

# Stepping Stones Family Learning Centre Day Care of Children

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**Type of inspection:**  
Unannounced

**Completed on:**  
26 February 2026

**Service provided by:**  
North Lanarkshire Council

**Service provider number:**  
SP2003000237

**Service no:**  
CS2003015424

## About the service

Stepping Stones Family Learning Centre is registered to provide care for 64 children, of those no more than ten are aged two years to under three years. At the time of inspection 55 children were registered with the service

Care is provided from a detached single storey property located in Stepps, North Lanarkshire. The service is close to woodlands, green space and transport routes. Children are cared for in a large, bright playroom. They also had access to a block play room, sensory room and a large, natural garden.

## About the inspection

This was an unannounced inspection which took place on 24 and 25 February 2026 between 09:30 and 16:15. We provided feedback to management and the provider on 26 February 2026. The inspection was carried out by two inspectors from the Care Inspectorate. To prepare for the inspection we reviewed information about this service. This included previous inspection findings, registration information, information submitted by the service and intelligence gathered since the last inspection.

In making our evaluations of the service we:

- spoke with children using the service
- reviewed electronic feedback from 21 parents
- spoke with staff and management
- assessed core assurances, including the physical environment
- observed practice and daily life
- reviewed documents
- spoke to visiting professionals.

As part of our inspections, we assess core assurances. Core assurances are checks we make to ensure children are safe, the physical environment is well maintained and that a service is operating legally. At the time of this inspection, no improvements were identified relating to core assurances.

As part of this inspection we undertook a focus area. We have 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**

- Management and staff had a clear vision for the development of the service and were passionate and committed to drive forward improvement.
- Children were engaged in play, exploring resources and activities with confidence.
- Children's health and wellbeing was enhanced through daily access to outdoor play.
- The service should continue to develop the outdoor environment to promote children's independence and choice.
- Staff knew children very well and responded to their individual needs and wishes.
- Strong relationships had been established with families, which resulted in positive outcomes for children.
- Staff understood the importance of an individual approach to transitions to meet the needs of children and families.

**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	5 - Very Good
Children play and learn	5 - Very Good
Children are supported to achieve	5 - Very Good

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

## Leadership 5 - Very Good

### Quality Indicator: Leadership and management of staff and resources

We found major strengths in this aspect of the setting's work and identified very few areas for improvement, therefore we evaluated this quality indicator as very good.

The shared vision, values and aims of the service were well established and consistently reflected across the setting. Staff interactions were kind, nurturing and inclusive throughout the inspection. Positive feedback from families, along with visible commitments and improvements within the service further demonstrated high aspirations for children and families. Parents told us "I am extremely happy with the service and can't fault the staff for their warmth and professionalism" and "there has been a significant improvement in the service. The nursery feels like a different place, so much more positive, with positive relationships with parents and generally a happier place."

Quality assurance and moderation activities had been developed and were contributing towards the development of the service. This included well-timed monitoring and data gathering, carried out by senior staff to drive change at an appropriate pace that was both meaningful and sustainable. For example, tracking children progress and environment audits. Agreed outcomes and expectations were understood and provided further opportunities for staff to develop their skills and confidence. We discussed where some audit tools could be further developed. For example, personal plans and accident and incident audits.

Senior leaders empowered staff by creating conditions that supported them to initiate and lead well informed changes. The reflective staff team regularly took part in planned self-evaluation activities. This helped develop a strong sense of shared responsibility and helped develop leadership skills across the whole team. Regular staff meetings further supported reflection, sharing of key information and promoted consistency across the team. Staff worked well as a team and demonstrated a commitment to provide a high quality service.

Communication with parents had improved and parents shared they felt included within the services. One parent told us "all staff are very attentive and truly care for my [child]. They welcome us into the service with open arms and always communicate well with us as a family. Any minor issues are dealt with promptly and to our satisfaction." Information was shared with families through a range of communication methods, such as newsletters and daily conversations, which helped families feel included. Information gathered from questionnaires supported the continuous improvement of the service. Management shared this with parents using a 'you said, we did' approach. This created a positive culture where people felt confident contributing to well informed change and demonstrated the service's high aspirations for children and families. We discussed where this could be further developed within the service.

The service used the 'National Induction Resource' to support new staff. We discussed where this could be strengthened to provide further opportunities for staff reflection. Staff reported feeling supported by management and mentors, and spoke positively about their experience. They valued having a mentor and felt confident seeking support from any team member, contributing to a welcoming and collaborative environment. This helped to ensure that staff were well prepared to meet children's needs, creating a safe, nurturing and consistent learning environment.

**Children play and learn** 5 - Very Good**Quality Indicator: Playing, learning and developing**

We found major strengths in this aspect of the setting's work and identified very few areas for improvement, therefore we evaluated this quality indicator as very good.

Children within the setting were having fun and were engaged in their learning. Staff recognised play as an opportunity for developing skills for life. This included promoting children's independence when getting ready to play in the garden. Children told us, "I like playing in the garden on the climbing frame and it also has a slide", "I like everything" and "I like drawing flowers and going outside in the garden."

Children's right to play was valued and supported through a variety of play based approaches. Recent audits of the environment supported children to make informed choices about leading their play and learning within an enabling and creative environment. They have time, space and support to make decisions and develop their learning, creativity, resilience and independence. For example, making robots and pirate ships from cardboard boxes with creative material. We discussed where some area would benefit from further resources to support children's play and learning. For example, adding further resources to block play to enhance and extend children's creativity and imaginative play.

Staff understood the importance of outdoor play, which children could access daily through a free-flow approach. Children were engaged in their play for prolonged periods of time and were supported by staff who were attuned to their interest. For example, taking part in bug hunts and exploring water. We discussed where some areas outdoors could be developed to further support children's creativity and curiosity.

Staff were knowledgeable and demonstrated a good understanding of what children need to learn and develop. They were responsive to children and interacted in a way that supported their thinking and learning. They used helpful comments, asked effective questions and gave children time and space to explore their own ideas. Staff also understood when to join in to extend learning and when to step back and observe. Staff encouraged children to use their voice or visuals to share their ideas and had identified where this could be further developed through introducing choice boards. We agreed this would support children in further directing and participating in play opportunities.

Staff interactions supported children's numeracy and literacy skills. Effective questioning, commenting, repetition and narrating experiences supported children's communication and language skills. Children enjoyed listening to stories, singing with staff and participating in communication programmes. The use of props to support literacy experiences, helped aid fun and enjoyment. For example, story spoons and books within all areas to support children's interest. We asked the service to continue to review the environment, embedding digital technology that could support numeracy and literacy in all areas.

Planning had developed since last inspection. This was centred around children's needs, which helped enhance their learning and development. Staff used careful observations of children's play, interests and individual needs to guide both responsive and planned learning experiences. This meant children were offered meaningful and developmentally appropriate opportunities to learn, play and progress at their own pace.

The service enriched children's experiences by actively making good use of the local community with regular walks, visits to the shops and park outings that nurtured a sense of belonging. Parents told us "this is a great aspect to the nursery that they get them outdoors as much as they can" and "we really enjoyed taking part in the Gruffalo walk in the woods with experienced staff who facilitate lots of fun child led experiences."

## Children are supported to achieve 5 - Very Good

### Quality indicator: Nurturing care and support

We found major strengths in this aspect of the setting's work and identified very few areas for improvement, therefore we evaluated this quality indicator as very good.

Children experienced warm, consistent care that supported their emotional wellbeing. Staff were kind and nurturing in their interactions with children, helping them feel safe, secure and confident. They followed good practice and current guidance and were highly motivated to support children and their families. Staff took pride in their work, which was clear in the high quality care across the setting.

Staff understood the importance of supporting children through their transition to, within and beyond the service. Staff took time to get to know children and their families, and tailored transitions to ensure they were at the right pace for them. This contributed towards a sensitive and nurturing approach to help ensure transitions were supportive of every individual child. One parent told us, "it's a really friendly environment and the staff really take the time to get to know and connect with the children."

Care provided was sensitive and respectful. Staff understood both the verbal and non-verbal ways children communicate and recognised their individual needs. This included supporting their personal care and using different communication methods, such as objects of reference and boardmaker. These approaches helped children feel understood, valued and well supported throughout the day.

Children benefitted from sociable and unhurried mealtimes. Opportunities for self-serving were available which supported children's independence and skills for life. Staff were knowledgeable about children's routines and dietary needs. They positioned themselves at tables to aid engagement with children and provided support when needed. This promoted opportunities to socialise with peers and chat with staff supporting language development.

Personal plans had been developed since the last inspection. These contained meaningful information to support children's care, play and learning. Regular consultations and reviews with parents had taken place which enabled them to be fully involved in their child's care. Parents told us they were involved in creating their child's plans and had opportunities to discuss their child's development and next steps through informal and formal discussions with key workers, online journals and during parents' meetings. Parents' commented "I have had meeting about my child's progress and been involved in creating targets for [them]" and "I love that parents meeting are always so open and we work on going forward with goals together."

The service worked closely with external agencies, to ensure children received the care that was right for them. Wellbeing indicators were embedded in plans, with next steps and strategies shared across the staff team to ensure consistency and continuity in their care. This supported children to thrive.

The service had developed their approaches in involving families. Relationships with families were strong, respectful and meaningful. Staff valued their connections with families and strived to create a warm, welcoming and inclusive environment, which was mindful of cultural sensitivity and accessibility. Parents attended stay and play sessions and had fun at home with home learning bags. This approach supported families to be included in their child's learning and development, while positively impacting on the quality of care for children. Parents told us, "there are often opportunities welcoming parents and carers into the nursery for example a literacy workshop was run last term and there is a Bookbug session for parents running soon" and "the nursery is very open and welcoming. They have also had numerous stay and play events on."

## What the service has done to meet any areas for improvement we made at or since the last inspection

### Areas for improvement

#### Previous area for improvement 1

To support children wellbeing and development the provider should enhance personal plans to ensure they contain relevant information to meet the needs of children. This should include, but is not limited to, clearly setting out how their individual needs will be met and ensuring this is agreed and reviewed with parents/ carers.

This is to ensure that care, play and learning is consistent with the Health and Social care Standards (HSCS) which states: 'My personal plan (sometimes referred to as a care plan) is right for me because it sets out how my needs will be met, as well as my wishes and choices.' (HSCS 15).

**This area for improvement was made on 21 August 2024.**

#### Action taken since then

The service had developed personal plans to ensure there contained relevant information to meet the needs of children. This was regularly reviewed with parents and staff updated key information to help ensure it reflected children current needs, interest and preferences.

Parent spoke positively about being involved in their children's learning and shared how they had shared approaches they could use at home. Most personal plans had clear strategies that supported children's wellbeing and development. We discussed where some strategies would benefit from further detail.

This Area for Improvement has been Met.

#### Previous area for improvement 2

To ensure children's health needs are met, the provider should improve medication processes to ensure relevant information is gathered to administer medicine safely. This includes, but is not limited to, ensuring clear signs and symptoms are recorded and medication is regularly reviewed with parents.

This is to ensure that care and support is consistent with the Health and Social Care Standards which state that: 'Any treatment or intervention that I experience is safe and effective.' (HSCS 1.24).

**This area for improvement was made on 21 August 2024.**

#### Action taken since then

The service had developed their approaches to ensure administration forms contained clear signs and symptoms to support children's health needs. Staff worked closely with families to gather important information to meet their health and medical needs. This included detailed action plans and regularly reviewing medication. We discussed where some improvements could be made within some forms. The service actioned this during the inspection.

This Area for Improvement has been Met.

## Previous area for improvement 3

The provider should ensure that children receive care in a clean, well looked after and well maintained premises. This should include, but is not limited to, ensuring appropriate safeguards are in place.

This is to ensure that care and support is consistent with the Health and Social Care Standards (HSCS) that states: 'I experience an environment that is well looked after with clean, tidy and well-maintained premises, furnishings and equipment.' (HSCS 5.24).

**This area for improvement was made on 21 August 2024.**

### Action taken since then

Since the last inspection the service had taken action to fix broken fixture and fittings. The bathroom had been refurbished, which was contributing towards a clean environment. We discussed where some areas could be further developed.

Overall the nursery was clean, bright and well maintained.

This Area for Improvement has been Met.

## Previous area for improvement 4

To support children's wellbeing, learning, and development, the provider should ensure communication with parents is consistent, accurate and meaningful. This should include, but is not limited to, when a specific need is identified, records accurately reflect how children will be supported. Children's care plans are regularly reviewed, and parents are involved in the development and implementation of support strategies to promote consistency.

This is to ensure care and support is consistent with Health and Social Care Standard (HSCS) that states: '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 3.14).

**This area for improvement was made on 10 October 2025.**

### Action taken since then

The service had improved communication with parents and had developed communication logs to record discussion linked to children's learning and development. Records within personal plans kept an overview of work with external agents and how children are being supported. This was also enhanced with meaningful personal plans that contained clear strategies of how children would be supported. Staff were all knowledgeable of these strategies which helped to provide consistency in children's care.

This Area for Improvement has been Met.

## Complaints

Please see Care Inspectorate website ([www.careinspectorate.com](http://www.careinspectorate.com)) for details of complaints about the service which have been upheld.

Detailed evaluations

<b>Leadership</b>	<b>5 - Very Good</b>
Leadership and management of staff and resources	5 - Very Good
<b>Children play and learn</b>	<b>5 - Very Good</b>
Playing, learning and developing	5 - Very Good
<b>Children are supported to achieve</b>	<b>5 - Very Good</b>
Nurturing care and support	5 - Very Good

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