

Inspection of 1st Step Pre-school Ltd

Unit 9d, Cowley Road, Blyth Riverside Business Park, Blyth NE24 5TF

Inspection date: 6 October 2023

Overall effectiveness	Good
The quality of education	Good
Behaviour and attitudes	Good
Personal development	Good
Leadership and management	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Not applicable

What is it like to attend this early years setting?

The provision is good

Children are happy, settled and secure at this friendly and welcoming setting. They form close bonds with staff, who are caring, gentle and kind. Staff plan strong support for children's personal, social and emotional development. They encourage children to explore their emotions through a 'feelings tree' display. Staff use this to support children to express how they feel. Staff return to the display with children throughout the day to highlight to them how their feelings can improve and to show them how resilient they are. Staff are good role models. They are respectful and support children to use manners. Children take turns as they wash their hands and share as they play with board games and puzzles. Their behaviour is good.

Staff provide strong support for children's growing independence. Staff encourage children to make their own choices and to have a try. They put thoughtful strategies in place to help children pour their own drinks and blow their own noses. Staff encourage children to zip up their coats, tidy away their toys and put their rubbish in the bin. Children are confident, curious and busy in their play. Staff are happy and positive. They clearly praise children's efforts and ideas and delight in their achievements.

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

- Staff plan a wide range of exciting activities and experiences that interest and challenge children. For example, children explore with their senses as they investigate real flowers, fruits and vegetables. Children look for bugs in the enclosed garden and empty and fill containers with water and sand.
- Staff model new skills to children well. Occasionally, however, there are times during the daily routine when staff do not consistently provide more targeted support for children's learning.
- Staff use familiar books as starting points for activities. For example, children act out a favourite story as they use wooden hammers to explore vegetables that staff have encased in ice.
- Children learn about the lives of others and their local community, such as through visitors to the setting. For example, they meet a firefighter, a veteran, a volunteer from a local food bank and a representative from a local mosque.
- Overall, staff provide strong support for children's developing communication and language skills. Children enjoy singing, sharing stories and learning how to sign simple words. However, at small-group times, staff do not always check that children are settled and ready to listen before they begin.
- Staff plan good support to develop children's physical skills. Children balance, stretch and climb during outdoor play. They learn how to roll, pinch, splat and squeeze dough with their fingers. Children build houses with wooden blocks, make sandcastles and take part in action rhymes.

- Staff weave mathematics through activities and children's everyday play. For example, they encourage children to build towers with bricks and discuss which is the tallest. Children count the rings of stacking towers and compare the size of potatoes.
- Staff talk to children about healthy eating and provide healthy lunchbox ideas for parents. Children benefit from hot and home-cooked meals, which are balanced and nutritious.
- Staff have experience in caring for children with special educational needs and/or disabilities. They understand the importance of working closely with other professionals in education and health to provide a consistent approach to support children's learning.
- Parents speak highly of the setting and staff. They say staff are very warm, friendly and approachable. Parents praise the systems in place for communication and the progress which their children make. They say their children settle quickly and love coming to the setting.
- Senior staff provide strong support for their staff team's professional development and well-being. They reflect well on experiences for parents, staff and children. For example, staff adapt spaces in which children play after observing how best to support their learning.
- Senior staff have a positive attitude towards continuous improvement. They are passionate about the service they provide and are dedicated to providing a home-from-home environment for the children in their care.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Senior staff have a good understanding of their roles and responsibilities in relation to keeping children safe. This includes a range of aspects of safeguarding. All staff have completed training in safeguarding and first aid. The directors and staff know what might concern them about a child in terms of safeguarding. They know who to contact and the processes to take to help to keep children safe. Staff have a good understanding of how to teach children to keep themselves safe. For example, they gently remind children to be careful not to throw sand and to walk indoors, rather than run.

What does the setting need to do to improve?

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

- review the structure of the daily routine and deployment of staff to provide more targeted support for children's learning
- develop strategies to settle and prepare children at the beginning of small-group times so that they are ready to listen and learn.

Setting details

Unique reference number	2681818
Local authority	Northumberland
Inspection number	10312784
Type of provision	Childcare on non-domestic premises
Registers	Early Years Register, Compulsory Childcare Register
Day care type	Full day care
Age range of children at time of inspection	1 to 3
Total number of places	24
Number of children on roll	34
Name of registered person	1st Step Pre-School Ltd
Registered person unique reference number	2681817
Telephone number	07708890208
Date of previous inspection	Not applicable

Information about this early years setting

1st Step Pre-School Ltd, Blyth, registered in 2022 and is located in Northumberland. The setting opens all year round, from 7.30am until 5pm, Monday to Friday. It employs 12 members of childcare staff, including the manager. Of these, three staff hold qualifications at level 2 and four staff hold qualifications at level 3. The setting provides funded early education for two-, three- and four-year-old children.

Information about this inspection

Inspector

Julie Foers

Inspection activities

- This was the first routine inspection the setting received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. The inspector discussed the impact of the pandemic with the setting and has taken that into account in their evaluation of the setting.
- The director and deputy manager discussed with the inspector how staff organise and plan the curriculum and experiences for children. The inspector viewed the inside and outside space used by the setting.
- The inspector observed the quality of education during activities and assessed the impact on children's learning. The deputy manager and the inspector evaluated an activity together.
- The inspector looked at a sample of the setting's documents. This included evidence of training and suitability of staff.
- The inspector held discussions with the directors, deputy manager and staff. She spoke to parents to gather their views on the setting.

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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