

Little Steps Childcare Day Care of Children

Garrybank
Bankfoot
Perth
PH1 4DX

Telephone: 01738 788 188

Type of inspection:
Unannounced

Completed on:
23 October 2025

Service provided by:
Claire Bell trading as Little Steps
Childcare

Service provider number:
SP2009975690

Service no:
CS2009233142

About the service

Little Steps Childcare is a day care of children service, registered to provide care to a maximum of 68 children aged from 0 to 12 years.

Other conditions that are unique to this service:

- On the lower floor the nursery may provide care to a maximum of 12 children aged 0 to under 2 years, in the designated baby room and cot room; and a maximum of 23 children aged 3 years and over in the designated playroom and quiet room.
- On the upper floor the nursery may provide care to a maximum of 20 children aged 2 years and over, in the designated playroom.
- In the Portakabin, care may be provided to a maximum of 13 children aged 4 years and over.

The nursery is located in the village of Bankfoot, Perthshire. The children are accommodated within three playrooms designated for different age groups of children. A Portakabin is used for out of school care. This was not operating at the time of inspection. The children have access to two fully enclosed outdoor areas that are accessible from the main playrooms.

About the inspection

This was an unannounced inspection which took place on 21 and 22 October 2025. This inspection was carried out by three inspectors from the Care Inspectorate. Feedback was provided on 23 October 2025.

To prepare for the inspection we reviewed information about this service. This included, previous inspection findings, registration and complaints information, information submitted by the service and intelligence gathered throughout the inspection year.

To inform our evaluation we:

- spoke with and spent time with children using the service
- received feedback from 14 families using the service
- spoke with the staff team and the provider
- assessed core assurances, including the physical environment
- observed practice and daily life
- reviewed documents.

At the time of this inspection, improvements were identified relating to core assurances. We have reported where improvement is necessary within Leadership.

During this inspection we gathered specific information to help us understand more about how services support children's safety, wellbeing and engagement in their play and learning.

This included reviewing the following aspects:

- staff deployment
- safety of the physical environment, indoors and outdoors
- the quality of personal plans and how well children's needs are being met
- children's engagement with the experiences provided in their setting.

This information will be anonymised and analysed to help inform our future work with services.

Key messages

- The provider was proactive in addressing recruitment challenges to support better outcomes for children and their families. Ongoing challenges with recruitment and staffing impacted on the quality of children experiences.
- Quality assurance processes needed to be further developed and embedded to support identify and action improvements.
- Families were supported to be included and involved in the service.
- The quality of resources and learning environments supported children's engagement and curiosity, and provided opportunities for children to express their creativity.
- Some of the routines of the day could be further developed to ensure they are consistently responsive to children's needs.
- Some staff demonstrated warm, kind and caring interactions with children, which contributed to positive relationships. These approaches were not consistent and resulted in missed opportunities to support children's emotional needs.

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

Leadership	3 - Satisfactory / Adequate
Children play and learn	3 - Satisfactory / Adequate
Children are supported to achieve	3 - Satisfactory / Adequate

Further details on the particular areas inspected are provided at the end of this report.

Leadership 3 - Satisfactory / Adequate

Quality Indicator: Leadership and management of staff and resources

We evaluated this quality indicator as satisfactory/adequate where strengths just outweighed the weaknesses.

Families were encouraged to share their views and feedback, which helped them feel included and involved. One family member told us, "There are always updates about what is happening in the nursery and asking us how they could improve". The aims and vision statement had recently been updated through consultation with families and the staff team, helping to capture shared aspirations and values for the service. Plans to further involve families were being developed to enhance their engagement and involvement. This would ensure that families continue to feel informed and are included within the improvement journey of the service.

The provider engaged positively and was transparent throughout the inspection visit. They kept inspectors informed of staffing changes and were open and honest about the challenges faced, particularly around staffing and recruitment. Despite these challenges, the provider continued with ongoing recruitment efforts aimed at stabilising the team and enhancing service delivery.

Staff understood the challenges the service was experiencing. Core staff described feeling informed and included in decision-making processes. One staff member shared, "I feel like information is shared with myself and I have been asked to put my personal thoughts forward". This helped staff feel valued and heard.

Safer recruitment practices were not consistently followed. While some aspects, such as fit person checks, were in place prior to staff commencing employment, the overall process was not robust. The quality and depth of information gathered within newly recruited staff files highlighted an inconsistent approach. We signposted the service to the Scottish Social Services Council (SSSC) values-based recruitment resources and National Safer Recruitment guidance to support improvements in pre-employment checks. This would support to protect children and promote their wellbeing through a safe and competent workforce. (See Area for improvement 1)

The induction programme was not thorough and personalised to meet the different roles within the staff team. The use of the national induction resource will support the provider to continue to develop induction programmes. This will give new staff and those in new roles the skills and knowledge to deliver high-quality outcomes for children.

Quality assurance procedures were not yet robust or embedded across the service. Opportunities for monitoring practice and assessing the quality of children's experiences were limited. This was partly due to ongoing recruitment challenges. As a result, areas requiring improvement were not always identified or addressed in a timely manner. The provider shared that the approaches to quality assurance and improvement planning were under review. Establishing a clear and actionable plan within appropriate timescales would support improvements and lead to more positive outcomes for children and families. (See Area for improvement 2)

Quality Indicator: Staff skills, knowledge, values and deployment

We evaluated this quality indicator as satisfactory/adequate where strengths just outweighed the weaknesses.

The deployment of staff was affected by poor staffing levels. More experienced staff provided support to new or less experienced staff. They worked together to support the day to day running of the service including routines and the activities of the day. However, a lack of appropriate staffing, including adult-to-child ratios were not consistently maintained. This meant that at busier times of the day, staff weren't always able to fully meet children's needs. Activities became task orientated rather than opportunities for high-quality engagement and interaction for children. Whilst we recognise that the service is experiencing significant challenges with staffing and recruitment, they should continue to develop contingency plans to ensure children's needs are met. (See Area for improvement 3)

The regular use of agency staff in the service had a negative impact on continuity of care for children and families. The provider continued to use agency staff whilst trying to recruit permanent staff for vacant positions. They made every effort to plan staffing to support continuity of care. However, inconsistent staffing led to disruption to children's routines.

There were limited opportunities for staff professional learning and development. This included not all staff completing core training. While some opportunities existed for staff to engage in professional discussions, these were not consistent or structured enough to support ongoing reflective practice and continuous improvement. As a result, children did not benefit from shared knowledge and skills within the team.

The leadership team had identified leadership roles which would support a shared approach to continuous improvement across the team. Plans were developed with staff to account for their interests and strengths. This helped to empower staff. Roles were in the early stages of development and we would encourage the service to continue with their plans. This would further a shared vision approach to leadership and improvement.

Areas for improvement

1. The provider should ensure that all children are cared for and kept safe by safely recruited staff. Recruitment procedures should be developed to support employers to fully assess the skills, knowledge and experience of those applying for employment.

This is to ensure that care and support is consistent with the Health and Social Care Standards (HSCS) which states that: 'I am confident that people who support and care for me have been appropriately and safely recruited' (HSCS 4.24).

2. To promote a culture of continuous improvement so that outcomes for children and families improve, the provider should enhance the current approaches to quality assurance and self-evaluation.

This should include but not be limited to:

- a) providing consistent support and monitoring of staff practice
- b) developing self-evaluation processes

c) developing and implementing an improvement plan that supports continuous improvement.

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

3. The provider should ensure that contingency plans are in place to account for staffing challenges, including recruitment issues and staff absence. They should consider staffing levels and skill-set in the deployment of staff to support and minimise disruptions to children's care.

This is to ensure that care and support is consistent with the Health and Social Care Standards (HSCS) which state that:

'My needs are met by the right number of people' (HSCS 3.15); and

'My care and support is provided in a planned and safe way, including if there is an emergency or unexpected event' (HSCS 4.14).

Children play and learn 3 - Satisfactory / Adequate

Quality Indicator: Playing, learning and developing

We evaluated this quality indicator as satisfactory/adequate where strengths just outweighed the weaknesses.

The quality of resources and learning environments were engaging and supported children's imagination and curiosity, offering a broad range of experiences. One of the children we spoke to told us, "We have lots of things to build with. I can make different things you know. Like houses and people". During free play, children were often busy and focused, exploring their interests and making choices that reflected their ideas and preferences. This promoted children's independence, creativity and enjoyment in their learning.

The pace of the day did not support an effective balance between planned and responsive experiences. Children's play was frequently interrupted and there were missed opportunities for adult interaction to support children's engagement and learning. This meant that children's preferences and wishes were not always considered. Improving the flow of the day and providing a more responsive routine would enhance the quality of children's learning, engagement and wellbeing.

There were gaps in staff knowledge and understanding of how children learn and develop. This led to inconsistencies in the quality of children's experiences. Routines and interactions were not always responsive to children's play and learning needs. Leaders should monitor practice to identify where staff would benefit from targeted professional development to ensure a consistent nurturing approach is provided to children. (See Area for improvement 1)

Floor books and learning journals were used to record observations of children's experiences. Children's progress and achievements were shared with families, supporting a culture of celebration and inclusion. While tracking and evaluating of children's learning took place, the service could apply a more consistent approach to ensure observations are meaningful. This would help to inform individualised next steps for children and support staff to monitor and evaluate children's learning.

Areas for improvement

1. The provider should continue to support staff to develop their skills, knowledge and understanding of how children develop and learn. A range of training and professional development should be provided to support inform practice and ensure that children receive high quality care and are supported to thrive.

This is to ensure that care and support is consistent with the Health and Social Care Standards (HSCS) which state that: 'I have confidence in people because they are trained, competent and skilled, are able to reflect on their practice and follow their professional and organisational codes' (HSCS 3.15).

Children are supported to achieve 3 - Satisfactory / Adequate

Quality Indicator: Nurturing care and support

We evaluated this quality indicator as satisfactory/adequate where strengths just outweighed the weaknesses.

Staff demonstrated kindness and care in their interactions with children at times. However, this was not consistent across the team, and there were occasions where opportunities to provide comfort and reassurance were missed. Strengthening the continuity and quality of staff interactions will help ensure every child experiences secure, nurturing relationships throughout their time in the service. (See Area for improvement 1)

Transitions within the daily routines were not always effectively managed. At times, children experienced long periods of waiting and unoccupied time during changes between activities. For example, when getting ready to go outdoors. As a result, some children became unsettled and upset. The service should consider reviewing the routines and transitions of the day to ensure they are responsive, child-led and provide a more nurturing flow to the day.

All children had a personal plan in place which were developed in partnership with families. The level of detail across plans could be enhanced to support a more consistent approach around the level of information gathered and updated. This would help to create a more responsive approach to personal planning, promoting children's wellbeing and supporting positive outcomes.

Mealtimes provided opportunities to promote children's independence and support their health and well-being. Children were encouraged to make choices and develop skills through opportunities to set up for mealtimes and serve some of their food choices. Access to water throughout the day helped keep children hydrated and promoted healthy habits. One of the staff team shared that recent changes to routines, including children self-serving foods, had positively impacted on the social aspects of mealtimes.

Personal care was carried out sensitively, with staff supporting children's independence where appropriate. Sleep routines reflected family preferences and home practices such as, specific sleep times and comforters. This helped to create a sense of continuity and security for children.

Areas for improvement

1. The provider should ensure that all staff consistently demonstrate warm, sensitive and nurturing interactions with children. Staff should be supported to develop their understanding of how interactions impact on children's emotional wellbeing, including recognising and responding to children's emotional needs.

This is to ensure that care and support is consistent with the Health and Social Care Standards (HSCS) which state that:

'My care and support meets my needs and is right for me' (HSCS 1.19); and

'I am supported to communicate in a way that is right for me, at my own pace, by people who are sensitive to me and my needs' (HSCS 2.8).

Complaints

There have been no complaints upheld since the last inspection. Details of any older upheld complaints are published at www.careinspectorate.com.

Detailed evaluations

Leadership	3 - Satisfactory / Adequate
Leadership and management of staff and resources	3 - Satisfactory / Adequate
Staff skills, knowledge, values and deployment	3 - Satisfactory / Adequate
Children play and learn	3 - Satisfactory / Adequate
Playing, learning and developing	3 - Satisfactory / Adequate
Children are supported to achieve	3 - Satisfactory / Adequate
Nurturing care and support	3 - Satisfactory / Adequate

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