Arolygiaeth Gofal Cymru
Care Inspectorate Wales

# Inspection Report

**Stepping Stones 4 Schools Out of School & Holiday Club**

**Thornhill Primary School**
**Heol Hir**
**Thornhill**
**CF14 9LA**



## Date Inspection Completed

22/09/2023

# About Stepping Stones 4 Schools Out of School & Holiday Club

| | |
|---|---|
| Type of care provided | Children's Day Care<br>Out of School Care |
| Registered Provider | Stepping Stones 4 Schools LLP |
| Registered places | 40 |
| Language of the service | English |
| Previous Care Inspectorate Wales inspection | 6 October 2017 |
| Is this a Flying Start service? | No |
| Does this service promote Welsh language and culture? | This service does not provide an 'Active Offer' of the Welsh language and does not demonstrate a significant effort to promoting the use of the Welsh language and culture. |

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| | |
|---|---|
| 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 settle well. They are able to engage in activities of their choosing and are free to develop their play in collaboration with their peers. They are listened to and their views are taken into account. Children form close bonds with each other and staff, making them feel safe and secure.

Staff are well qualified, professional and have a good understanding of how to keep children safe and healthy. They are responsive and respect the children in their care and the decisions they make. Staff have a good understanding of children's individual needs and this helps to ensure that those needs are well met.

The environment is clean, welcoming and well-organised. Resources are plentiful and of good quality. Staff follow procedures, such as completing risk assessments and daily checks, to ensure the environment is safe and suitable. The outdoor play area is secure and well used, providing plenty of opportunities for children to be physically active.

Leadership and management of the service is effective. The management team has a clear vision for the service and shares this with staff. Managers support staff well, providing good development opportunities to keep their skills and knowledge up to date. There are suitable policies, procedures and records in place, and they are reviewed regularly.

## Well-being — Good

Children are confident and make decisions about what they want to play with. They join in keenly with activities and are confident to express their opinions because they know staff will listen to them and take action. For example, we saw children asking staff for additional games and resources and these were provided. Children engage consistently and enthusiastically with staff; lots of lovely conversations and play happens. Children contribute regularly to ideas for activities.

Children feel safe, happy and valued at the setting. They are relaxed and confident, moving around freely to suit themselves. Children of all ages are cared for together. This enables them to play with class friends and siblings or make friendships across year groups as they choose. Children feel valued because staff know them well and are a consistent presence. We saw children laughing and smiling as staff joined in with their play.

Children play co-operatively, take turns and share. They behave well and are developing sensitivity to the emotions of others. They demonstrate a good understanding of what is expected of them whilst they are at the setting. Children interact respectfully with staff and respond well to their requests and any guidance on their behaviour. Children develop a sense of right and wrong and are, in the main, self-disciplined.

Children are interested and excited in the play-based activities in which they engage. They are active and curious throughout. Children are happy and confident to move freely between activities, but also sustain interest well in activities of their choosing. We saw children engage for extended periods in imaginative role-play, as well as group games such as football. Children benefit from a good balance of free-choice leisure activities, as well as activities that are led by staff. All children we spoke to told us they enjoy their time at the setting. They particularly enjoyed the varied outdoor play available to them on the school field.

Children are able to be independent in the setting. For example, they can make choices about what they have for snack, they access the toilet independently and routinely wash their hands, as necessary. We saw children happily playing independently of staff, who allowed them the space to explore and progress their own play.

## Care and Development Good

Staff are very effective in their roles. They are clear about their responsibilities and they have good knowledge of how to keep children safe and healthy. Snacks they provide are healthy, nutritious and provided in sufficient quantities. Staff ensure children have lots of access to physical exercise either outdoors or in the large school hall. Staff know how to raise safeguarding concerns. They speak confidently about safeguarding procedures and know that managers will be responsive to any concerns they raise. The staff we talked to spoke positively about the support they receive from managers, and they are committed to ongoing improvement. There are suitable procedures for recording the administering of medication, accidents, incidents and existing injuries. Staff practice fire drills with the children regularly and record this.

Staff set realistic boundaries for children. They are good role models and use a consistent, positive approach to managing behaviour, taking into account children's age and understanding. They are proactive in praising the children when they behave well, thereby reinforcing this good behaviour. They are also very encouraging when the children make a good effort and praise this. Children respond well to this praise and encouragement. Staff help children to develop understanding and coping skills to manage certain difficult situations themselves, such as younger children wanting to play games with older children but sometimes getting hurt.

Staff provide a nurturing and caring environment in which children's play and well-being are well promoted. All staff have a relaxed, happy and caring nature when interacting with the children. They speak with the children in a consistently reassuring manner, and this helps to ensure that the play environment remains friendly and fun. The staff group are keen to ensure they are good play facilitators. They have undertaken playwork qualifications in order to improve their understanding of facilitating play for school-aged children. All activities are child-initiated, while staff have available additional pre-planned activities children can request, such as craft activities. This approach is entirely reactive to children's developing interests and works well to support children's play and learning. We did not hear the Welsh language used in the setting. Managers told us they had worked to include more Welsh previously but it fell by the wayside whilst coping with the Covid-19 pandemic. They told us they will refocus on including it again.

## Environment — Good

The environment is safe, secure and welcoming. Staff are vigilant and supervise children closely at all times. Staff complete daily safety checks to identify, and where possible eliminate, any risks to children's safety. Registers record the times children arrive at and leave the premises. Managers keep records of all visitors to the setting. There are suitable risk assessments in place for all areas of the setting and many activities. Records show all regular and routine maintenance checks for the building and appliances are in place. However, managers had been unable to obtain two of these from the landlord as a matter of routine. Since the inspection, they have been provided.

The premises provides a rich and stimulating environment for children to play and learn. It is well maintained and in good decorative order. Staff follow daily cleaning schedules. Toilets are clean and provide children with suitable privacy. The outside play space is very well utilised and we saw the children enjoy the resources made available to them. Children also have plenty of opportunities to be physically active in the large hall close to the playroom if it is impossible to get outdoors. We saw children running freely, playing ball games and engaging in imaginative role-play with natural resources such as cut grass, twigs and leaves. They are able to take suitable risks in a safe environment.

There is a wide range of good quality resources. Furniture is of a suitable size and design for the age range of the children. The manager told us that it is vital to her that children have access to what they ask for; although resources are not freely accessible to children due to storage limitations, the manager has ensured that the resources are exceptionally well organised so anything can be found quickly and easily. She also ensures older and younger children can have some time away from each other if they wish it, where they can play with more age-specific resources. Children are well aware of what is available to them. This supports their independence and enables them to follow their interests and lead their own play.

## Leadership and Management — Good

Managers are skilled and experienced. They manage the setting to a high standard. They have a clear vision for the setting which is reflected in the statement of purpose. There are clear policies and procedures to support the smooth running of the setting. Managers ensure staff work consistently in line with them. Operational records contain the necessary information. Managers employ a suitable number of suitably qualified and experienced staff to care for the children. They have high expectations of staff and support and challenge them to do their best.

Children and parents benefit from a service which is committed to improving outcomes for children. Managers undertake a review of the quality of care at least annually as required. They take into account the views of children, parents, staff and outside agencies, such as the school in which the setting is based. There is a suitable quality of care report detailing what the setting does well and informing an action plan of what they want to improve. Managers work hard to ensure they deliver high quality care.

Managers are effective in overseeing staff, their time and prioritising activities responsively to ensure that children's needs are met in a timely manner. Staff are well organised, with the help of a day-by-day task rota, allowing them to remain calm and well prepared whilst delivering care. Staff confirmed they enjoy working at the setting. They feel supported, knowing they can approach managers for help or support if needed. All staff benefit from regular supervision and appraisal meetings to reflect on their practice. Robust recruitment procedures ensure that suitable staff are employed to work with children.

Positive relationships with the community are developed well at this setting. Staff told us they value the relationships they have built with parents and are keen to ensure that parents feel they can approach them at any time. They also spoke to us about the value they place on the links they have developed with the school in which the setting is based. Parents are complimentary about the setting and are confident to leave their children there, reporting that staff are friendly and approachable.

| 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 |

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 7 - Opportunities for play and learning | The Welsh language should be included in the provision. |
| Standard 24 - Safety | Embed a robust system to ensure the setting has copies of the safety certificates for the building when they are updated. |

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) |
| Add into the Uncollected Child policy timescales for contacting emergency contacts and social services. |

| 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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