Arolygiaeth Gofal Cymru
Care Inspectorate Wales

Inspection Report

First Steps Day Nursery Ltd

The Croft
Alltami Road
Buckley
CH7 3PG

Mae'r adroddiad hwn hefyd ar gael yn Gymraeg

This report is also available in Welsh



Date Inspection Completed

11/06/2024

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About First Steps Day Nursery Ltd

Type of care provided	Children's Day Care Full Day Care
Registered Provider	First Steps Day Nursery Ltd
Registered places	51
Language of the service	English
Previous Care Inspectorate Wales inspection	05 May 2019
Is this a Flying Start service?	No
Does this service promote Welsh language and culture?	This service is working towards providing an 'Active Offer' of the Welsh language and demonstrates a significant effort to promoting the use of the Welsh language and culture.

Well-being	**Good**
Care and Development	**Good**
Environment	**Good**
Leadership and Management	**Good**

For further information on ratings, please see the end of this report

Summary

Children are happy and settled and supported appropriately to reach their potential and to develop their independence.

Staff understand their roles and responsibilities to keep children safe and healthy. They are suitably qualified and most have a very good understanding of child development. Behaviour is managed effectively. Staff interactions are positive and demonstrate patience, warmth, and kindness. Staff have a responsive approach to activity planning, which focuses on children's interests and invitations to play, in line with the curriculum in Wales.

People who run the setting ensure all areas are safe, secure, and clean. Policies and procedures are in place to support staff and to ensure they keep up to date with all health and safety requirements. They ensure the premises are child friendly, bright, stimulating and very well resourced. Outdoor facilities are particularly good.

Leaders have created a warm, caring, and homely atmosphere at the nursery. Leaders consider the age range of children and ensure they cater for each child's stage of development. The persons in charge/nursery manager and deputies keep up to date with new initiatives. They delegate research in areas such as the curriculum in Wales, responsive planning, assessment, and record keeping, to room leaders who are inspirational, lead their teams and nurture new staff and students effectively. Leaders are approachable, supportive, and share their knowledge with staff. They work well with parents, carers, local authority teams and support organisations.

Well-being Good

Children communicate confidently using verbal and non-verbal cues and visual aids. They ask questions for example when looking at the Giant Snails and talk about their interests and family events at lunch time. Babies point to things they want and express their feelings using body language. For example, they cry when they cannot pull a toy out of a box and are quickly responded to. All children know they will be listened to when they seek attention, and what they say or express will be valued. Some children are multi-lingual and have settled in well and are learning Welsh and English as additional languages. Children move freely around their base room and make decisions and choices about where they want to play. Older children go outdoors whenever they want, however babies and less mobile toddlers do not have as much freedom of choice as they need help when using the stairs.

Children have a good sense of belonging to the nursery and are very comfortable and familiar with their play areas, peers, staff, and their daily routines. As a result, they cope well with separation and enjoy their opportunities to play and learn successfully. Being able to join siblings in their room provides additional comfort for younger children when settling in, as do the posters, photographs and displays of the children's families and others worldwide. Children form good relationships with others, especially their key workers, who support them well and help them to feel relaxed.

Children interact confidently with others, most pre-school children use good manners, are helpful and share resources well. Plenty of smiles, hugs and caring conversations were heard between the children and with staff when looking at books and using mirrors for example. A few children across the age range are supported in their play, for example young children are still developing their social skills. A few find it difficult to share, and struggle to communicate their needs appropriately. Children are also learning to concentrate on their activities for longer periods of time, so must be interested and stimulated so they learn to persevere when chopping the vegetables for example. They join in together with dancing, singing, and clapping with an invited guest, and show great enjoyment through their laughs and smiles. Children are comforted when for example a tower of bricks falls and surprises them but are easily distracted when shown photographs of family members on the wall.

Children enjoy their play. They are actively involved in stimulating learning opportunities such as the song and dance sessions where babies and toddlers are physically active waving ribbons and crawling through hoops. They explore their well-resourced environment independently when they play and follow their interests freely. They enjoy watching cars speed across the floor and race to fetch them back, whilst others relax in the reading den with books. The Giant Snails were introduced to the children, who eagerly thought of names for them and prepared vegetables for their lunch. Babies show a great sense of

achievement when they lift themselves up to stand at a table and enjoy using the indoor sand and water play areas. Toddlers enjoy a run around outdoors before they go to sleep.

Children are successfully developing their independence as they grow and learn. They eat meals at the table from an early age. By pre-school age most children use the self-service snack station and can prepare, peel, cut and chop their own fruit to prepare their own breakfast. They use cereal dispensers, cartons of milk, and jugs of water independently, then recycle their waste when they finish their meal or snack. They use a range of drinking beakers as they develop their handling skills and are confident to have a go when pouring their own drink of water or milk. All children help to tidy up whilst singing songs and recognise what is required of them. They wash their hands before meals and can wipe their own noses at the well-resourced ‘nose wiping station’ when staff suggest this to them.

Care and Development Good

Staff ensure children are kept safe and healthy. They have a good knowledge of safeguarding and know the procedure to follow if they have concerns about a child. To ensure children are kept safe, staff ensure fire risk assessments are completed with the support of external agencies, and fire drills are practised routinely. As a result, adults and children are aware of the procedures to follow in an emergency. Accidents and incidents are recorded meticulously, monitored by the persons in charge before being shared with parents using a nursery application. Keyworkers and the nursery cook ensure the dietary needs of children are carefully monitored. They have a good knowledge and understanding of the benefits of risk when allowing children to explore the outdoor environment. They encourage children to manage their own risks, whilst being safely and effectively supervised.

Staff follow the setting's policies and procedures in relation to hygiene practices. Staff ensure handwashing routines are effective and age appropriate. Nappy changing is completed appropriately. Staff promote healthy lifestyles ensuring the children are provided with healthy and nutritional snacks and meals. Menus cater for those children with specific dietary needs. For example, oat and lactose free milk are available, and breast-feeding mums are encouraged to continue their routines.

Staff ensure children have opportunities to play outdoors for favourable amounts of time during most days. Pre-school children and toddlers have direct access to the outdoors from their base rooms, whereas babies and less mobile toddlers are accompanied in small groups at a time determined by staff. Children benefit positively from their outdoor play in relation to exercise, fresh air and through exploring the natural environment and extensive resources. Staff implement an effective and appropriate behaviour management policy and use consistent, age-appropriate strategies to encourage positive interactions. For example, in the pre-school children are encouraged to tidy up by taking on the role of super heroes to the rescue, engaging on a secret mission. They are discouraged from jumping and fast running indoors as there isn't enough room for 'Spiderman' to do this. They sensitively encourage children to share and provide warmth and distraction to de-escalate situations by saying for example "We can share with our friends, look at X, share the pebbles, thank you".

Staff are warm and kind in nature. They are good role models and show genuine interest in what each child is doing. They listen to children responsively and stimulate them by asking questions to extend their learning and to develop their language skills. They interact positively with children, joining in with their play if invited to do so. Staff use praise successfully to encourage children and to develop their self-esteem.

Managers and room leaders have a very good knowledge of child development. They plan interesting activities in the moment, in a well-resourced environment. The environment is

set up to stimulate curiosity, and to promote learning through play. Consequently, children are active and curious learners. Staff attend the relevant training to encourage them to consider children's development and interests effectively. They use their skills and understanding to observe the children and to ensure they know which skills they need to practice and achieve. Staff cater well for children with additional needs, for example when learning English as an additional language, managing inappropriate behaviours and specific learning needs. Staff used the Welsh language effectively to familiarise children with simple words and phrases, "Dwi'n hoffi broccoli" "I like broccoli" was used when looking at the snails eating. This led on to asking questions such as "I wonder what will happen when the snails grow" and the children responding excitedly with "We will we give them lots of food." Staff praised a child when persevering with their pedalling on a bike, they clapped and called out "look at you!"

Environment — Good

Leaders are dedicated to improving the environment as the needs of the children change. They have risk assessments in place which are externally audited and ensure appropriate security measures are in place to restrict access to the building and outdoor areas. Indoors closed-circuit television is used effectively to monitor and improve the quality of care provided and children's safety. Perimeter fences and gates are secure. The premises are appropriately maintained, and hazards are eliminated as far as reasonably possible. Safety gates are fitted throughout the premises to restrict the use of the stairs and access to the corridors. However, leaders do not always ensure risk assessments are in place for all recently added equipment outdoors, as children may decide to use these spontaneously and without supervision.

Areas are well designed to promote independence and stimulating for the age-range of children using them. Children's base rooms are welcoming, with neutral colours and furnished with natural and authentic furnishings such as storage baskets, hanging vines, rugs, and coffee tables. Leaders ensure children's artwork is displayed effectively alongside photographs promoting inclusion and belonging. Direct access to the outdoors is possible from the toddler and pre-school rooms. Outdoor play facilities are a strength of this nursery, with playhouses, a tyre swing, climbing wall and large play equipment used extensively by the children. Most of the outdoor space is decked and covered, providing shelter and shade in both the side and front garden areas, enabling children to use the outdoors in all weathers. Trees, nature areas, hard surfaces and grass provide creative spaces outdoors which allows children to freely investigate and learn. Children have an area in which to store wellies and outdoor clothes which is easily accessible. Storage is good, with the nursery having several under cover areas in which to leave large equipment such as buggies, rockers, bikes, prams and playhouses. This ensures they stay clean, dry and in a good condition.

Leaders provide purposeful resources which support children's learning. Rooms are furnished appropriately for the age and stage of development of children using them. They ensure all children have access to activities that extend and build upon individuals' abilities and independence successfully, as they move through the setting. For example, children are supported to use safety knives for chopping vegetables and fruits and serving tongs throughout the nursery. They use authentic utensils, natural and sustainable materials such as a redundant microwave oven, sand, water, compost, leaves, and branches where they can and make their own play dough. Staff promote recycling with the children and use packaging for example for modelling and painting and to restock large and small loose parts baskets. Although there are many posters, books and photographs to promote cultural diversity there are very few resources such as multicultural dolls in the home corner and outdoors.

Leadership and Management — Good

Leaders have created a warm, caring, and homely atmosphere at the nursery. Staff are rewarded with special events to celebrate their successes and to support team building. They are developing their vision along with their staff team, that focuses on a holistic approach to the well-being and progress of every child. Leaders consider the age range of children and ensure they cater for each child's stage of development. The persons in charge/nursery manager and deputies keep up to date with new initiatives. They delegate research in areas such as the Curriculum for Wales, responsive planning, assessment, and record keeping, to room leaders who are inspirational. Room leaders lead their teams and nurture new staff and students effectively. Leaders are approachable, supportive, and share their knowledge with staff and promote the setting's policies and procedures. The Responsible Individual is also the nursery cook and is on the premises most days, monitoring the needs and achievements of the staff and children and available to meet with parents if needed. An effective booking in system and staff deployment plan are in place to ensure good ratios of staff to children. In response to feedback from parents, the RI shared the setting's complaints policy and other reviewed policies and procedures, including an extensive inclusion and equality policy.

Leaders accurately identify the setting's strengths and areas for development. They observe staff and evaluate how areas are being used to make the changes needed. The previous joint inspection by CIW and Estyn identified and acknowledged improvements needed and these were met. The setting's 2023 – 2024 self-evaluation document and quality of care report is extensive and contains a realistic action plan for future improvements based on the joint inspection framework.

Leaders have good relations with their team of staff. Collaborative working is strong. The staff team has been consistent since the previous inspection. Students often remain at the setting and are encouraged and are successful in achieving further qualifications. Staff meetings are productive with a focus on training needs and ensuring all staff complete and understand mandatory training and can engage in meaningful and relevant training courses to develop their skills set and confidence. Leaders ensure the supervision of staff is effective and carry out appraisals annually to ensure staff have opportunities to relay their strengths and areas needing further training. Most mandatory training is in house or online ensuring staff have the time to complete training during working hours or at a time convenient to them. Room leaders share their knowledge and skills to ensure staff are familiar with and use for example the Curriculum for Wales and the non-maintained curriculum across the nursery. Leaders, and room leaders support each other with planning and assessment to promote consistency.

Leaders work well with the early entitlement team who provide support in the teaching and learning provision for three-year-olds. They have good relationships with parents and

carers, who feel welcomed at the nursery. Leaders work closely with several local schools, and transport children to and from these daily. This assists in their transition to school.

Summary of Non-Compliance	
Status	**What each means**
New	This non-compliance was identified at this inspection.
Reviewed	Compliance was reviewed at this inspection and was not achieved. The target date for compliance is in the future and will be tested at next inspection.
Not Achieved	Compliance was tested at this inspection and was not achieved.
Achieved	Compliance was tested at this inspection and was achieved.

We respond to non-compliance with regulations where poor outcomes for people, and / or risk to people's well-being are identified by issuing Priority Action Notice (s).

The provider must take immediate steps to address this and make improvements. Where providers fail to take priority action by the target date we may escalate the matter to an Improvement and Enforcement Panel.

Priority Action Notice(s)		
Regulation	Summary	Status
N/A	No non-compliance of this type was identified at this inspection	N/A
29 (3) (a)	Staff did not receive appropriate supervision.	Achieved
16 (2) (b) [i]	The quality of care review did not take into consideration the views of parents or children.	Achieved

Where we find non-compliance with regulations but no immediate or significant risk for people using the service is identified we highlight these as Areas for Improvement.

We expect the provider to take action to rectify this and we will follow this up at the next inspection.

Area(s) for Improvement		
Regulation	Summary	Status
N/A	No non-compliance of this type was identified at this inspection	N/A
	Staff are to receive regular supervision meetings. Details of these meetings must be recorded.	Achieved
	Supervision of staff	Achieved

Where we find the provider is not meeting the National Minimum Standards for Regulated Child Care but there is no immediate or significant risk for people using the service, we highlight these as Recommendations to Meet National Minimum Standards.

We expect the provider to take action to address these and we will follow these up at the next inspection.

National Minimum Standards	
Standard	Recommendation(s)
Standard 23 - Equipment	To ensure there are a sufficient number of child-sized chairs in use at tables during snack and mealtimes. Toddlers and mobile babies in particular must be able to place their feet on the floor to maintain a stable position, when using a chair.
Standard 24 - Safety	To ensure the risk management of the recently added 'rope and wire pulley system' is considered alongside the benefits for the child in developing skills, knowledge and understanding.
Standard 1 - Information	To review all information made available to staff and parents to ensure it refers to Care Inspectorate Wales (CIW) as the regulator. Accurate information is needed, so as to empower parents/carers when making decisions about the care of their children.

Where we think it helpful, we may make best practice recommendations. These are to encourage settings that are doing well to become even better at helping children thrive.

Best Practice
Recommendation(s)
To add multi cultural dolls to learning areas to further strengthen children's sense of belonging, in this already inclusive setting.

Ratings	What the ratings mean
Excellent	These are services which are committed to ongoing improvement with many strengths, including significant examples of sector leading practice and innovation. These services deliver high quality care and support and are able to demonstrate that they make a strong contribution to improving children's well-being.
Good	These are services with strengths and no important areas requiring significant improvement. They consistently exceed basic requirements, delivering positive outcomes for children and actively promote their well-being.
Adequate	These are services where strengths outweigh areas for improvement. They are safe and meet basic requirements but improvements are required to promote well-being and improve outcomes for children.
Poor	These are services where important areas for improvement outweigh strengths and there are significant examples of non-compliance that impact negatively on children's well-being. Where services are poor we will take enforcement action and issue a non-compliance notice.

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