

Small Steps Day Nursery and Pre-School

Inspection report for early years provision

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Type of setting	Childcare - Non-Domestic

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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by Ofsted under Sections 49 and 50 of the Childcare Act 2006 on the quality and standards of the registered early years provision. 'Early years provision' refers to provision regulated by Ofsted for children from birth to 31 August following their fifth birthday (the early years age group). The registered person must ensure that this provision complies with the statutory framework for children's learning, development and welfare, known as the *Early Years Foundation Stage*.

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Description of the setting

Small Steps Day Nursery and Pre-School is one of two privately owned settings run by the same provider. It registered in 2007 and operates from four rooms within a converted house. Children have access to an enclosed outdoor play area. The nursery is situated in the residential area in the West Kirby area of Wirral, Merseyside. It is open each weekday from 8am to 6pm for 51 weeks of the year.

The nursery is registered on the Early Years Register. A maximum of 45 children may attend the nursery at any one time. There are currently 61 children aged from birth to under five years on roll, some in part-time places. The nursery currently supports a number of children with special education needs and/or disabilities.

There are 12 members of staff, all of whom hold appropriate early years qualifications, National Vocational Qualification to at least level 2. Eight members of staff hold level 3. In addition, three members of staff are qualified to degree level with qualified teacher status, one of whom is qualified to foundation degree level in early years. The setting provides funded early education from two- to four-year-old children and receives support from the local authority.

The overall effectiveness of the early years provision

Overall the quality of the provision is good.

The nursery provides a warm, welcoming and fully inclusive environment, where staff respect and value children as individuals. Clear understanding of the Early Years Foundation Stage contributes to the children making a high level of progress in their learning and development. Partnerships with other agencies are very effective and with parents are superb. Comprehensive policies and procedures are implemented to safeguard and promote children's welfare. However, on occasion there are slight inconsistencies in relation to daily checks. The motivated manager places strong emphasis on effective self-evaluation, which has identified strengths and weaknesses to drive improvement.

What steps need to be taken to improve provision further?

To further improve the early years provision the registered person should:

- ensure procedures for maintaining a safe environment are consistent, particularly in relation to daily checks.

The effectiveness of leadership and management of the early years provision

A strong commitment to keeping children safe means that all staff have a detailed understanding of their roles and responsibilities in relation to safeguarding. All necessary policies, procedures and records are in place. Effective safeguarding

checks ensure that the nursery only employs personnel, who are suitable to work with children. Staff are vigilant throughout the day, ensuring children are well supervised and protected from accidental harm. Detailed risk assessments are routinely carried out to protect children as they play indoors and outdoors and on outings. However, there are slight inconsistencies when checking the indoor environment on a daily basis.

Partnership with parents is exemplary and at the heart of the nursery ethos. Excellent relationships are fostered, resulting in children's needs being understood and met. Parents are valued as the most knowledgeable resource about their own child and, as a result, are encouraged to work closely with the key worker. Any special need is fully discussed and outside support obtained as necessary, ensuring children receive individualised care to help them reach their potential.

Partnerships with others are well developed. Staff are fully committed to working with appropriate professionals and support agencies. As a result, children with special educational needs and/or disabilities are thoroughly supported. Staff promote positive attitudes to diversity and difference within all children. Consequently, children and families feel included, safe and valued. Staff are well qualified and motivated towards continuing their own professional development. Deployment of staff is good and children have access to a rich, varied and imaginative choice of activities and resources.

The manager leads and encourages a culture of reflective practice, self-evaluation and informed discussion to identify areas of strength and prioritise development. An action plan is in place and the nursery is knowledgeable about its strengths and weaknesses.

The quality and standards of the early years provision and outcomes for children

Children progress well, as they are provided with a broad range of interactive activities. All rooms are well resourced to allow plenty of opportunities to engage in free play. Staff know the children and their capabilities and activities are matched to the full range of children's needs, enabling all of them to succeed. Staff closely observe children's progress and use assessment and planning well to identify children's next steps. There is a calm and purposeful atmosphere throughout the setting with all children busily on task. Children thrive on the good balance of adult-led and child-initiated opportunities and enjoy their learning. Practitioners are skilled at using open-ended questions and activities with the children to help them think and solve problems. Children share very well, encouraged and praised by staff when doing so.

Children's physical development and opportunities to adopt a healthy lifestyle are excellent. The recently introduced beach project incorporates the natural environment as a learning tool to extend children's knowledge and understanding of the world. Sessions at the beach allow children to learn about the benefits of physical exercise, with opportunities to solve problems, whilst constructing with sand and stones. In the nursery's outside area, staff and children play group

games involving counting and ordering of numbers. Various chalk boards in the outside area offer opportunities for mark-making, extending their literacy skills. Vegetables growing in the organic garden further extend the children's knowledge of a healthy lifestyle.

Children show high levels of independence, as they serve themselves from an excellent choice of healthy fruit snacks, following an embedded routine of hand washing. Water and milk is offered during snack time and fresh drinking water is continually available. A chosen helper of the day counts the number of plates needed for children, as they each serve themselves nutritious fruity curry and rice for lunch, further increasing their independence. The environment is clean and hygienic and strict measures are put in place for nappy changing to ensure health and safety. Children's information and communication technology skills are promoted as they experience a broad range of opportunities to access a computer, compact disc player and programmable toys.

Children are inclusive with each other, showing politeness, friendship and tolerance during activities. They feel safe in the environment and move around with confidence. They take part in regular fire drills and learn how to respond to instruction promptly. They have the freedom to experiment yet know staff are close at hand for support. Children's understanding of the world is effectively promoted through the celebration of various religious and cultural festivals, including, Diwali and Chinese New Year. The children learn about their own group, the community and the wider world. They are regular visitors into the community as staff support them to buy fruit from the local supermarket to make 'smoothies'. Children are encouraged to make a positive contribution, as they become involved in recycling and fundraising, participating in a sponsored walk along the seaside promenade.

Annex A: record of inspection judgements

The key inspection judgements and what they mean

Grade 1 is Outstanding: this aspect of the provision is of exceptionally high quality

Grade 2 is Good: this aspect of the provision is strong

Grade 3 is Satisfactory: this aspect of the provision is sound

Grade 4 is Inadequate: this aspect of the provision is not good enough

The overall effectiveness of the early years provision

How well does the setting meet the needs of the children in the Early Years Foundation Stage?	2
The capacity of the provision to maintain continuous improvement	2

The effectiveness of leadership and management of the early years provision

The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	2
The effectiveness with which the setting deploys resources	2
The effectiveness with which the setting promotes equality and diversity	2
The effectiveness of safeguarding	2
The effectiveness of the setting's self-evaluation, including the steps taken to promote improvement	2
The effectiveness of partnerships	2
The effectiveness of the setting's engagement with parents and carers	1

The quality of the provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage

The quality of the provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
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Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage

Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The extent to which children achieve and enjoy their learning	2
The extent to which children feel safe	2
The extent to which children adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which children make a positive contribution	2
The extent to which children develop skills for the future	2

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