

First Step Nursery Day Care of Children

37 Galt Avenue
Musselburgh
EH21 8HU

Telephone: 01316 650 848

Type of inspection:
Unannounced

Completed on:
12 March 2024

Service provided by:
First Step Community Project

Service provider number:
SP2003003379

Service no:
CS2003042326

About the service

First Step Nursery is registered with the Care Inspectorate to provide a care service to a maximum of 24 children aged from birth to 8 years.

There were two playrooms with direct access to the outdoor areas - Wee bears for children aged up to approximately three years and Big bears for children over the age of three. The service is a community project for families with young children, delivered from an adapted block of flats in a Musselburgh housing estate.

First Step aims to provide opportunities for local families with young children to make positive choices in their lives by providing supportive centre-based and outreach activities.

About the inspection

This was an unannounced inspection that took place on 11 March 2024 between 09:00 and 16:30. We provided feedback to the manager and a representative from the local authority on 12 March 2024. The inspection was carried out by one inspector from the Care inspectorate. A team manager was also present at the inspection as part of the Care Inspectorate's quality assurance processes.

To prepare for the inspection we reviewed information about this service. This included previous inspection findings, registration information, information submitted by the service and intelligence gathered since last inspection.

In making our evaluations of the service we:

- spoke with children using the service and five of their family members
- received eight online questionnaires from parents and families
- spoke with staff and received three online questionnaires from staff and management
- observed practice and daily life
- reviewed documents.

Key messages

- Staff warmth, kindness and compassion enabled children to feel valued, loved, and secure.
- Children's individual wellbeing was supported as staff knew the children in their care; they worked in partnership with families to ensure personal planning was effective.
- Children benefitted from direct access to stimulating outdoor play spaces supporting their health and wellbeing.
- The nappy changing facilities should be developed to bring this in line with current good practice guidance.
- The service was well led by management who promoted a clear shared vision for the nursery and had high aspirations for children and families.
- Staff reflected well together and used these reflections to bring about positive change to outcomes for children and families.

From this inspection we evaluated this service as:

In evaluating quality, we use a six point scale where 1 is unsatisfactory and 6 is excellent

How good is our care, play and learning?	4 - Good
How good is our setting?	4 - Good
How good is our leadership?	5 - Very Good
How good is our staff team?	5 - Very Good

Further details on the particular areas inspected are provided at the end of this report.

How good is our care, play and learning?

4 - Good

We evaluated different parts of this key question as as very good and good, with an overall grade of good. Several strengths impacted positively on outcomes for young people and clearly outweighed the areas for improvement.

Quality Indicator 1.1 Nurturing care and support

We found significant strengths in aspects of the care provided and how these supported positive outcomes for children, therefore we evaluated this quality indicator as very good.

Children attending the setting were confident and happy, they were looked after by staff who knew them well and cared about them. We observed warm, welcoming and loving staff who were responsive to children's individual needs and requests. Staff provided comfort and reassurance when needed. A child was observed telling staff "I love you", they followed this up with a hug. Several parents told us, "Staff know my child extremely well, they have strong relationships with her, really helping her confidence", "My children have created secure bonds with staff" and "Staff at First Step are very welcoming, friendly, kind and always have a smile on their face". These confirmed children were valued, loved and secure in their environment.

Children experienced calm and social mealtimes. Staff listened to children and were attentive to their needs; support was provided where required. Staff were focused on children whilst eating alongside them, modelling good table manners. The service promoted healthy choices; children told us: "Soup is healthy, it is the tick side" pointing to a healthy choices display they had created. Another child said "I have two triangles, it's a sail" before eating their bread. This meant mealtimes provided opportunities that were positive, unhurried and nurturing experiences for children. We highlighted children could play a more active role in setting up for lunch and tidying away their dishes, recycling food and wiping tables. These opportunities would extend children's independence whilst fostering a sense of responsibility.

Children's overall wellbeing was supported through the effective use of personal planning. Parents told us "My child's needs have been met every step of the way enabling her to blossom", "Children's care and learning routines are individual to their needs and are delivered with kindness and compassion" and another commented, "The staff provide individual and tailored care for my children". Children and families were central to the personal planning process. The service worked in partnership to ensure information gathered was used effectively by staff to promote consistency and continuity of care. Personal planning enabled staff to respond quickly, sensitively and compassionately to changes in a child's life. Staff worked in collaboration with children, families and other professionals to identify meaningful strategies and next steps based on individual needs. The manager was receptive to our suggestion of reviewing the format and consolidating paperwork, ensuring information and strategies are more prominent. This will support how children's individual needs are met whilst providing a consistent approach.

Family engagement held significant importance in the nursery setting and overall community project. Staff worked proactively with children, families and other professionals, providing a variety of groups and classes. For example, weaning classes for parents, community café, breast-feeding clinics, counselling, stay and play and book bug sessions. A community pantry and clothes swaps were available to families for sustainability and to mitigate against the cost of living. These initiatives sent a welcoming message to children and families that they matter. Parents told us "Staff know the whole family wellbeing, and the First Step team provide a safe and nurturing environment".

This approach enriched the nursery experience for both children and families, whilst strengthening relationships, fostering a supportive and inclusive environment where every child could reach their potential.

Children were kept safe and well by knowledgeable staff. Staff were confident in a range of procedures, including safeguarding children's well-being, the safe storage of medication and accident and incident reporting. Policies, procedures and children's information were regularly reviewed and updated as required.

Quality Indicator 1.3 Play and learning

We evaluated this quality indicator as good, where several strengths impacted positively on outcomes for children and clearly outweighed areas for improvement.

Children were meaningfully and actively involved in leading their play and learning through a balance of spontaneous and planned quality experiences. Most staff were attuned to children's ideas and interests. For example, during together time a child began to sing the weather song with actions. Staff acknowledged the child's excitement whilst responding, "do you want to stand up and sing?", the child then confidently stood up and sang. A parent told us: "It's great to see my once shy little girl turn into a confident child", another said "My child has come on great with their learning". Consequently, children experienced opportunities to develop learning and confidence whilst supporting their sense of achievement.

Children's learning and progress was shared with families through online learning journals, daily conversations, and parent consultations. A parent commented, "I really enjoy seeing what he has been up to as he is still too young to tell me, great to see his independence and confidence grow". Parents were positive about children's learning they told us, "We received a 'brilliant book card' to encourage reading at home together". Small gestures staff provided contributed to a holistic learning approach. Most staff have a good understanding of where children are at, planned next steps in learning and development were recorded. The introduction of floorbooks captured children's voice whilst providing opportunities for children, families, and staff to recall and share learning. Children were proud to share their achievements, a child pointed to their personal learning mat on the wall commenting, "look that's mine, I done it all by myself". Play resources, such as blocks, sand, water and materials to support curiosity and creativity were available, some resources were linked to planning others part of continuous provision. The overall environment supported children to learn key skills through play and having fun.

Generally, children benefited from staff's knowledge of child development and play. Staff had a good understanding of universal approaches to developing speech and language. For example, visuals were displayed throughout the environment, key words were signed using 'sign along', whilst opportunities were available for children to be part of small storytelling and song groups with the use of props. World Book Day had been celebrated, children and staff dressed up and shared their favourite stories throughout the day. A parent told us: "I can see how much she has progressed developmentally since being there having learnt various words in sign language" another said, "I'm very grateful for all the hard work that has been put into my child's early learning experience". Children were provided time to direct their own play and learning, while staff extended play through effective commenting and questioning. This contributed to a literacy rich environment which supported children to develop language and communication skills.

Transitions were thoughtfully considered, placing the child at the centre. Staff communicated and worked in collaboration with families and other professionals. This ensured changes in children's routines were nurturing and supportive.

Whilst we saw most children made informed choices about leading their play and learning, this was not consistent across the whole environment.

Some experiences were adult led, with a focus on the product rather than the process; this limited children's inquiry and creativity. Staff were not always attuned to children's non-verbal communication cues. For example, children were observed at the door and window indicating they would like to go outdoors; however, this was not acted on by staff. Staff told us recent changes had been implemented to planning to incorporate Realising the Ambition. They commented "this is an ongoing area of development, we are continuously reflecting and improving our skills and knowledge around practice guidance". We discussed the importance of observations informing planning to support children's current interests, choices and needs. To support improvement, we directed the service to the Care Inspectorate Growing my Potential and Voice of the Infant: best practice guidelines and infant pledge.

Opportunities for outdoor play were available from both playrooms. The 'Big bear' room provided free flow between inside and outdoors, promoting children's choice and independence. Children in the 'Wee bears' garden had fun as they confidently navigated slopes and different textured surfaces. They shared their joy with smiles and 'high fives' after successfully reaching the top the climbing frame and slide. Rich opportunities were provided for children to develop physical skills and problem solve while outdoors.

How good is our setting?

4 - Good

We evaluated this quality indicator as good, where several strengths impacted positively on outcomes for children and clearly outweighed areas for improvement.

Quality Indicator 2.2 Children experience high quality facilities.

The setting was warm and inviting with a homely atmosphere, sending a clear message to children and families that they mattered and were valued. Parents told us "First Step is a great setting. It is a homely environment that my child feels safe and happy in", "I really like First Step because it is smaller, more intimate setting". Parents' comments supported our findings. The setting had plenty of natural light and ventilation with quality soft furnishings, equipment and resources. Small touches such as lamps and fairy lights created an overall calm environment, providing a comfortable and safe space for children to play and relax.

The 'Big bears' room provided a wide range of experiences and resources that reflected children's current interests. For example, open-ended resources were available throughout the playroom; children transported these around the environment using these in different contexts. A small room was set up as a home area. As a result, the environment provided children with opportunities to develop and extend their curiosity and imagination.

The 'Wee bears' indoor environment provided children with access to a small quiet room for children to enjoy a story, play and rest. However, spaces and resources in the main playroom did not fully reflect children's developmental stage and interests. The room layout limited space for children to move, explore and develop gross motor skills. It would be beneficial to review and evaluate the layout of children's play spaces and resources to reflect the developmental stage of the children. For example, more open-ended resources and loose parts would support children's curiosity and schematic play. We referred the staff to best practice guidance Realising the Ambition 2020.

Outdoor environments were stimulating play spaces that offered challenge and risk, whilst small quiet spaces were available to support children who needed a quieter and calmer space to relax. Staff discussed planned improvements due to take place in the Big bears garden, these were responsive to children's development and ongoing interests.

Outdoor play spaces provided rich opportunities for children to extend their play and learning whilst meeting their needs and wishes.

The setting was well maintained, equipment was safe and secure. Maintenance records were up to date, whilst a secure entry system was in place with staff on hand to welcome children and families in and out of the playroom. Children benefited from good staff communication to ensure they were accounted for across the day. Best practice guidance on children's safety was shared at a recent staff meeting; this contributed to staff knowledge around identifying, assessing and managing risk. As a result, staff were confident children were safe and secure within the service.

The environment was clean and well looked after, infection prevention and control measures were in place. We observed children and staff washing their hands at mealtimes, toothbrushing, during personal care and when required. A child told the inspector after brushing their teeth "oh I have to wash my hands now". Environmental cleaning charts were on display and up to date, as was staff training regarding infection prevention and control. This contributed to ensuring the environment was clean and safe for young children.

To support children's wellbeing and to minimise the spread of infection, improvements should be made to all nappy changing facilities throughout the setting. This should be brought in line with current good practice guidance. To support this improvement, we directed the service to the Care Inspectorate, 'Nappy changing for early learning and childcare settings (excluding childminders)' (2023). This would contribute to children's overall health, wellbeing and safety (see area for improvement).

Areas for improvement

1. To ensure children experience personal care in a welcoming, dignified, safe environment, the provider should ensure the nappy changing facilities comply with best practice guidance, and protects children from risk of infection. This should include, but is not limited to:

- (a) ensuring the environments are easily cleaned
- (b) ensuring children's privacy and dignity is protected throughout personal care routines.

This is to ensure that care and support is consistent with the Health and Social Care Standards (HSCS) which state that:

HSCS 1.4 'If I require intimate personal care, this is carried out in a dignified way, with my privacy and personal preferences respected'.

HSCS 5.18 'The premises have been adapted, equipped, and furnished to meet my needs and wishes'.

How good is our leadership?

5 - Very Good

We found significant strengths in aspects of the care provided and how these supported positive outcomes for children, therefore we evaluated this quality indicator as very good.

Quality Indicator 3.1 Quality assurance and improvement are led well

First Step provided opportunities for local families with young children to make positive choices in their lives through supportive centre-based and outreach activities. Opportunities enabled parents and children to develop their self-esteem, confidence, and skills whilst meeting other local families.

Parents told us: "You can sense the belonging and being part of the community", another commented, "The staff are fantastic, communication is great, they are easy to talk to." Staff told us, "We value the relationships we have and strive to help children and their families grow and develop to their fullest". Children, parents and staff were happy and valued the support provided. This was reflective of a shared strong vision, where values and aims positively informed practice.

Children and families were meaningfully involved in influencing change. Their views were actively sought through a variety of ways; including feedback forms, displays and floor books, online platforms and newsletters. Family members told us the staff and manager listened to them. Parents' feedback included "Stay and play supported me to improve home learning opportunities, I was inspired by staff" another said, "My children consider this a home from home environment, I have confidence in all the staff." Families contributed to planning the holiday activity programme and the recent 'welly waddle'. The manager had a clear understanding of the importance of using the views of children, families and partners to inform planning and areas for improvement. Strong leadership ensured the best outcomes for children, supporting them to reach their full potential.

Robust quality assurance including self-evaluation and improvement plans were in place. The improvement plan was informed through self-evaluation, with everyone involved. The manager had developed strong relationships with children, families and staff. Their guidance and leadership fostered a culture of continuous improvement, while supporting staff wellbeing. For example, staff had regular supervision and support meetings to identify strengths and take forward identified areas for development.

Staff were complimentary of the manager; they commented: "We can share worries and concerns at any time," another said, "They are such an approachable manager." Staff told us they highly valued the time provided to come together as a team to reflect and forward plan. Likewise, parents were complimentary about the manager; they told us, "The place is well run and organised", and "The manager is a brilliant leader with great communication". Others said, "The manager is very professional, friendly and approachable, we are kept up to date with nursery news, events, and policies". As a result, the service's quality assurance, self-evaluation, and improvement systems enabled the service to deliver high quality care and support tailored towards children and their families' particular needs and choices. This was bringing about positive change to outcomes for children.

How good is our staff team?

5 - Very Good

We found significant strengths in aspects of the care provided and how these supported positive outcomes for children, therefore we evaluated this quality indicator as very good.

Quality indicator 4.3 Staff deployment

Effective deployment of the skilled staff team ensured high quality outcomes for children. Staff warmth, kindness and compassion enabled children to feel loved and secure. Strong team partnerships were observed throughout the inspection. Staff told us "We care about our colleagues", clearly valuing each other. Staff shared how recent reflections around children's mealtime experiences resulted in changes made to staff lunches, ensuring mealtimes provided a consistent approach with minimal interruptions. The service had their own bank staff to cover planned and unplanned absences. As a result, children experienced stability in their care from people who knew them well, whilst children's choices and wishes were met because people worked well together.

Staff recognised the importance of building strong attachments. They took time to support children and their families. For example, during transition staff took time to listen and offer reassurance sensitively to both children and their families. A parent commented about their positive experience, "Connections are made by the outreach team; they visit at home which was helpful for my child's transition into the nursery". This contributed to the warm, caring atmosphere that children experienced. Parents were very complimentary about staff; through our questionnaire they shared, "The staff are great with the kids, my boys started not long ago and settled in so quickly". Others commented, "The staff team are fantastic, they go above and beyond", "You can tell they really love all the kids and their job". Strong relationships supported children's overall wellbeing, resulting in positive outcomes for all.

Enough staff were available to meet children's needs whilst ensuring their safety. Management communicated well with staff and staff were flexible in supporting the service needs. Visuals and photos were displayed on playroom doors informing children and families what staff were where there that day. This provided predictability for children and their families. Staff worked together providing good supervision of children, ensuring quality interactions throughout the day. This contributed to children's needs being met by the right number of people at the right time. Parents told us: "Staff are just fantastic and so caring" and "my daughter loves all of them they are just amazing".

All staff were qualified with a wide range of strengths and experience, staff shared an enthusiasm for learning. A training calendar was in place to support ongoing continuing learning and professional development. Board members received yearly training to support and develop their role. Recent individual and team training included quality observations, profile writing and keeping children safe, whilst training from the educational psychologist supported staff's knowledge and understanding on the use of effective strategies to support children with their emotions. This ensured children had confidence in people because they were trained, competent and skilled.

The service recently worked with Improvement Scotland with a focus on their good staff retention. Staff comments for why they continue to work at First Steps included, the uniqueness of the service, continuing professional development, staff team, community connections, many more were shared. A parent commented, "I like that the staff turnover is low", this demonstrated a highly committed staff team who strive to achieve quality outcomes for children and families.

Complaints

There have been no complaints upheld since the last inspection. Details of any older upheld complaints are published at www.careinspectorate.com.

Detailed evaluations

How good is our care, play and learning?	4 - Good
1.1 Nurturing care and support	5 - Very Good
1.3 Play and learning	4 - Good

How good is our setting?	4 - Good
2.1 Quality of the setting for care, play and learning	4 - Good
2.2 Children experience high quality facilities	4 - Good

How good is our leadership?	5 - Very Good
3.1 Quality assurance and improvement are led well	5 - Very Good

How good is our staff team?	5 - Very Good
4.3 Staff deployment	5 - Very Good

To find out more

This inspection report is published by the Care Inspectorate. You can download this report and others from our website.

Care services in Scotland cannot operate unless they are registered with the Care Inspectorate. We inspect, award grades and help services to improve. We also investigate complaints about care services and can take action when things aren't good enough.

Please get in touch with us if you would like more information or have any concerns about a care service.

You can also read more about our work online at www.careinspectorate.com

Contact us

Care Inspectorate
Compass House
11 Riverside Drive
Dundee
DD1 4NY

enquiries@careinspectorate.com

0345 600 9527

Find us on Facebook

Twitter: @careinspect

Other languages and formats

This report is available in other languages and formats on request.

Tha am foillseachadh seo ri fhaighinn ann an cruthannan is cànan eile ma nithear iartras.

অনুরোধসাপেক্ষে এই প্রকাশনাটি অন্য ফরম্যাট এবং অন্যান্য ভাষায় পাওয়া যায়।

یہ اشاعت درخواست کرنے پر دیگر شکلوں اور دیگر زبانوں میں فراہم کی جاسکتی ہے۔

ਬੇਨਤੀ 'ਤੇ ਇਹ ਪ੍ਰਕਾਸ਼ਨ ਹੋਰ ਰੂਪਾਂ ਅਤੇ ਹੋਰਨਾਂ ਭਾਸ਼ਾਵਾਂ ਵਿੱਚ ਉਪਲਬਧ ਹੈ।

هذه الوثيقة متوفرة بلغات ونماذج أخرى عند الطلب

本出版品有其他格式和其他語言備索。

Na życzenie niniejsza publikacja dostępna jest także w innych formatach oraz językach.