

# Inspection of Small Steps Day Care

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

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Inspection date: 8 July 2022

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	<b>Outstanding</b>
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The quality of education	<b>Outstanding</b>
Behaviour and attitudes	<b>Outstanding</b>
Personal development	<b>Outstanding</b>
Leadership and management	<b>Outstanding</b>
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Outstanding

## **What is it like to attend this early years setting?**

### **The provision is outstanding**

Children have a positive and excellent approach to learning. They have fantastic social communication skills, expressed with ease and enthusiasm. Children form warm and strong attachments with their key person. Practitioners offer children an exciting, inspiring and inviting environment, to build on their skills, knowledge and emotional resilience. For example, as soon as children arrive at the setting, they proudly find their name tags and post them in a letter box placed by the door, showing fantastic reading skills.

Children are encouraged to choose between activities. They can explore a stimulating indoor provision, filled with interesting books and exciting activities, where they have opportunities to reflect and regulate their emotions. Or they can access the immense garden, which is set up with real-life resources and activities. Children are eager to take risks in a safe manner while being closely supervised by practitioners. For example, they laugh with excitement when they learn to climb a tree, following safety steps and focusing on taking turns. This enables them to acquire problem-solving skills, which in turn contributes to building their confidence and self-esteem.

Children learn so much about the world around them, particularly about where food comes from. They have access to a vegetable allotment, and they get actively involved in planting, watering and looking after the vegetables. In addition, the children get to look after a large chicken coop. This learning is extended to how to look after pets, as well as showing care and affection towards all living things.

## **What does the early years setting do well and what does it need to do better?**

- The setting offers a rich environment with exciting and meaningful learning opportunities. Practitioners focus on developing children's independence. For example, while in the garden, children are supported to climb trees and a climbing wall in a safe manner, to build on their large-muscle skills, balance and coordination. Children's emotional development and self-regulation are also a priority. For example, children have access to quiet areas, indoors and outdoors, to reflect and talk about their feelings. They also access various books and props associated with feelings and emotions to learn more about how to express them or the impact they have on others.
- Practitioners have strong and sound relationships with their key children. They have a robust knowledge of assessment, the curriculum and children's next steps, and they contribute positively to children's progress. Children's communication and language is supported and extended, including at lunchtime. Practitioners engage in meaningful conversations with the children, modelling language well and extending their vocabulary. As a result, children's imaginative

skills, as well as positive interactions with their peers, are promoted and supported.

- Older children acquire the vital skills necessary to support them with transitioning on to school. For example, they spend time with their key person on a regular basis to complete their personalised learning booklet. This focuses on developing small-muscle skills, pencil control and number and letter formation.
- Practitioners support children's understanding of the world by involving them in looking after the chickens or the vegetable allotment. For example, when a child finishes eating a plum at lunchtime, they are then supported to plant the pip in the garden. Practitioners also bring out the inquisitive spirit in all children when they encourage them to dig in the sand looking for gems or find living insects to place in the setting's bug hotel.
- Partnerships with parents are strong and effective. They comment on how robust the communication is and how well the setting supports children's progress in all areas of learning. In addition, the parents get involved in children's learning by completing the reading diaries or the homework packs sent to them on a regular basis. Furthermore, parents often volunteer at the setting to extend children's learning; teaching them Mandarin, talking about first aid as a paramedic or teaching the children how to care for the pets and animals in general as a vet.
- Leadership and management is strong and inclusive. As a result, the staff turnover is limited. All team members are well supported in their career development and well-being, and feel valued and included in achieving the setting's vision.
- The ethos and vision for the setting are ambitious and focus on children's positive outcomes. These are shared by the team of staff who embrace it with passion and enthusiasm.

## Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Risk assessments are strong and effective, completed daily and well understood by all staff members. Children are also included in completing the risk assessments to better understand how to navigate around the provision in a safe manner. All children, including the most vulnerable ones, are provided with a safe and stable environment. Children's emotional well-being and self-regulation are managed well, with help and support from outside professionals when necessary. All staff members have sound knowledge and understanding of safeguarding, including wider aspects of safeguarding. They are aware of how to deal with disclosures and make referrals.

## Setting details

<b>Unique reference number</b>	EY367692
<b>Local authority</b>	Essex
<b>Inspection number</b>	10127326
<b>Type of provision</b>	Childcare on non-domestic premises
<b>Registers</b>	Early Years Register, Compulsory Childcare Register, Voluntary Childcare Register
<b>Day care type</b>	Sessional day care
<b>Age range of children at time of inspection</b>	3 to 4
<b>Total number of places</b>	16
<b>Number of children on roll</b>	35
<b>Name of registered person</b>	Small Steps Day Care Ltd
<b>Registered person unique reference number</b>	RP911066
<b>Telephone number</b>	01621 828767
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	6 January 2015

## Information about this early years setting

Small Steps Day Care was registered in 2007. It is situated in Mundon, near Maldon, Essex, and is managed by a limited company. The setting opens Monday to Friday, during term time only, from 9am to 3pm. The setting employs four members of childcare staff. Of these, three hold appropriate early years qualifications at level 3, and one of these is working towards gaining a relevant childcare qualification. The pre-school receives funding for two-, three- and four-year-old children.

## Information about this inspection

**Inspector**  
Anca Sandu

## Inspection activities

- This was the first routine inspection the provider received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. The inspector discussed the impact of the pandemic with the provider and has taken that into account in their evaluation of the provision.
- The inspector and manager completed a learning walk together. They discussed how the curriculum is organised and what they want children to learn.
- The inspector observed the quality of teaching and education, outdoors and indoors, and assessed the impact this has on children's learning.
- The inspector spoke with the practitioners at appropriate times throughout the inspection.
- Children spoke with the inspector about the activities they were doing.
- The inspector carried out a joint observation with the manager.
- The inspector held a meeting with the manager. She looked at relevant documentation and reviewed evidence of the suitability of the practitioners working at the setting.
- Some parents spoke with the inspector. The inspector took into account their views.

We carried out this inspection 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.

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