting and challenging play opportunities.

This inspection was carried out by two inspectors from the Care Inspectorate. We visited the nursery on 26 May 2021 and 28 May 2021 when we spoke to children, staff, the manager and the provider. We reviewed relevant documentation such as children's personal plans and medication records. Further information and documentation were requested from the manager and was sent to us by e-mail. We asked the manager to distribute an email from us to parents using the service asking for their views. We provided feedback to the provider and manager on 3 June 2021 using Microsoft Teams.

This was a focussed inspection to evaluate how well children were being supported during the Covid-19 pandemic. We evaluated the service based on key areas that are vital to the support and wellbeing of children experiencing care during the pandemic.

What people told us

There were 16 children present at the time of the inspection visit. We observed children having lunch and playing outside in the garden. We assessed that most children were happy and having fun. We asked the service to distribute our contact details to parents and received feedback from seven parents whose children used the service. All parents commented positively about the regular communications they had received throughout the pandemic. They felt well-informed of changes in procedures in response to national guidance. Parents praised staff for the time taken at settling-in times to gather information to support a smooth transition for children. Their comments included:

- 'I've been most impressed with the clear and regular communications from the manager and provider throughout the pandemic. They have managed a difficult situation very well especially as the nursery was fairly new when the pandemic started. All communications followed the latest guidance from the Scottish Government but it was clear that time had been taken to digest the guidance and apply it to the setting in a responsible and well thought out manner'
- 'The settling sessions for our son were fantastic. Stepping Stones set up an extended settling in period which lasted for three weeks building up from a couple of hours to a full day. My son took to nursery instantly, but this was really critical in helping me feel comfortable, particularly since I haven't been able to see him in the setting at all'

- 'My daughter absolutely loves going to nursery and whilst she didn't get to socialise with others for most of last year, she is turning into such a confident and happy girl and much of this is due to the care she receives at Stepping Stones'
- 'Our overall impression is that the staff are very caring and take the time to explain what our son has been up to that day when we collect him. I would definitely recommend Stepping Stones to other parents'
- 'Overall we are extremely happy with the nursery and the level of care they are providing to our daughter. All the staff are very caring and professional, and they are so well informed about my daughter's progress which I think stems from being a small, close knit nursery'

From this inspection we evaluated this service as:

In evaluating quality, we use a six point scale where 1 is unsatisfactory and 6 is excellent

How good is our care and support during the COVID-19 pandemic?	4 - Good
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Further details on the particular areas inspected are provided at the end of this report.

How good is our care and support during the COVID-19 pandemic?

4 - Good

5.1 Children's health and wellbeing are supported and safeguarded during Covid-19

Children were cared for in a warm and welcoming environment. Staff recognised the need for children to experience secure attachments and developed new ways to keep in touch with families during times of closure due to the pandemic. For example, staff recorded videos of them singing songs and reading stories and shared them with families on social media. This meant that relationships could be maintained between children and staff.

The provider and manager had communicated effectively with families throughout the pandemic to provide information on new procedures and safety measures required to prevent the spread of Covid-19. Parents told us that they received regular updates on any changes in procedures and that staff took time to answer any questions they had.

Staff knew children well and talked to us about what they did to support children's individual needs. Children's personal plans were reviewed prior to children returning to the service after periods of closure. Staff adapted settling-in procedures so that positive relationships could be fostered with new families and information about children's care and support needs could be shared effectively. Information provided by parents in personal plans was used by staff to help children settle-in and feel confident in their new environment. For example, staff ensured that children's favourite books were available in the playroom for their first day in nursery. We observed that some new children were upset and needed extra support from staff to feel comforted and secure. Staff should identify and implement appropriate strategies to support children's individual needs. This will mean that children experience consistent care and support from staff and help them to feel secure in their new environment. Staff should record strategies in children's personal plans and review these regularly in response to children's changing needs and ongoing development. See area for improvement 1.

During our inspection visit, some children slept in buggies when they needed a nap. We advised the service on recommended best practice and asked them to review their procedures for children sleeping in the setting. Children enjoyed regular access to outdoors. Play equipment in the garden provided opportunities for children to be active and gain confidence in moving their bodies and controlling their movements. Children could experiment in the mud kitchen and some loose parts provided open-ended play opportunities for children, such as, tyres, logs, wooden planks and drum. Children developed their confidence when they balanced on logs and walked up planks. Some children needed assistance from the staff and this was given when necessary. Staff could extend children's learning further through meaningful interactions and the use of open questions to stimulate children's curiosity when they are playing. We discussed with the manager the need to consider a more flexible approach to daily routines, such as, lunchtime and nappy changing as this would help to reduce interruptions to children's play. Best practice guidance, such as, Realising the Ambition will assist staff in evaluating children's experiences and ensure that these are meaningful and flexible around the routines of the day. See area for improvement 2.

5.2: Infection prevention and control practices support a safe environment for children and staff

Children experienced an environment which was very clean and safe. The risks of Covid-19 had been carefully assessed by the manager and provider and appropriate safety measures implemented. A Covid-19 risk assessment was carried out in line with Scottish Government guidance which provided clear guidance for staff and parents on the precautions necessary to prevent the spread of infection.

Effective communications throughout the pandemic with staff and parents meant that people were updated on any changes to procedures in response to evolving national guidance. Staff communicated with parents using emails and phone calls. Individual meetings gave parents the opportunity to ask questions about the new procedures and to discuss children's health and wellbeing. Parents told us that they felt well-informed throughout the pandemic and any questions they had were answered efficiently by staff.

Staff were trained in Covid-19 awareness, and we found that good infection prevention and control practices were in place. Rooms were ventilated, staff used PPE appropriately and cleaning checklists guided staff on the additional tasks required throughout the day to ensure a safe environment for everyone. New procedures were implemented by staff to ensure that physical distancing occurred between adults when children were dropped off and collected. Staff and parents wore face coverings to mitigate the risk of transmission of Covid-19.

Children were supervised and, where necessary, supported by staff to wash their hands at appropriate times throughout the day. Children's handwashing sinks were available in both playrooms which helped older children be more independent as they could access these easily.

During our inspection visit, we observed that whilst the different age groups of children were cared for in two separate playrooms, the two groups mixed together in the garden and some staff worked in both playrooms. The manager told us that as the number of children attending the service was low, they considered both groups as one cohort as this provided better experiences for the children. We asked the manager to review their staffing arrangements and Covid-19 risk assessment and to adopt a more consistent approach so that some staff did not work in both playrooms. This will mean that contact between people is reduced and the risk of transmission of Covid-19 is limited. See area for improvement 3.

5.3: Staffing arrangements are responsive to the changing needs of children during Covid-19

Staffing arrangements were in place to meet the needs of children and the additional demands placed on staff to ensure a safe environment for all. We observed respectful interactions and good working relationships across the staff team. Staff were supportive and kind to each other which created a positive atmosphere for children. Staff told us that they felt safe and well-supported by the manager and provider.

The service had arranged staff meetings to discuss the Covid-19 risk assessment and new procedures. The manager kept staff informed of any changes in Scottish Government guidance and ensured that new or supply staff were instructed on safety measures on their first day. This meant that staff felt confident in their roles and understood their responsibilities to implement safe practice and procedures.

The provider told us that they are seeking new staff to join the existing team. Once new staff are in post, the provider should review the range of skills and experience of staff working in each playroom. This will help to ensure that children receive quality care and support and a wide range of learning experiences. To support ongoing development, the service should further develop quality assurance systems and use best practice guidance to evaluate children's experiences, interactions and the environment to create a rich learning environment for children. See area for improvement 4.

Areas for improvement

1. To ensure that children receive consistent care and support, staff should develop strategies to meet the individual needs of children. Strategies should be recorded in children's personal plans and reviewed by staff regularly in response to children's changing needs and ongoing development.

This is to ensure that care and support are consistent with the Health and Social Care Standards which state 'I experience stability in my care and support from people who know my needs, choices and wishes, even if there are changes in the service or organisation'. (HSCS 4.15)

2.
To ensure that children's experiences both indoors and outdoors are meaningful and flexible around the routines of the day, staff should use best practice guidance, such as, Realising the Ambition to evaluate children's experiences, the environment and interactions.

This is to ensure that care and support are consistent with the Health and Social Care Standards which state 'As a child, I can direct my own play and activities in the way that I choose, and freely access a wide range of experiences and resources suitable for my age and stage, which stimulate my natural curiosity, learning and creativity'. (HSCS 2.27)

3.
To ensure the safety and wellbeing of children and staff, the service should review their staffing arrangements in line with their Covid-19 risk assessment and national guidance to ensure that the potential spread of infection is minimised because contact between people is reduced.

This is to ensure that care and support are consistent with the Health and Social Care Standards which state 'I experience high quality care and support based on relevant evidence, guidance and best practice'. (HSCS 4.11)

4. To help the service to further progress, a robust quality assurance system should be developed to ensure that children receive quality care and support. This should include, but is not limited to, an evaluation of the range of skills and experience of staff working with the different age groups of children.

This is to ensure that care and support are consistent with the Health and Social Care Standards which state 'I benefit from a culture of continuous improvement, with the organisation having robust and transparent quality assurance processes'. (HSCS 4.19)

Detailed evaluations

How good is our care and support during the COVID-19 pandemic?	4 - Good
5.1 Children's health and well being are supported and safeguarded during COVID-19	4 - Good
5.2 Infection prevention and control practices support a safe environment for children and staff	4 - Good
5.3 Staffing arrangements are responsive to the changing needs of children during COVID-19	4 - Good

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