

# Small Steps Day Care

Little Wycke Farm, Blind Lane, Mundon, MALDON, Essex, CM9 6PS

## Inspection date

06/01/2015

Previous inspection date

09/09/2008

## The quality and standards of the early years provision

**This inspection:**

1

Previous inspection:

2

How well the early years provision meets the needs of the range of children who attend	1
The contribution of the early years provision to the well-being of children	1
The effectiveness of the leadership and management of the early years provision	1

## The quality and standards of the early years provision

### This provision is outstanding

- All children make exceptional progress in all areas of learning because the quality of teaching is consistently very high quality. Staff understand how children learn, and provide stimulating and imaginative activities both indoors and outside.
- Children learn about the natural world, seasons and lifecycles due to the excellent programme for outdoor play and learning. They confidently engage with natural materials, plants and animals and gain an understanding of the world around them.
- Children form strong and effective emotional attachments to the adults caring for them due to superbly well thought out settling-in procedures. This develops their sense of security and emotional well-being.
- Parents are reassured that children are well cared for and happy. They are fully informed of progress and know their child's next steps in learning, enabling them to continue learning at home. Support for children with special educational needs and/or disabilities is excellent. All children are fully included and enabled to make the best possible progress.
- Safeguarding of children is given paramount consideration. All concerns are referred without delay, keeping children safe and free from harm and abuse.
- The provider has a vision for the future development of the setting and motivates her staff exceptionally well, so the staff team is very strong and shows commitment and dedication to ensuring the highest standards of care and learning, through a reflective approach.

## Information about this inspection

Inspections of registered early years provision are:

- scheduled at least once in every inspection cycle – the current cycle ends on 31 July 2016
- scheduled more frequently where Ofsted identifies a need to do so, for example where provision was previously judged inadequate
- brought forward in the inspection cycle where Ofsted has received information that suggests the provision may not be meeting the legal requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage or where assessment of the provision identifies a need for early inspection
- prioritised where we have received information that the provision is not meeting the requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage and which suggests children may not be safe
- scheduled at the completion of an investigation into failure to comply with the requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage.

The provision is also registered on the voluntary and compulsory parts of the Childcare Register. This report includes a judgment about compliance with the requirements of that register.

## Inspection activities

- The inspector observed and interacted with children in the playroom and in the outside area.
- The inspector held discussions with staff and the provider, and carried out a joint observation with the provider in the outside area.
- The inspector viewed a sample of documentation including evidence of staff suitability checks and qualifications, some policies and children's development profiles.
- The inspector took account of the views of parents spoken to during the inspection.

## Inspector

Sarah Williams

## Full report

### Information about the setting

Small Steps Day Care was registered in 2007 and is on the Early Years Register and the compulsory and voluntary parts of the Childcare Register. It is situated in Mundon, near Maldon, Essex, and is managed by a limited company. The setting operates from purpose-built premises and there is an enclosed area available for outdoor play. The setting employs four members of childcare staff. Of these, three hold appropriate early years qualifications at level 5, 3 or 2. The setting opens Monday to Friday during term time only from 9am until 4pm, except on Thursdays when the opening hours are 8am to 4.30pm. Children attend for a variety of sessions. There are currently 26 children on roll who are in the early years age group. The setting provides funded early education for two-, three- and four-year-olds. It supports children who speak English as an additional language and children with special educational needs and/or disabilities.

### What the setting needs to do to improve further

#### To further improve the quality of the early years provision the provider should:

- consider enhancing children's understanding of simple everyday technology by introducing them to a wider range of different personal and household items, for example, items of clothing with various fastenings, and equipment, such as bags, purses and lunchboxes, to aid knowledge of how things work and promote further the development of independence and self-care.

## Inspection judgements

### How well the early years provision meets the needs of the range of children who attend

All children at the setting make exceptionally good progress in all areas of their learning and development. This is because staff provide a consistently excellent quality of teaching in a well-thought-out, stimulating and child-friendly environment. They imaginatively use the available space to create an outstanding, highly child-centred and very welcoming environment that is colourful, bright and stimulating. As well as the main playroom, children have free access to a superbly resourced enclosed outdoor area. This is a real strength of the setting and demonstrates the very strong ethos for discovery play and learning, delivered in a natural environment. Staff understand that many children learn best in an outdoor environment. Children who choose to use the outdoor area can explore and take risks as they climb and balance on the logs and earth mounds. They develop their thinking skills and find solutions to problems as they use the natural materials and create their own imaginative games. Children can build dens, make a meal in the mud kitchen, fill containers with water and check on the hens. They are encouraged to collect the eggs laid by the roaming hens, and care for the hens by feeding them. The entire outside area invites children to extend and challenge their physical skills, and take risks by negotiating uneven terrain in a fully supervised environment. Children develop ideas, such

as how they can use long sticks to help them climb a slippery mound. Their sense of achievement is huge as they reach the top. Staff take opportunities to develop vocabulary while children are outside, helping them describe what they are seeing and doing. They talk about how the mud is slippery and think about the tinkling sounds that the wind chimes make when they tap them. Children use mathematical skills as they calculate how much water is needed to fill pots and pans in the mud kitchen. They work out ways to move things around and gather the items they need for their games.

Indoors, a full programme of creative activities encourage children to explore texture and form and use materials to create collages and structures. Children thoroughly enjoy the sensation of different materials as they freely explore them. The planning allows for spontaneous and child-initiated activities to be woven into the day, and all planning takes account of children's expressed interests and ideas. A mini topic on tractors and farm vehicles is a direct result of the enthusiasm shown by children when outside and noticing what is around them. Staff understand well how children learn by thinking creatively and making links. For example, role play with props and resources based on a hospital theme skilfully weaves in children's own personal experiences. Children learn about their community and the local environment when visitors, such as the police and a farmer, come into the setting to talk to them. Children eagerly await a visit from a vet who also writes children's books, as they will learn about caring for their pets and the animals at the setting.

Each child has a record of their development in the form of a 'learning journey'. These records are compiled by their key person. They include a one page 'passport' detailing children's likes and dislikes, their approach to learning and their developmental starting points. This information is provided by parents, normally at the settling-in visits before children start attending, or during the home visit. The appealing and extremely well-presented learning journeys include examples of art and craft work, children's attempts at writing, and photographs of activities they have taken part in, together with comments and observations by their key person. There is a wealth of information for parents about how they can use the different activities to promote and continue the learning at home, and space to comment and contribute their thoughts and ideas. This clearly illustrates the very strong and effective partnership with parents, which benefits children and contributes towards their progress. The clear and precise next steps, devised accurately by the key person from observations, are reviewed and fed into the comprehensive, rigorous tracking system. This serves to check that children are reaching expected levels of development, and identifies any gaps which may need additional attention. The progress check for children aged between two and three years is incorporated extremely well within this system. Parents are able to take the findings and use them when they see the health visitor for their child's routine check. Any identified problems are promptly addressed, with specialist help from the setting's knowledgeable special educational needs coordinator. Any additional outside help required is sought from a team of external professionals. All additional support is clearly documented and systematically reviewed. As a result, all children are effectively supported to make the best possible progress in their learning and development.

Children attending who speak English as an additional language are supported very well by the use of key vocabulary in their home language, where appropriate. The playroom

displays posters and signs using different languages and scripts, and dual-language books can be obtained. This enables all children to see the diversity of language in written form. Some staff are proficient in the use of sign language, which helps all children and is especially useful to those in the early days of language acquisition. There is scope, however, for extending children's access to fastenings on clothing and personal or household items, to aid their knowledge of how things work and to promote further the development of independence and self-care.

All children are active, confident, eager and enthusiastic learners, taking control of their chosen activities. They very successfully develop the skills and attitudes they need for the future. As they approach their final term in the setting, they take part in structured activities designed to help them prepare for the changes ahead. Their independence and confidence are boosted by having responsibilities as a helper, for example, at snack time. The move to school is made as seamless as possible by staff's thorough and thoughtful preparation. All the feeder schools are contacted and arrangements made for children to visit, and for teachers who wish to come to meet the children in the setting. For children who attend more than one early years setting, or are cared for by a childminder, highly effective links are established and information is shared. This supports children and guarantees an exceptional continuity of care and learning.

### **The contribution of the early years provision to the well-being of children**

Children attending the setting are extremely confident as they work and play, happily engaging with their surroundings. They demonstrate a strong sense of self as they make decisions about where they play and who they play with. Their high self-esteem is promoted exceptionally well by staff from the earliest days of attendance. The well-planned admissions system and well-thought-out key-person system establishes highly effective relationships with the child and their family. A home visit is arranged before children start to attend, so that children are reassured by familiar faces once they start at the setting. This also enables staff to find out about the child's unique needs and achievements so that care and learning can be tailored to suit their individual requirements. Children quickly develop attachments to the adults caring for them. They readily turn to the staff for emotional support and guidance, knowing that their needs will be met. For example, children ask staff if they can help to feed the guinea pigs and chicks, or for help with getting into their outdoor clothing and boots. Children's behaviour is managed calmly and consistently, so they start to learn that their actions have consequences, and that by being kind and helpful they can help to influence how others feel. This is facilitated exceptionally well by the free-flowing use of the outdoor area. With the open-ended play and learning this provides, children are encouraged to extend themselves and take risks in a supported yet challenging environment. Children are emotionally very well prepared for future challenges, such as the move to primary school. Staff emphasise the development of independence and always encourage children to do things for themselves. This works well at snack time and mealtimes, when children manage their own food needs and help themselves to fresh vegetables and bread placed on the tables.

Staff build in time every day to work specifically with their key children, so that they can

plan activities around the child's known next steps in learning and social needs. For example, they set up a game which involves taking turns or listening to instructions, or to describe what they are doing. The key persons are highly skilled in preparing children well for their future learning by developing their creative thinking and self-awareness. The attention to the development of children's good health is outstanding. A strength of the setting is how children are encouraged to move about freely, developing control as they negotiate the various slopes and uneven surfaces in the outdoor area. They climb mounds, balance on logs and stepping stones, and use wheeled toys to steer and move about the playground. Children know that exercise and exertion is good for them, and tell staff they can feel their heart beating faster when they have been very active or energetic. Children willingly engage in these active sessions because staff are excellent, inspiring role models. They join in, show genuine enthusiasm and suggest ideas for the children to use to extend their play. Children's self-care is promoted exceptionally well. They confidently select and put on protective clothing and boots when they wish to play outside, even in wet weather. They use the bathroom independently, or with support, to wash and dry their hands. Tissues are available and children are taught how to use these effectively to keep their hands germ-free.

Children gain a developing understanding of how to manage their own needs because they choose when they would like something to eat and drink. They enjoy a selection of well-chosen, healthy options at snack time. These always include fruit, vegetables and energy-giving foods, such as cereal or crackers, along with a drink of milk or water. Independence is very well promoted as children serve themselves, supported by a staff member. Suitable leftovers are fed to the chickens, giving children a good understanding of recycling and using resources thoughtfully. At lunchtime, children sit together and eat either their packed lunch from home, or a healthy, nutritionally balanced meal, prepared in the setting's kitchen. Staff sit with the children, modelling good table manners and encouraging discussion about the foods they are eating. Children talk about what is good for them and which foods are best seen as occasional treats. For children who become sleepy or tired during the session, beds can be made up in a quiet area, so they can rest undisturbed while others continue to play.

### **The effectiveness of the leadership and management of the early years provision**

Leadership of the setting is inspirational and positively influences all aspects of children's care and learning. The management and the staff team are dedicated and passionate in their commitment to maintain the highest levels of quality within the setting. Staff demonstrate their fully secure understanding of how to meet the safeguarding and welfare requirements. The manager has overarching responsibility for child protection. Children's safeguarding is fully assured because they are cared for in a safe, secure environment by staff who have excellent knowledge and understanding of child protection matters. This knowledge is refreshed at every staff meeting, and any concerns are dealt with promptly and efficiently. All staff and volunteers are checked and vetted for suitability before they are allowed to work with children. The indoor and outdoor environments are comprehensively risk assessed on a daily basis to keep them safe and child-friendly. Any broken or damaged toys or equipment are removed.

The learning and development requirements are fully met because all staff have a very clear and secure understanding of how children learn. This informs how staff plan the activities they provide, as they know how to encourage every child to make the individual progress they need. The manager monitors the quality of teaching and carries out regular, rigorous supervision and twice-yearly appraisal for all staff. Where training needs are identified, they are addressed promptly, so that staff improve their practice continually. Additionally, all activities are thoroughly evaluated and discussed at the end of each day to assess their success or how they can be changed in the future. Initially, each child's starting points are assessed using information sought from parents and gained at the home visit undertaken. Staff make observations of children as they play and work from the earliest days of attending. This ensures that the educational programme is effectively targeted at individual learning needs. The main playroom is well set out and makes good use of the available space. Staff skilfully make excellent use of every surface for displays, resources and features to interest and engage children. For example, wall displays with examples of children's artwork and emergent writing, and low-level storage, which allows children to independently access the resources they need. The overall progress of children is tracked and monitored very closely. The tracking of individual children and different groups of children is very well established, and monitored by the manager. Any gaps in achievement are analysed and swiftly addressed. This may mean changing a routine, or finding new ways to present resources, to make them more appealing. This meticulous attention to detail ensures that every child is included and given the best opportunities to succeed and maximise their potential. A reflective approach, combined with robust self-evaluation, provides a focus for ongoing development and improvement. Parents' views are sought and any suggestions for changes are incorporated where appropriate. Additionally, the provider is keen to extend the scope of the setting's support for children with special educational needs and/or disabilities, and has plans in place to initiate these improvements.

Partnership working is fully embraced as this is understood to be the key to children's ongoing successful development. Parents are fully involved in contributing to planning for their child, and are encouraged to include any information about things their children enjoy doing at home. Parents are encouraged to continue the learning at home as children's next steps are presented clearly and reviewed regularly. The regular two-way flow of information between parents and the key person is maintained rigorously, so that all important details about children's care and welfare are shared. Staff work very effectively in partnership with a range of external agencies, to ensure that every child's care and learning needs are identified swiftly and fully met. Lines of communication are established with any other early years providers attended by children, including childminders. This is so that all important and relevant information is shared and continuity of care is maintained. Children attending the setting go on to attend several different primary schools. The manager has excellent resources and information for parents to ensure that the move is as easy as possible for the children. By focusing on their independence and readiness for the change, and by showing them photographs of the different things they can expect to encounter, children can discuss any matters to allay anxieties. Overall, children's progress at the setting is excellent. They are happy, adventurous and curious and enjoy a superb and well-structured educational programme.

Every child is able to develop through the highly stimulating, extremely well-balanced indoor and outdoor play and learning provided.

### **The Childcare Register**

The requirements for the compulsory part of the Childcare Register are	<b>Met</b>
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The requirements for the voluntary part of the Childcare Register are	<b>Met</b>
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## What inspection judgements mean

### Registered early years provision

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	Outstanding provision is highly effective in meeting the needs of all children exceptionally well. This ensures that children are very well prepared for the next stage of their learning.
Grade 2	Good	Good provision is effective in delivering provision that meets the needs of all children well. This ensures children are ready for the next stage of their learning.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	The provision is not giving children a good standard of early years education and/or there are minor breaches of the safeguarding and welfare requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage. We re-inspect nurseries and pre-schools judged as requires improvement within 12 months of the date of inspection.
Grade 4	Inadequate	Provision that is inadequate requires significant improvement and/or enforcement action. The provision is failing to give children an acceptable standard of early years education and/or is not meeting the safeguarding and welfare requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage. It will be monitored and inspected again within six months of the date of this inspection.
Met		There were no children present at the time of the inspection. The inspection judgement is that the provider continues to meet the requirements for registration.
Not met		There were no children present at the time of the inspection. The inspection judgement is that the provider does not meet the requirements for registration.

## Inspection

This inspection was carried out by Ofsted under sections 49 and 50 of the Childcare Act 2006 on the quality and standards of provision that is registered on the Early Years Register. The registered person must ensure that this provision complies with the statutory framework for children's learning, development and care, known as the Early Years Foundation Stage.

## Setting details

<b>Unique reference number</b>	EY367692
<b>Local authority</b>	Essex
<b>Inspection number</b>	873695
<b>Type of provision</b>	
<b>Registration category</b>	Childcare - Non-Domestic
<b>Age range of children</b>	0 - 17
<b>Total number of places</b>	16
<b>Number of children on roll</b>	26
<b>Name of provider</b>	Small Steps Day Care Limited
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	09/09/2008
<b>Telephone number</b>	01621 828767

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## Type of provision

For the purposes of this inspection the following definitions apply:

Full-time provision is that which operates for more than three hours. These are usually known as nurseries, nursery schools and pre-schools and must deliver the Early Years Foundation Stage. They are registered on the Early Years Register and pay the higher fee for registration.

Sessional provision operates for more than two hours but does not exceed three hours in any one day. These are usually known as pre-schools, kindergartens or nursery schools

and must deliver the Early Years Foundation Stage. They are registered on the Early Years Register and pay the lower fee for registration.

Childminders care for one or more children where individual children attend for a period of more than two hours in any one day. They operate from domestic premises, which are usually the childminder's own home. They are registered on the Early Years Register and must deliver the Early Years Foundation Stage.

Out of school provision may be sessional or full-time provision and is delivered before or after school and/or in the summer holidays. They are registered on the Early Years Register and must deliver the Early Years Foundation Stage. Where children receive their Early Years Foundation Stage in school these providers do not have to deliver the learning and development requirements in full but should complement the experiences children receive in school.

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