



Childcare Inspection Report on

Stepping Stones Nursery Aberdare

**Stepping Stones Creche
Robertstown Industrial Estate
Aberdare
CF44 8HD**



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Description of the service

Stepping Stones Creche/ Nursery was registered by Care Inspectorate Wales (CIW) in April 2002. They provide full day care for a maximum of 79 children. The responsible individual on behalf of Jameswell Ltd is Nicola James. The persons in charge for the service are Nicola James and Kerry Ann Evans. The nursery is open Monday to Friday, 7.15 a.m. to 6.00 p.m. The service is located in Roberstown Industrial Estate, Aberdare. The main language of care is English.

Summary of our findings

1. Overall assessment

Children attending the nursery thoroughly enjoy their play and learning and staff treat children with kindness. They are cared for in a suitable environment. The Leadership and management of the service is organised and effective.

2. Improvements

Since the last inspection the provider has made the following improvements to the service:

- more key worker and parent/ carer meetings have been arranged;
- open evenings have been implemented;
- the nursery car park has been resurfaced and designated parking spaces have been marked out;
- the undercover pram and buggy bay has been refurbished;
- shelters and covers over waiting areas have been renewed;
- the outdoor play areas throughout the nursery have been improved and more resources for activities for the various sections of the nursery have been purchased;
- all high chairs in the 'Tiny Turtles' section of the nursery have been replaced with new high chairs;
- plates are now provided for all children in the various sections of the nursery at snack times;
- children who rest and sleep in the Cute Caterpillar and Stepping Stones sections of the nursery are now provided with individual bedding;
- the soft chairs that were split in the Shootings Stars section of the nursery have been removed;
- the Statement of Purpose has been amended with the correct CIW contact details;
- registers of attendance have been up dated for each section to reflect both children and staff being signed in and out. This also includes denoting when staff and children move from one room to another as well as the highlighting of the supernumerary person in charge at any given time;
- there is a supernumerary person in charge available at all times when the service is operational;

- registers of attendance are now completed in pen;
- full team meetings are being conducted more frequently;
- greater free flow play opportunities are provided for the pre school section of the nursery and
- food play is now suitably risk assessed.

3. Requirements and recommendations

None

1. Well-being

Summary

Children attending Stepping Stones Creche/ Nursery settle quickly are listened to and make choices. Children interact well with one another and with the adults caring for them. Children enjoy the range of free play and planned activities on offer and regularly take part in indoor and outdoor physical play. Children have easy access to toys and resources.

Our findings

1.1 To what extent do children have a voice?

Children at Stepping Stones Creche/ Nursery are listened to and speak up for themselves. Children were able make some choices and decisions. They had opportunities to express themselves. Children had a choice of what they wanted to play with. Babies moved between activities confidently. Older children chose between the play resources that were available to them. Children chose from the wide range of activities available to them in all four base rooms for example home corner, reading corner, dressing up, construction, puzzles, 'Tuff Tray' activities, interactive toys and ball pit. Children chose whether they wanted milk or water to drink at snack time. However, some children in the Shooting Stars section of the nursery vocalised some frustration at not being able to free choose from wider range activities that was available in the form of having free flow access to the enclosed outdoor attached to this base room. This was because children were taken to play in this section in small groups. However, prior to the production of this report the registered provider confirmed that children in this section of the nursery are now provided with greater free flow indoor/outdoor play opportunities.

Children generally have a good voice at the service.

1.2 To what extent do children feel safe, happy and valued?

Children are happy, settle quickly and have positive bonds with the staff.

We saw that children had formed positive attachments with the staff members as the children were happy, secure and settled. We saw that the children separated from their parents or carers comfortably and with ease. We observed a young child who was new to attending the nursery. The child presented as having settled in quickly and was starting to develop good bonds with their keyworker.

Children are happy, settled and relaxed and new children feel welcome and included quickly.

1.3 How well do children interact?

Children play alongside each other showing an understanding of what is acceptable behaviour and an understanding of right from wrong. Older children know the rules. They are able to express their own feelings and are considerate to the feelings and emotions of others.

We observed that the older and younger children interacted well with one another. They were able to sustain collaborative play whilst being happy to help the younger children in some activities, including sharing construction blocks and play dough whilst discussing their creations. We heard the children praising each other and talking about what they had created. The children spoke to each other and the staff members respectfully whilst happily negotiating about sharing the equipment and resources.

Children behave and interact with one another well.

1.4 To what extent do children enjoy their play and learning?

Children enjoy the range of planned and free play activities that the nursery provides for them.

We saw the children sustain interest in activities for age appropriate amounts of time such as story time, a singing session, playing with a matching game, vehicles and garage, arts and crafts, ball pit, playing with interactive toys and 'Tuff Tray' focussed task activities, for example food play activities and during outdoor play. We saw children in the pre-school section enjoying different activities in the main base room. We saw children playing with sand, Small World toys and mark making. They fully enjoyed their play and learning experiences. We saw children in the older baby room enjoying inquisitive and experimental play and laughing when playing with musical and interactive toys as well as enjoying the ball pit and the bubble machine.

Children enjoy their play and learning very much.

1.5 How well do children develop, learn and become independent?

Children are developing and are becoming independent. They are confident to try things before asking for help and know that if they ask for help they will receive it.

We saw children involved in activities and they were confident to try things independently before asking for help from a staff member. We observed children independently attempting to put on their own shoes and coats and to wash and dry their hands without being prompted. They dried their hands independently. We saw that the children engaged in a variety of play. For example they completed puzzles, played together with matching games, construction and role play and took part in a variety of physical free play activities outdoors

such as ride on equipment and toys. They looked at books on their own and also listened attentively to a story which was read to them. Children communicated with the staff confidently and we saw them enjoying the physical play outdoors. Similarly, we observed the younger children playing with a wide range of toys including soft toys, interactive and sensory toys.

Children are developing an appropriate level of independence and are given good opportunities to become effective independent learners.

2. Care and Development

Summary

Staff interact well with children and show genuine care and affection for them. They are aware of children's developmental milestones and are able to support their learning and development effectively. Staff ensure that they keep children free from avoidable risks to their health and safety

Our findings

2.1 How well do practitioners keep children safe and healthy?

Staff strive to keep the children safe and healthy. They work in line with the service's policies and procedures and they update relevant training in a timely way in order to protect children and promote children's health, safety and development.

We saw that the staff promoted best practice in relation to healthy eating and that children benefit from freshly cooked meals on a three weekly menu cycle. On the second day of the inspection we saw children heartily enjoy a meal of home made cheese and potato followed by ice cream. Several children were seen to ask for second helpings. Food allergies were catered for in the varied menu. We heard children tell staff that the main lunch was "yum, this dinner is my favourite!" We observed staff members adhering to good health and hygiene protocols whilst toileting children. We saw a sample of accident and incident records which had been completed comprehensively. The outdoor area was equipped with a hygiene station containing gloves, aprons, antibacterial wipes, first aid kit etc. Emergency treatment authorisation consents had been completed by parents and carers in relation to children attending the service. However, we discussed with the provider in order to ensure the possible elimination of cross infection that greater care needed to be undertaken in relation to food play being suitably risk assessed. This was due to the fact that we observed children in the 'Big Butterflies' section of the nursery playing with cooked pasta in the 'Tuff Tray' activity and then putting it to their mouths. Prior to the completion of this report the provider confirmed that measures had been put in place to thoroughly risk assess all food play activities. In addition, we also observed children in the Shooting Stars section of the nursery being served apples and raisins at snack times and these being placed directly in front of them on the table. However, prior to the production of this report the provider had also confirmed that all children within each of the four sections of the nursery are provided with bowls or plates at snack time.

Staff keep children safe and generally promote their care and development.

2.2 How well do practitioners manage interactions?

There is a behaviour management policy in place which is understood and practised by the staff to good effect.

Discussion with the staff and observation of their practice demonstrated that they understood and implemented this policy consistently. For example we saw a staff member talking to a child who was crying as he wanted a vehicle held by another child. She said gently “no, we need to share, are we going to share?” and offered the child another vehicle. A child threw a toy truck to the floor; the staff member said “no thank you” and suggested that the child might want to get something else instead. He duly went off to play quietly in the home corner. Prior to lunch the staff asked the children to sit quietly at the dining table as their lunch was being served. They praised the children who co-operated by saying their name and a compliment such as “sitting beautifully” after it.

Staff manage behaviour well.

2.3 How well do practitioners promote children’s play, learning and development and meet their individual needs?

Staff know the children well and know their individual needs and are able to effectively meet these needs.

We saw records of children’s needs and preferences which included each child’s likes, dislikes and general routines. We saw that staff cared for the children in line with this information, for example, some babies were settled to sleep in cots and others in pushchairs or reclining baby chairs according to parental requests. We saw lists of children’s specific food allergies displayed in the main base room and kitchen and through discussions; staff demonstrated that they were aware of each child’s dietary needs. We observed that there was a ‘routines board’ in the baby section and that all four sections of the nursery had a ‘special requirements information board’ as well as a ‘dietary board’ in place. Staff attempted to introduce basic incidental Welsh throughout the nursery and we saw some bilingual displays for example for colours and numbers. Staff introduced Welsh songs, months of the year and week days at circle time. We observed a sample of children’s files which evidenced that staff recorded and maintained children’s development.

Staff promote children’s play, learning and development and meet their needs effectively.

3. Environment

Summary

The leaders ensure that the premises are safe, clean and well organised. They provide good quality toys and resources which reflect diversity. Policies and procedures promote safe practices and records show that these are followed by the staff.

Our findings

3.1 How well do leaders ensure the safety of the environment?

Leaders have policies and procedures in place which promote safe practices and a safe environment.

The entrance to the nursery was kept safe and secure via a comprehensive locking system. The nursery environment was clean, light, bright; well maintained and organised. We saw that the staff regularly checked the cleaning and health and safety rotas for each section of nursery and carried out the duties required throughout the day. The leader also employed a housekeeper and the provider's spouse carried out the general maintenance for the service and is present at the service daily. They told us that daily opening and closing checks are implemented in relation to each section of the nursery as well as regular comprehensive risk assessments. We saw that leaders had conducted regular fire drills. All fire exits were clearly marked.

Leaders ensure the safety of the premises well.

3.2 How well do leaders ensure the suitability of the environment?

Leaders ensure that all sections of the nursery are welcoming, spacious and well laid out.

In the older children's section of the nursery namely Shooting Star's, the person in charge and room leader displayed the children's colourful art work around the walls. The art work related to the topics they had been learning with one of the current themes being 'The Royal Wedding'. During our second visit to the service we observed that children had turned up at the nursery dresses in smart clothes and party dresses or princess dresses in readiness for the Royal Wedding celebration party they were to have that afternoon. The young baby section namely 'Tiny Turtles' was also well equipped. It was a suitable large bright base room which was stimulating and brightly decorated and well equipped. The sections for older babies and older toddlers namely 'Cute Caterpillars' and 'Big Butterflies' were equipped with a smaller quiet area, they contained a home corner, play kitchen, small table and chairs, music corner, dolls and prams as well as a variety of dressing up outfits. The nappy changing room and children's toilet area throughout the nursery was well equipped. Leaders had also recently renovated the designated undercover pram and buggy

bay as well as the covered shelters and waiting areas. The car park area had also been resurfaced and redesigned with allocated parking marked out for staff, visitors and parent/carers. However, we observed that not all children within all four sections of the nursery had been provided with individual top and bottom sheets/blankets at sleep time. Leaders had confirmed prior to the production of this report that this issue had now been addressed and all children were provided with individual bedding at sleep and rest periods.

Leaders ensure that the premises are suitable.

3.3 How well do leaders ensure the quality of resources and equipment?

Leaders provide a good variety of clean, age appropriate toys and equipment.

We saw a wide range of clean toys and resources which were appropriate for the children's age groups and easily accessible by the children. In the older children's room, leaders had distinct set out play areas which were well resourced with educational toys, puzzles, construction toys and arts and crafts materials. In the younger children's areas we saw that the leaders had in place a wide range and selection of suitable toys. There was an excellent range of outdoor play equipment within the designated play areas for specific age groups. The large communal play areas, which were also equipped with a good range and variety of play equipment, we observed that staff had regularly completed checks on the cleanliness and standards of the toys. During our first visit we observed that some of the high chairs in the 'Tiny Turtle' section of the nursery had split at the sides and the foam filling was beginning to show. This issue was addressed with the person in charge on the day and leaders were asked to risk assess this equipment. However, leaders had decided to promptly replace all the high chairs in this section of the nursery with new ones.

Leaders ensure that there is a sufficient range of good quality resources.

4. Leadership and Management

Summary

Leaders have systems in place to monitor and evaluate outcomes for children. Leaders manage and organise, record keeping and policies and procedures effectively and these are subject to regular review and updating.

Our findings

4.1 How effective is leadership?

Leadership of the service is good although some improvements need to be made.

Leaders had a statement of purpose in place; however it required amending to be fully in line with regulatory requirements. During the course of the inspection, leaders confirmed that the statement of purpose had been fully amended to include the correct CIW contact details and a copy had been forwarded to CIW. Leaders had a system of signing children in and out of the service in the main entrance area. However, although there were room registers in place they required amending to ensure that the registers of attendance have been updated for each section of the nursery to reflect both children and staff being signed in and out. This also included recording when staff and children move from one room to another as well as the highlighting of the supernumerary person in charge. All registers were not always being completed in pen with some entries being in pencil. Leaders confirmed prior to the production of this report that these amendments had been made to the registers of attendance and that they were now being completed in pen. A visitor's book was in place.

Leadership is good.

4.2 How effective is self evaluation and planning for improvement?

Leaders had an effective system in place for reviewing the service and planning ongoing improvements.

The leaders had implemented a comprehensive process for reviewing their service which included issuing questionnaires to children, parents and carers. Leaders also confirmed that the latest questionnaires had been sent to parents and carers in December 2017. Four parent/carers spoken to at the time of the inspection stated that they were happy with the quality of care that their child was receiving and that they were progressing well at the service. Leaders had completed the SASS (Self Assessment of Service Statement) part one and two in August 2017. However, leaders confirmed that they were due to complete their current quality of care report by the end of July 2018 and they would forward a copy to CIW on its completion.

Leaders are striving to make improvements to their service.

4.3 How effective is the management of practitioners, staff and other resources?

Leaders' management of practitioners, staff and resources in the main, is satisfactory. However, some improvements need to be made.

A sample of staff files seen confirmed that leaders have a robust recruitment procedure in place and that staff files are developed and maintained in line with regulatory requirements. Regular staff supervision and annual appraisal had been conducted and recorded. Leaders were reminded however, to ensure that there was a supernumerary person in charge at the service at all times in line with the National Minimum Standards guidance.

Leaders management of practitioners and staff in the main is good.

4.4 How effective are partnerships?

Leaders have developed a good relationship with parents, carers and the local community.

We saw that there was a relaxed discussion between parents, carers and staff when they collected their children. The person in charge told us that parents were kept informed of any developments at the service either verbally, via regular newsletters and/or via the social media page for the service. In addition open evenings had been arranged for parent and carers. Daily information sheets were completed by the relevant keyworkers for all children attending the baby section which informed parents and carers of their child's day at the service. For example baby feeds, sleep times and nappy changes etc. In addition, leaders had agreed contracts with all parents and carers and had sought consent for aspects of the service such as taking photographs, applying suntan lotion and any outings. Leaders ensure that parents and carers are provided with information about their child's progress as information gathered via observations that are recorded by the children's key workers. Comprehensive learning journals were completed which contained actual examples as well as photographic evidence of activities that the children had been involved in. Leaders had established good links with the local health visitors and speech and language therapists and the local area.

Leaders build effective partnerships.

5. Improvements required and recommended following this inspection

5.1 Areas of non compliance from previous inspections

None

5.2 Recommendations for improvement

None

6. How we undertook this inspection

This was a full baseline inspection undertaken as part of our normal schedule of inspections. Two inspectors undertook two unannounced visits to the service for a period of approximately eleven hours.

- We observed the children and the care which they received at Stepping Stones Creche/ Nursery at different times of the day;
- we used our SOFI tool to capture evidence of the children's engagement and the care being provided by staff;
- we spoke to several children and four parents/carers, the acting person in charge and most staff during our inspection visits;
- we looked at a wide range of records including the children and staff registers, staff rotas, children's records, staff files, and the quality of care report and statement of purpose; and
- provided detailed feedback to the responsible individual over the phone on 21 June 2018.

Further information about what we do can be found on our website:

www.careinspectorate.wales

7. About the service

Type of care provided	Childrens Day Care Full Day Care
Responsible Individual	Graham James Nicola James
Person in charge	Nicola James
Registered maximum number of places	79
Age range of children	From 6 weeks to 5 years of age
Opening hours	From 7.15am to 6.00pm
Operating Language of the service	English
Date of previous Care Inspectorate Wales inspection	July 2017
Dates of this inspection visit(s)	16 and 18 May 2018
Is this a Flying Start service?	No
Is early years education for three and four year olds provided at the service?	Yes
Does this service provide the Welsh Language active offer?	This is a service that does not provide an “Active Offer” of the Welsh Language. It does not anticipate, identify or meet the Welsh language needs of the people/children who use, or intend to use their service. We recommend that the service provider considers Welsh Government’s “More Than Just Words follow on strategic guidance for Welsh language in social care”.
Additional Information:	