



Inspection Report

Little Steps Childcare Centre Ltd

**1a Herbert Street
Pontardawe
Swansea
SA8 4EB**



Date Inspection Completed

30/04/2024

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About Little Steps Childcare Centre Ltd

Type of care provided	Children's Day Care Full Day Care
Registered Provider	Little Steps Childcare Centre Limited
Registered places	46
Language of the service	English
Previous Care Inspectorate Wales inspection	30 August 2018
Is this a Flying Start service?	No
Does this service promote Welsh language and culture?	The service is working towards the 'Active Offer' of the Welsh language. It anticipates, identifies, and meets many Welsh language and cultural needs of people who use, or may use, the service.

<u>Well-being</u>	Excellent
<u>Care and Development</u>	Good
<u>Environment</u>	Excellent
<u>Leadership and Management</u>	Excellent

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

Summary

Children are completely settled and feel a very strong sense of belonging and attachment to staff caring for them. They confidently communicate their needs and preferences with staff. Children show positive interactions and are thoroughly engaged and interested in their play and learning opportunities. Children are developing excellent independence skills.

Staff keep children safe and healthy. Staff consistently implement positive behaviour management strategies with children and are good role models. Staff meet the needs of children effectively and make a great effort to promote their home language.

Leaders have highly effective measures in place to ensure everyone understands their responsibilities in relation to the safety and well-being of children. The environment is very well maintained indoors and outdoors. Leaders ensure the areas accessible to children are extremely organised.

Leaders have an excellent and innovative vision for the future running of the setting. They manage staff excellently. Leaders have a dedicated and thorough self-evaluation and there is a consistent culture of continuous development. Partnerships are excellent.

Well-being

Excellent

Children are very happy at the setting and thoroughly express their enjoyment in what they are doing. For example, children beam with smiles as they pop bubbles and get excited when it's their turn to blow them. Children are completely settled and feel a very strong sense of belonging and attachment to staff caring for them. They run into the nursery greeting familiar staff and settle immediately to play with activities. Children are very content. For example, on arrival they run to sit by a friend of their choice and engage in conversation and laughter. Children engage in role play activities and eagerly play with the small world dinosaur activities with motivation and excitement.

Children very confidently communicate their needs and preferences with staff. They approach staff for assistance to request more foods during lunchtime, which are acted upon. Children are extremely comfortable within their surroundings and very confidently make their own choices and decisions. Some children chose to listen to a story, whilst others confidently move around the indoor and outdoor play and learning areas, excitedly interacting with staff. They move around the play and learning areas with ease and happily play with their favourite animals, balls, musical books, and the soft play area.

Children show positive interactions with others. They show very strong bonds of attachment towards staff who care for them. Children run to staff for spontaneous cuddles as they happily play. They go to familiar staff for comfort when they have fallen over outdoors and are immediately cured by the warmth and interactions of staff who care for them. Children feel a sense of accomplishment when they are praised for their achievements. For example, when a child counted in Welsh from one to three, she smiled happily when told "*Da iawn!*" During lunchtime, children sitting near friends were heard laughing loudly and joking about what they were going to play, and shared views about their delicious foods.

Children are thoroughly engaged and interested in their play and learning opportunities. They choose to take part in activities that result in a feeling of great achievement and concentrate for an extensive amount of time for their stages of development. For example, children confidently recognise colours, animals, and feelings of the ducklings in the story that was told to them. Younger children excitedly engaged in small world play and shouted, "*Daddy Pig!!*" as they played with the characters. Older children confidently moved the toys and resources of their interest from one area to another. For example, children moved the dinosaurs to role play areas, and made models with construction toys for their dinosaurs.

Children are developing excellent independence skills for their ages and stages of development. During snack times, children use tongs to help themselves to healthy foods and water from the water dispenser throughout the day. Children brought their plates, cutlery, and cups back to staff. They make the greatest attempt to put on their own wet weather gear some with support. Whilst playing outdoors, children develop fine and gross motor skills through play. They are confident on the balance bikes, balancing and use their finger skills to paint, mark making, explore and create using natural resources.

Care and Development

Good

Staff follow effective procedures to ensure they keep children safe and healthy. They complete robust cleaning regimes and keep records. Staff ensure they wash their hands before assisting children at mealtimes and ensure all children have washed their hands before eating. Staff understand and meet children's dietary requirements, intolerances, and medical requirements well. There is an excellent provision of healthy, nutritious, and homemade food menus and snacks for children. Water is available indoors and outdoors throughout the day. Many staff are trained to administer medication for children's intolerances. Most staff have paediatric first aid and safeguarding training, the majority have food hygiene training. Staff adhere to the nappy changing policy and procedures, as they sanitise all areas between each change. Most staff have a very good understanding of the child protection and safeguarding policies and procedures. However, not all new staff members are confident of the procedures to follow when given potential child protection scenarios. Staff perform daily risk assessments for all areas indoors and outdoors and these are effectively recorded.

Staff effectively follow the behaviour management policy and consistently implement positive behaviour management strategies with children and are good role models. They ensure they come down to the children's level when they promote sharing. Children are very regularly praised for climbing safely and coming down the slide, and staff successfully praise them for listening well; *"Good job! Da iawn!"* Staff enhance children's self-esteem by praising their independent learning, such as when children help themselves to fruits, and for being 'helpers' giving the plates and cutlery to friends. Staff provide very warm and engaging interactions with children and meet their individual needs efficiently and heart warningly. They read stories to children as requested and when children ask for their foods cut up for them, they respond promptly. They kindly offer children support at lunchtime and tell them they have plenty of time to eat their lunch and snacks.

Staff meet the needs of children effectively and make a great effort to promote their home language. They use incidental Welsh with children asking questions such as *"Wyt ti moin afal? Ga i helpu?"* and sing Welsh songs with children, such as, 'Lliwiau'r Enfys.' Staff have a good understanding of Additional Learning Needs (ALN) and engage with parents effectively to support the needs of children. Staff observe and assess children's development ensuring their developmental next steps are embedded. However, staff interactions to develop and enhance children's curiosity and exploration are limited. Staff provide engaging and interesting opportunities for younger children and ensure they have sensory and fun activities to enhance their development using foods, colours, and natural resources for the different themes of the year. Children benefit from stories and phonic sounds as well as learning about different cultures and diversity, such as Chinese New Year, St Davids day, Diwali, St Patricks Day, and fun fundraising activities.

Environment

Excellent

Leaders have highly effective measures in place to ensure everyone understands their responsibilities in relation to the safety and well-being of children. They have very robust systems in place to ensure all areas, indoors and outdoors are secure, with an electronic security system and CCTV. General and comprehensive risk assessments are extremely detailed and effective, they undergo regular review and updates. School run risk assessments have been embedded during the inspection. Leaders ensure all incidents and accidents are audited to identify and eliminate any risks to children's safety. Maintenance checks are embedded and regularly tested. Fire risk assessments are extremely robust. Leaders have fire marshal training and ensure they carry out regular fire drills and record these effectively.

The environment is highly maintained indoors and outdoors. Toilets and changing facilities are accessible and clean, providing privacy and dignity to all children. Furniture and equipment are perfectly suitable for the children in each area. They provide children with the ability to be independent and to successfully develop socially and physically. There are three rooms within the nursery for the different ages and stages of children attending. These areas have been recently re-decorated to create a calm and relaxed environment which promotes children's curiosity and exploration skills. There are pictures of children on walls and a celebration of children's craft work which gives a very strong sense of belonging for the children.

Leaders ensure the areas accessible to children are extremely organised. They effectively organise the resources and toys to ensure children can access them with ease. Leaders provide highly stimulating resources for all ages and stages of development to promote and nurture personal and social skills, language, mathematical skills through sensory, imaginative, and creative play. There are Welsh and English books available, and bilingual vocabulary are on the walls. The outdoor area is an extension to the indoor play environment, where children can access high quality physical equipment, gardening and resources that stimulate children's curiosity and exploration skills. Leaders ensure there are sheltered areas, allowing for a range of activities during all weather conditions. Resources include a mud kitchen and tools, natural and exploration kits, loose parts, gardening, and physical play, all of which enhance the children's learning and development. Leaders ensure resources include children's interests and promote their knowledge of different cultures and diversity. They ensure that children have excellent opportunities to explore the outdoors, by visiting areas of local interest very regularly.

Leadership and Management

Excellent

Leaders have an excellent and innovative vision for the future running of the setting. They ensure the statement of purpose complies with regulation and fully meets the national minimum standards. They are extremely knowledgeable about their regulatory responsibilities. Leaders ensure the required records are kept and correct. Leaders ensure policies and procedures are in place and are consistently implemented. The safeguarding policy has been updated to include the Wales Safeguarding Procedures, and the ALN policy has also been amended and sent to Care Inspectorate Wales (CIW) during the inspection. Leaders ensure they deploy roles and responsibilities in an organised manner and ensure the staff to child ratios are fully met. Contracts and permissions for children are in place and insurances are current and valid.

Leaders manage staff excellently. They hold regular supervisions and appraisal meetings, ensuring staff have valuable opportunities to continue their professional development and training. Staff told us they are fully supported to go onto the training of their choice, such as Speech Therapy and Welsh. Most staff have completed the 'prevent duty' training in relation to radicalisation and terrorist activity and nearly all staff have received 'Curriculum for Wales' and 'Adverse Childhood Experiences' (ACEs) training. Staff feel fully supported by leaders and can confidently share anything with those running the setting, as there is always an open-door policy. Leaders fully and excellently promote staff well-being. They ensure that staff are praised and congratulated for their hard work. They display staff personal praise 'shout-outs' on walls, and they ensure staff have very regular social evenings and events. In addition to this, they celebrate their 'practitioner of the month' and award the staff for their achievements. Leaders ensure staff files have accurate suitability checks for all staff working at the setting and current Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) checks. Leaders liaise effectively with CIW and other organisations and have completed the self-assessment of service statement (SASS). Leaders have an excellent knowledge and understanding of their roles and responsibilities in relation to child protection and safeguarding children. They ensure safeguarding topics and quizzes are an integral part of their regular staff meetings.

Leaders show a dedicated and consistent culture of thorough self-evaluation in their action plans which is consistently reviewed, monitored. There is also an extremely detailed quality of care review which highlights views of children, parents, staff, and others. They evaluate, review, and develop the setting according to the views of those using the service and actions of further improvements to the setting are outlined.

Partnerships are excellent. Leaders are aware of the additional learning needs (ALN) framework and have excellent communication with the local authority referral team. Parents are highly informed about the running of the setting. Leaders inform parents of changes and events by providing them with policies and procedures, newsletters, and a very informative notice board. The webform online app shared with parents show children's daily activities and personal needs, pictures, and development. Leaders invite parents into the setting and

provide annual open days for current and prospective parents. They support local and national charities and have excellent communication links to the community. They arrange visits for children to the local care home and prepare activities such as cooking and crafts for both the children and elderly which is highly valued by all. Parents feel that the setting is excellent. They feel the managers and staff are very professional and approachable. Parents feel staff are nurturing. They believe the setting is safe, healthy and allows their children to reach their full potential; going above and beyond to care for their children. They told us that their children feel safe, happy, and adore the staff caring for them.

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
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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 20 - Child protection	Ensure new staff have received safeguarding training and are fully aware of the setting's policies and procedures

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 develop staff interactions in order to enhance children's curiosity, problem solving and creative skills through play

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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