Arolygiaeth Gofal Cymru
Care Inspectorate Wales

Inspection Report

Stepping Stones Little Nippers Day Care

Golden Gate, Ty Glas Avenue, Llanishen, Cardiff, CF14 5DX

07468461646

www.steppingstoneschildcare.rocks

The inspection visit took place on 01/04/2026

Service Information:

Operated by:	Stepping Stones 4 Schools LLP
Care Type:	Children's Day Care
Registered places:	50
Main language(s):	English
Flying Start service:	No
Receive funding to provide early years part time education:	No
Promotion of Welsh language and culture:	The provider is not promoting the Welsh language and culture needs of people, and this requires improvement.

Ratings:

Well-being	Good
Care & Development	Good
Environment	Good
Leadership & Management	Good

Summary:

Children feel confident, happy, and secure at the setting. They make purposeful choices, build positive friendships, and engage enthusiastically in well-planned activities. Children have many opportunities to be independent, guided by positive relationships with staff. They develop social, emotional, and practical skills through meaningful play and warm, nurturing relationships with staff.

Staff provide consistently safe, nurturing care. They understand safeguarding well, follow strong hygiene routines, and create calm, supportive environments. Staff ensure that children feel secure and valued through warm interactions, thoughtful planning and clear communication with parents. They confidently promote learning, independence and Welsh language use, supporting children's development effectively.

Leaders provide a safe, welcoming and well-organised environment. They have robust safety measures in place, along with strong risk management. Leaders organise the space thoughtfully to support children's independence, confidence and learning. They provide clean, well-resourced

indoor and outdoor areas that promote creativity, inclusion and wellbeing, while effective fire safety and security arrangements reassure families and staff.

Leaders provide effective, supportive leadership and share a clear vision for the setting. They provide good quality leadership through strong teamwork, well-managed systems and a positive staff culture. Leaders invest in training, staff wellbeing and reflective practice, and work closely with parents and partners to support children's development and transitions successfully.

Findings:

Well-being — Good

Children have a strong voice at the setting and influence their experiences confidently. They make purposeful choices about their play and move freely between well-organised activities that capture their interest. Children benefit from staff who listen carefully to them and respond positively to their ideas. For example, children extend their earlier enjoyment of washing toy cars by exploring shaving foam again, this time with hidden items, showing that staff use children's interests well when planning activities. Children know their views matter. Even very young children indicate their preferences at mealtimes, using simple gestures such as nodding, pointing, or saying *"more"*. Babies follow their individual sleep routines and their preferences, such as personal comforters, are respected.

Children feel safe, settled, and happy. Many cope well with separating from their parents because they form warm and trusting relationships with kind and attentive staff. We saw children arrive eagerly, quickly joining their friends and choosing activities. Staff protect children's privacy and dignity during nappy changes and toileting, speaking gently and offering reassurance throughout. Familiar routines help children feel secure and confident. For example, children recognise it is time to change into outdoor clothes when staff set out chairs, and they respond calmly and with enthusiasm.

Children interact positively with others and are developing meaningful friendships. They take turns and share resources successfully, such as waiting patiently to use trikes and scooters outdoors. During craft activities, they work alongside one another cooperatively, sharing materials and celebrating each other's creations. Children are learning the expectations for behaviour and respond well to consistent, positive support from staff. They are becoming sensitive to the emotions of others and show kindness, such as helping a friend collect their drinks bottle.

Children show strong engagement and enthusiasm in their play and learning. They immerse themselves in activities, concentrating for sustained periods. For instance, we observed children focused on transferring sand between containers, exploring how it moved and experimenting with different tools. Children experience a beneficial balance of child-led and adult-led activities. They enjoy working with staff to collect Easter eggs, while also taking play in their own direction, such as two children who used craft ribbons to create their own dance. Children invite adults into their play, proudly showing what they are making and involving us in a role-play tea party.

Children develop their independence and practise a wide range of emerging skills. They wash their hands before meals, feed themselves with support as needed, and use the bathroom with appropriate supervision. Children express their preferences confidently and ask staff for help when they need resources to extend their play.

Care & Development — Good

Staff have a strong understanding of their responsibilities to keep children safe and healthy. They are confident in safeguarding procedures and clearly explain how they would recognise and escalate concerns. They are confident in talking about hypothetical scenarios, showing that training is well embedded in practice. Staff follow effective hygiene routines, including safe nappy-changing procedures and good handwashing practices. They work closely with the cook, who prepares healthy and nutritious meals while managing allergies and dietary preferences with care. Staff ensure mealtimes are calm, social occasions where they support children sensitively. They encourage children's independence by giving gentle prompts and ensuring fresh drinking water is always accessible.

Staff follow the setting's policies and procedures consistently. They complete regular fire drills and know the evacuation procedures well. Staff promote the benefits of outdoor play and often join children enthusiastically, enriching activities by introducing imaginative games or adding resources to extend learning. They ensure that records of accidents, incidents and medication administration are generally well completed. However, a small number of medication records were not fully completed, with some missing parental signatures. Staff hold appropriate qualifications, including paediatric first aid and food hygiene, ensuring they can respond effectively to children's needs. They gather detailed information during settling-in periods, capturing children's individual routines, communication preferences and comfort items.

Staff interact warmly with children and model positive behaviour well. They use a consistent approach in line with the behaviour management policy, offering regular praise and reassurance. We observed staff celebrating children's efforts, such as thanking them for helping a friend. Staff speak to children and each other with respect, creating a nurturing atmosphere and serving as excellent role models. Their calm, kind approach contributes to strong, trusting relationships.

Staff support children's learning and development effectively. They plan activities based on what they know about each child's interests and abilities. Staff observe children's progress and identify next steps, recording these in a meaningful way. They keep parents well informed by sharing information verbally and through a communication app. Staff use the app particularly well for sharing information regarding children under two, providing updates on nappies, sleep and meals. Staff use incidental Welsh confidently throughout the day and promote Welsh through songs, stories and routines.

Environment — Good

Leaders prioritise the safety and suitability of the environment effectively. They ensure staff understand and follow relevant policies and procedures, and we saw evidence that risk assessments are completed and reviewed regularly. Leaders maintain a safe and secure environment for children. They ensure that outdoor play areas are fully enclosed, the front door is secured with a fob system, and safe arrivals and departures are supported by use of a doorbell. Leaders have robust daily cleaning routines in place and staff carry out regular safety checks throughout the day, responding promptly to any identified risks.

Leaders balance children's safety with opportunities to develop independence and confidence through managed risk-taking. Staff attentively support children to use trikes, climbing equipment and obstacle course resources safely. Leaders oversee that all areas of the environment are clean, well maintained and organised. They ensure that vehicles used for transporting children are appropriately insured, fitted with suitable car seats, and have current MOT certificates. Leaders organise fire safety arrangements thoroughly. There is a comprehensive fire risk assessment in place which is reviewed annually. Leaders ensure that fire alarms are tested weekly, firefighting equipment is checked regularly, and fire drills are completed and evaluated so that staff and children understand how to evacuate safely.

Leaders make sure the premises and outdoor spaces are welcoming and support children's play and learning effectively. They display children's photographs and work attractively, helping children feel a strong sense of belonging. There is sufficient space and suitable facilities to meet children's needs, including appropriate toilets and changing areas. Leaders choose low-level furniture and open storage that enables children to access resources independently, promoting choice and confidence. They ensure the environment is well maintained and thoughtfully decorated using calming, neutral colours and visually appealing displays that enhance learning.

Leaders also ensure staff have appropriate workspaces to support reflection and professional development, alongside suitable areas for confidential discussions with parents. Leaders ensure that resources are clean, well maintained and rotated regularly to sustain interest and provide variety.

Leaders organise the outdoor environment thoughtfully, ensuring that the space offers a wide selection of stimulating resources that support creativity, physical development and imaginative play. Indoors, they see that children benefit from well-resourced play spaces that include role play areas, arts and crafts activities and a loose parts play space. They choose resources that include a good mix of natural and manufactured materials: however, there is a limited selection of real-life items. Leaders choose books and toys that reflect diversity, including multi-racial dolls, supporting children's understanding of the wider world.

Leadership & Management — Good

Leaders and staff demonstrate a strong commitment to providing a good-quality service. They are enthusiastic about their roles and share a clear, well-understood vision for the setting. Leaders present an accurate and up-to-date statement of purpose that clearly sets out how the service operates and what families can expect. Leadership is effective, and we saw clear evidence of good teamwork. Leaders set clear expectations for staff and support them well through access to worthwhile training that strengthens practice and promotes positive outcomes for children.

Leaders have a comprehensive range of policies and procedures in place which support the smooth running of the setting. These are reviewed regularly and staff understand their responsibilities in putting them into practice. Leaders maintain contact with Care Inspectorate Wales (CIW) and have systems in place to share required information. However, outcomes for children require improvement because leaders have not consistently notified CIW of all significant events in line with regulatory requirements and we expect the provider to make improvements. Leaders have recognised this and have taken prompt action to strengthen their systems to ensure future notifications are made appropriately.

Leaders understand the importance of reflective practice and self-evaluation and seek the views of children, parents and staff annually. However, they do not identify strengths and areas for development in order to set out a clear action plan for improvement. Leaders are developing their approach to quality assurance so that improvement activity is more clearly evidenced and sustained.

Leaders follow safe recruitment procedures to help safeguard children. They have robust recruitment checks in place to ensure staff suitability, and induction arrangements are thorough and effective. Leaders ensure staff are appropriately qualified, including training in paediatric first aid, food hygiene and safeguarding. They carry out regular supervisions and appraisals in order to support staff development which are used effectively to reflect on practice and identify training needs. Staff told us they feel well supported by leaders and value the positive and caring culture within the team. Leaders have also introduced initiatives to support staff wellbeing, recognising the importance of promoting staff morale and work-life balance.

Leaders maintain positive partnerships with parents, external professionals and the wider community. They gather detailed information during settling-in periods to understand children's individual needs and work closely with parents to establish routines and care arrangements. Parents receive regular updates through a communication app, daily diaries and conversations with staff. Feedback from parents is very positive. Leaders also maintain good links with local schools and external agencies, supporting children effectively during transitions into the setting and into their next stage of education.

Areas identified for improvement

Where we identify **Areas for Improvement** but we have not found outcomes for people to be at immediate or significant risk, we discuss these with the provider. We expect the provider to take action and we will follow this up at the next inspection.

Where we find outcomes for people **require significant improvement** and/or there is risk to people's well-being we identify areas for **Priority Action**. In these circumstances we issue a Priority Action Notice(s) to the Provider, and they must take immediate steps to make improvements. We will inspect again within six months to check improvements have been made and outcomes for people have improved.

The table(s) below show the area(s) for priority action and/or those for improvement we have identified.

Summary of Areas for Improvement	Date identified
Children may be at risk of harm because the provider does not notify Care Inspectorate Wales (CIW) of all significant events to enable them to make informed regulatory decisions.	01/04/26

CIW has not issued any Priority action notices following this inspection.

National Minimum Standards

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.

Standard	Recommendation(s)
Standard 11 - Medication	Ensure that medical records are completed in full and parents' signatures are included
Standard 18 - Quality assurance	Prepare a Quality of care review that represents a continuous improvement cycle and a culture of quality improvement

Best Practice

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.

Recommendation(s)
Increase the use of more real life, authentic play resources

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