Arolygiaeth Gofal Cymru
Care Inspectorate Wales

Inspection Report

Stepping Stones Nursery Aberdare

Stepping Stones Creche
Robertstown Industrial Estate
Aberdare
CF44 8HD



Date Inspection Completed

18/05/2022

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About Stepping Stones Nursery Aberdare

Type of care provided	Children's Day Care Full Day Care
Registered Provider	Jameswell Ltd
Registered places	79
Language of the service	English
Previous Care Inspectorate Wales inspection	16 May 2018
Is this a Flying Start service?	No
Does this service provide the Welsh Language active offer?	Working Towards. The service is working towards providing an 'Active Offer' of the Welsh language and intends to become a bilingual service or demonstrates a significant effort to promoting the use of the Welsh language and culture.

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

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

Summary

Children are confident, happy and enjoy their time at Stepping Stones. They have a strong sense of belonging and are developing positive relationships and friendships. Children have good choices and make effective decisions about what they want to do.

Nearly all care staff understand and implement policies and procedures to keep children safe. They are kind towards children, providing positive interactions to ensure children feel valued and happy. Care staff are good role models and meet children's needs well.

The environment is secure and maintained to a very high standard. Thorough safety measures ensure the setting is secure and children are safe. People who run the setting identify and remove risks. Children have access to a wide range of excellent quality, developmentally appropriate play and learning resources.

People running the service are very organised and manage the service well. They strive to develop the nursery and are committed to ongoing improvements. They have a strong vision for the service which they share with parents and carers of children. They comply with regulations and National Minimum Standards. They successfully embed their policies in the running of the setting.

Well-being Good

Children are confident communicators. For example, we heard older children expressing a preference as to where they wanted to play outside. Children are curious and happy to approach us to ask questions and chat. They have good opportunities to make choices. One younger child was asked if they wanted to go out outside and play and replied ‘No!’. Older children are part of a new ‘Council’ which gives them good opportunities to make choices and decisions.

Children are settled and cope well with separation. They have formed positive bonds of attachment with staff and children who were unsettled receive support and reassurance. For example, we saw one child being gently soothed and given strategies to calm down by staff and helped to return to their play. Children express enthusiasm and enjoyment, we saw them smile, laugh, and positively engage with their friends and staff. Nearly all children have a strong sense of belonging, forming positive relationships and are very familiar with routines. For example, at mealtimes and activity/song time.

Interactions between children and staff are consistently good and respectful. We heard one staff member politely ask a child if their friend could sit on the chair to which the child replied politely that they could. Young children and babies happily play alongside one another. Children express empathy and are sensitive to the needs of others. For example, we saw children supporting each other and being kind to their friends.

Children are enthusiastic and interested in their play and learning. They enjoy an excellent range of interesting opportunities indoors and outdoors that promote their all-round development. We saw younger children enthusiastically engage in a ‘messy’ multisensory activity and older children intently listening to stories and joining in with action songs. Children have opportunities to follow their own instincts, ideas and interests. We saw a group of older children enthusiastically leading an imaginative play activity about going to the beach.

Children have some opportunities to develop their independence skills. They use cutlery to feed themselves at mealtimes and with encouragement wash their hands independently. We saw some missed opportunities to further develop independence skills. For example, older children had their shoes put on for them before they went outside to play. Children are able to choose to engage in activities or take resources out to use independently in addition to making decisions about whether to engage in adult-led activities or free play.

Care and Development — Good

Most staff understand and implement policies and procedures to promote healthy lifestyles, personal safety and wellbeing. They record children's attendance and keep suitable staff attendance records. Nearly all staff have a thorough understanding of their responsibilities to protect children, confidently answering safeguarding scenario questions. They are aware of allergies and display allergy information in each room also carrying out daily cross-referencing checks with kitchen staff. Appropriate accident and incident records are in place and staff display a good understanding of the need to review such records regularly to identify any trends or obvious risks. Most staff identify and actively manage risks. During our visit we identified an activity and working practice in relation to a multi-sensory activity and turning to fasten a gate whilst carrying children on a staircase which required further risk assessment. This was raised with staff and measures immediately put in place to mitigate any risks. Nearly all staff implement robust cleaning and hygiene practices and follow nappy changing practices appropriately. However, we did observe the nappy changing policy was not fully adhered to by all staff. This was raised and was addressed swiftly with additional refresher training held for all staff.

Nearly all staff fully understand the behaviour management policy and consistently implement positive behaviour management strategies. They build extremely positive relationships with children and offer encouragement and praise. Staff have a strong understanding and knowledge of children's development, which reflects on how they manage children's behaviour. Staff are consistently responsive; they genuinely listen and respect children's views. We heard care staff asking a younger child, "*Is it OK to change your nappy now?*" and an older child was asked, "*Would you like to take off your jumper and then go back to your play?"* The interactions are very positive, demonstrating warmth and kindness. They know the children well and have extensive knowledge of their needs.

Most staff are committed to providing a range of play and learning activities. They support children to create a stimulating space in which they can play and learn. We saw staff playing alongside children in imaginative play, enhancing and facilitating the imaginative theme the children were creating. This is a real strength of the service. Most staff support and provide for children with additional needs. For example, staff seek opportunities for including children with additional needs in day-to-day activities and they model kind and empathetic behaviours which some children are quick to emulate. Staff receive additional training when needed to support children with additional needs and have positive relationships with external agencies. Some staff use incidental Welsh throughout the day. For example, we heard counting and praise given in Welsh.

Parents of children who use the setting told us, *"Knowing the positive relationship my child has with their keyworker makes it easier as a parent to leave her there."*

Environment — Excellent

People who run the setting have comprehensive policies in place and ensure that the environment is suitably safe, secure and well maintained. Staff complete effective and accurate general risk assessments, which are regularly reviewed, and any identified hazards are swiftly addressed. Regular fire drills are completed, and fire risk assessments are consistently reviewed. These along with emergency procedures are clearly communicated to all people accessing the environment. Staff effectively organise consistent cleaning routines that reflect excellent hygiene practices. Their highly effective infection control practices successfully minimise any risk to children's health and safety. Parents told us that, '*Cleanliness and safety always seems to be priority for all the children at this nursery*.'

People who run the setting ensure the environment has very good indoor play space for children to move freely. They ensure the environment meets most of the children's needs and enables them to reach their full potential. For example, there is a 'calm down' space equipped with sensory equipment and well considered areas for children with additional needs. People who run the setting ensure that the outdoor play space is used as often as possible and is an extension to the learning environment. Careful consideration and planning of outside areas, as well as extensive resources and play equipment, challenge and stimulate children's curiosity and interest. People who run the setting provide children with access to a range of areas which promote play and learning. For example, a construction area, mud kitchen, woodland area and water play area are available. Parents told us, '*The facilities are second to none……They have a number of outdoor play areas, some of which are undercover, which are all well maintained. They are constantly reinventing and developing new areas with new themes. My child loves playing outdoors here.'*

People who run the setting provide a wide range of good quality, developmentally appropriate play and learning resources, in sufficient quantity, to ensure children have good variety and choice. They provide stimulating resources for all ages and stages of development, which contribute to developing personal and social, language and mathematical skills. For example, through construction play, sensory activities, small world and role-play activities. Children can access toys and resources easily, as they are stored at low level or within their reach.

Leadership and Management	**Good**

People who run the setting are effective in the way they manage and operate the service and are committed to ongoing improvements. They have a strong vision that they share effectively with others and regularly review. They update the setting's policies and ensure staff implement these in practice. People who run the setting, do not always inform Care Inspectorate Wales (CIW) of recent staff changes. However, following the inspection visit, notifications were sent in relation to recent staff changes.

People who run the setting maintain and share an effective statement of purpose. At the time of inspection, the statement of purpose did not include a section on the setting's arrangements for dealing with emergencies or reflect the return of students following the COVID restrictions. The statement of purpose has been updated during the course of this inspection.

People who run the setting have procedures in place for self-evaluation of the service. They have completed a basic quality of care review which details improvements made. However, it is not reflective of parent's, staff and children's views and does not effectively identify areas of improvements to inform an action plan.

The people who run the setting implement safe recruitment procedures to safeguard children. They prioritise staff well-being following their return to work since COVID. Staff told us that they felt supported during the pandemic and following their return to work. We saw 'Well Being Boards' across the setting which are used to recognise and promote good practice amongst staff. Staff spoke of an 'open door' policy which allows them to discuss any ongoing and personal issues. People who run the service carry out regular appraisals and supervisions providing positive and constructive comments. They ensure staff receive training and keep them up to date with new initiatives to further their professional development, which ensures the service continues to improve.

People who run the setting have developed meaningful and positive relationships with parents and carers. There are excellent systems in place to keep parents well informed about their child's time at the setting. Parents told us, *'I get updates every day and nothing is missed.*' The people who run the setting have positive relationships with a range of professionals, the community and other stakeholders.

Recommendations to meet with the National Minimum Standards

R1 Further develop opportunities to enhance children's independence.

R2 Further develop the use of Welsh within the setting.

R3 Ensure that CIW are notified of all staff changes in a timely manner.

R4 Develop the Quality of Care review ensuring it is a reflective document outlining clear targets.

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

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. Where the provider has failed to make the necessary improvements we will escalate the matter by issuing a Priority Action Notice.

Area(s) for Improvement		
Regulation	Summary	Status
N/A	No non-compliance of this type was identified at this inspection	N/A

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.

Date Published 11/07/2022