

Stepps Primary School Nursery Class Day Care of Children

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Type of inspection:
Unannounced

Completed on:
30 May 2025

Service provided by:
North Lanarkshire Council

Service provider number:
SP2003000237

Service no:
CS2007163476

About the service

Stepps Primary School Nursery Class is registered to provide care for a maximum of 30 children not yet attending primary school. At the time of inspection 25 children were registered to the service.

Care is provided from a single storey building, which is located within a quiet residential area of Stepps, North Lanarkshire. The service is situated close to shops, transport links and other amenities.

Children were cared for in a large playroom, with direct access to a large enclosed garden. Children also benefitted from accessing school gym hall and other facilities within the primary school.

About the inspection

This was an unannounced inspection which took place on 28 and 29 May 2025 between 09:15 and 16:00. Feedback was provided to the service and the provider on 30 May 2025. The inspection was carried out by one inspector from the Care Inspectorate. 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 the last inspection.

As part of this inspection we undertook a focus area. We have gathered specific information to help us understand more about how services support children's safety, wellbeing and engagement in their play and learning. This included reviewing the following aspects:

- staff deployment
- safety of the physical environment, indoors and outdoors
- the quality of personal plans and how well children's needs are being met
- children's engagement with the experiences provided in their setting.

This information will be anonymised and analysed to help inform our future work with services

In making our evaluations of the service we:

- spoke with 14 children using the service and two of their family members
- reviewed electronic feedback from 12 parents
- spoke with staff and management
- observed practice and daily life
- reviewed documents.

Key messages

- Staff were warm, caring and kind. Their interactions were unhurried and responsive to children's needs.
- Children were cared for in a warm, nurturing environment where they were supported to develop their independence, skills and abilities.
- Staff knew children very well and responded to their individual needs and wishes.
- Children were happy, settled and having fun playing and learning. Children were given the time and space to make choices, directing their own play and learning.
- Children's health and wellbeing was enhanced through daily access to outdoor play.
- Quality assurance processes should be further developed to support continuous improvement in the service.

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?	5 - Very Good
How good is our setting?	4 - Good
How good is our leadership?	4 - Good
How good is our staff team?	4 - Good

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

How good is our care, play and learning?

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 key question as very good.

Quality indicator: 1.1 Nurturing care and support

Children experienced warm, caring, and nurturing approaches from staff who knew them well. This helped children feel safe and secure. Staff were down at children's level engaging in play and conversations, they listened and followed children's play ideas. This helped children feel valued and respected. Children told us "the [staff] look after us, they are kind and funny" and "we get to choose what books and toys we want to play with."

Children were supported with kind and nurturing approaches that supported their overall wellbeing. Staff took time to get to know children and their families, promoting positive relationships. This was supported through meaningful approaches, which included play and stay sessions, involving parents within transitions and daily interactions. Parents told us

"[staff] are so approachable and caring and they know my child so well", "we are invited to stay and play and events. All staff are always approachable face-to-face, on the message app or by telephone. The staff are all very professional and approachable" and "the staff have been extremely friendly and welcoming since day one. They did a fantastic job supporting the transition to nursery and were able to advise and support through separation anxiety."

Children's needs were supported by effective personal plans which helped to ensure staff caring for children had a clear overview of their individual needs and preferences. Regular consultations and reviews with parents had taken place which enabled them to be fully involved in their child's care, whilst also promoting consistent care for children. Parents told us "I recently had my child's personal plan review with their key worker and I was given all the information I needed and more. I felt listened to and completely involved in my child's personal plan going forward" and "I have met regularly with my sons key worker and discussed development and learning objectives." We discussed where the language within some personal plans could be further developed to ensure agreed targets and strategies were clear and meaningful.

Children benefitted from relaxed, sociable and unhurried mealtimes. Opportunities for self-serving were available which supported children's independence and skills for life. Staff were knowledgeable about children's routines and dietary needs. They positioned themselves at tables to supervise and support children if required. Staff interacted with children throughout the lunchtime experience, supporting their language and communication skills. The service had plans to further develop their lunchtime routines, which included delivering a rolling lunch approach, which would continue to support child led play.

A rolling snack meant children could choose when they wanted to come for snack, which supported children's choices and minimised interruptions to children's play. Children were consulted on what they would like to eat for snack and were confident in self selecting and serving food. We discussed where snack time could be further enhanced to support children's independence, for example, being involved in the preparation of snack.

Water was available throughout the service, which children could access at all times encouraging children to remain hydrated.

Medication was stored appropriately and was easily accessible. This helped staff to quickly identify which medication they required. We reviewed medication administration forms and suggested some minor adjustments to help ensure all information was clearly recorded. The service actioned this immediately.

Quality indicator: 1.3 Play and learning

Children had fun while at nursery. Their play and learning was supported by having access to a range of innovative and stimulating play spaces, where they also had the opportunity to use their imagination and explore their natural curiosity. This helped enrich children's play experiences. Children told us they liked "making friends and playing with blocks", "playing with the dinosaurs" and "playing in the garden."

Children's right to play was at the heart of the service's approach. Staff recognised and valued play as an opportunity for developing skills for life, which helped to support children's learning. This included promoting children's independence when getting ready to play in the garden and learning about nature when planting in the garden. One parent told us "[my child] always comes home excited to talk about the things [they] have done at nursery and we can see how staff tailor experiences to [their] interests. [My child] has access to a wide range of different play opportunities and really enjoys the regular changes that are made to the environment."

Children were leading their own play and learning through a balance of planned and spontaneous experiences. They had choice and independence of where they wanted to play and how they would lead their play both indoors and outdoors. Children were engaged in play experience for prolonged periods of time showing high levels of engagement, excitement, wonder and awe. This included, children exploring schemas (repeating patterns of behaviour) when exploring water outside, for example, filling and emptying water containers.

Play experiences supported children's skills in language, literacy, and numeracy. For example, using mathematical language and comparing different shades when making playdough. Children especially liked cosying up with staff on the large couch to read stories, which supported children to add new words to their existing vocabulary. For example, children were discussing some traditional Scottish words and what they meant.

Staff were knowledgeable and had a clear understanding of how children learn. Staff were responsive to children through observations, responding appropriately to their cues, interest and needs to support their learning. They used effective questioning to extend children's thinking and learning. This enabled children to progress at their own pace. One parent told us "the staff are great and always go above and beyond. We have noticed a huge improvement in our child's development since they started at the nursery. I am so happy that I chose this nursery for our child."

Children's success and achievements were shared with parents through online learning journals. However, we found some observations within children's profiles to be generic. We asked the service to develop their approaches to ensure observations were individual, meaningful and reflected progression within children's learning and development. The service agreed to review this.

The service enriched children's experiences by actively making good use of the local community with regular walks, visits to the shops and library that nurtured a sense of belonging. Additionally regular visits to the greenspace through their 'wildlife trust' approach, offered a wealth of benefits such as connecting with nature, developing understanding of environmental responsibility and instilling a sense of wonder and respect for nature.

Parents told us "children are always exploring the local community" and "[my child] has had opportunities to be part of a wildlife group, this has been great for learning about nature. I love hearing about their experiences and I am learning more about nature too."

How good is our setting?

4 - Good

We evaluated this key question 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.

Children benefitted from a welcoming environment that was warm, well-furnished and comfortable. There was plenty of natural light and ventilation to support children's wellbeing. The entrance area displayed photographs and information for parents and children had access to their own space to store their personal items. This helped promote a sense of belonging. Parents described the environment as "very welcoming and engaging, all areas are regularly updated or changed" and "the nursery has a lovely welcoming environment. The children all seem happy and keen to enter nursery in the mornings with the staff greeting everyone with a smile."

Whilst the service had worked hard to develop a warm, calm and welcoming ethos. At the time of inspection a tannoy system was being used to make announcements within the school. This was also linked to the nursery playroom, which was loud and contributed towards unnecessary interruptions. For example, staff had to pause their interactions with children during announcements. We asked the service to review the use of the tannoy system within the nursery. This would contribute towards the calm ethos of the setting and would continue to support children's communication and play opportunities.

Playrooms were clean, tidy and uncluttered. The inclusion of soft lightening, furnishings and natural materials, created a warm and nurturing space where children could feel safe. Careful consideration had been given to the layout of the room to offer a range of spaces for children to make choices, support their interest and develop their ideas. Children had access to a wide range of opportunities to develop their curiosity, imagination and problem solving. For example, block play and loose parts (resource that can be moved, taken apart and put together) were available, which encouraged children to use creative thinking and problem solving strategies as they developed their ideas through play. We discussed where some spaces could be further developed to support children's creativity and imagination. For example, developing the role play area, adding more materials to creative areas and adding further resources to support literacy and numeracy in all areas.

Children's health and wellbeing was promoted through outdoor play experiences. Children were confident moving freely between the indoor and outdoor spaces. Staff understood the importance of outdoor play and were passionate about providing it. A space had been created where children could independently get ready for outdoor play. Children were confident in using this area. Children told us "we can go outside whenever we want" and "the garden is great fun, come and I'll show you."

The garden provided a range of spaces for the development of physical skills and exploration. Children were learning about their natural environment through hands on experiences, this included planting and developing an orchard. Most resources were easily accessible for children to independently access and direct their learning. We discussed how this could be further enhanced through the addition of natural materials, for example extending the mud kitchen.

This would support children's natural curiosity, whilst further enhancing their imagination and curiosity. The service had plans to further develop their outdoor space and we agree this would contribute towards further positive experiences for children. We asked the service to consider the positioning of some large pieces of equipment when developing their outdoor spaces.

A range of robust safety measures were in place, this included a locked garden gate, secure entry with a buzzer system and key fob system. Staff communicated well with each other and regular head counts helped to ensure children's safety and supervision. For example, staff used walkie talkies to support children moving between spaces.

Toilets and nappy changing areas were clean and resources were stored appropriately. However, we identified where infection prevention and control measures could be improved, for example, removing items that should not be stored in bathrooms. The service actioned this immediately. At the time of inspection we noted that ventilation within the bathroom was not working. We asked the service to review this to ensure toilet areas were well ventilated. The service had actioned this before this report had been published.

Accidents and incidents were managed well to support children's health and wellbeing. Accident forms were completed and appropriate first aid administered when needed. Regular audits of accidents were completed. However, we discussed how these could be further developed to help recognise any patterns of accidents or incidents, detailing any actions needed which would support staff to take action to help prevent repetition and contributed to keeping children safe.

How good is our leadership?

4 - Good

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

Quality indicator: 3.1 Quality assurance and leadership are led well

There had been recent changes in management and staff within the service. Management and staff had fostered good relationships and worked together to ensure a positive ethos within the setting.

The nursery had a shared vision, values and aims that informed their practice. The service were in the process of updating this with children and their families to ensure a true inclusive approach, valuing everyone's voice. We agreed this would contribute towards a shared understanding of what the service can provide to families and support the staff in understanding parents' expectations of the service.

Some quality assurance processes were in place, including a clear improvement plan. Whilst some audits were carried out to review a number of procedures, for example, reviewing medication and informal monitoring of staff's practice and skills. We discussed where these could be further developed to support the continuous development of the service. This would include clearly documenting and recording the outcome and actions of quality assurance processes. This will help the management team have an understanding of the service's strengths and areas for improvement to drive forward continuous improvement. This should include developing a detailed quality assurance calendar. Management agreed to review this.

Self-evaluation was contributing towards improvements within the service. New staff had opportunities to share their ideas and initiate well informed changes through informal discussions. We discussed where this could be further developed to ensure everyone's voice could contribute towards the development of the service. This would include providing further opportunities for staff, parents and children to reflect together. For example, further developing parents' questionnaires through use of open ended questions. This will contribute to change and will help to drive positive outcomes for children and families.

Policies and procedures were in place to support practice within the service. Management shared they were currently reviewing policies with staff as part of their quality assurance. We asked the service to update their medication policy, to ensure information was clear and reflected current guidance.

There was a commitment to using staff's strengths, interests and skills to lead on specific areas of practice and some progress had been made with this. A programme of training was in place to support staff to develop their skills and knowledge of best practice guidance. Staff spoke about how training had influenced their practice and supported them in making changes to children's experiences. For example, exploring children's rights and outdoor training. This helped to ensure staff practice was up-to-date and meaningfully supported children's needs and care. We discussed where the service could continue to provide opportunities for staff to reflect and discuss best practice, to support and upskill staff.

The management team and staff were reflective of their practice and were keen to make changes to ensure positive outcomes for children. They understood they were on an improvement journey. As a result, we are confident that the service was well placed to continue to develop practice with a focus on improving outcomes for children.

How good is our staff team?

4 - Good

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

Quality indicator: 4.3 staff deployment

Staff worked well together to create a positive, caring and welcoming environment for children. They were kind, caring and nurturing in their interactions with the children. Parents described staff as friendly, kind, welcoming and helpful. Parents told us "the nursery staff have been so fantastic and we really appreciate everything that they do and the support they provide to our child and us as parents" and "all staff should be very proud of the service they provide to both children and parents, we are very grateful."

The service was appropriately staffed and staff deployed themselves effectively to meet the needs of children. They had time to listen, respond and care for children, helping them feel valued and loved. Whilst careful consideration had been given to staff deployment, the staffing model meant some keyworkers only worked the beginning of the week. We asked the service to develop their communication to clearly demonstrate who was caring for children at the end of the week. This would help ensure parents were informed of who was caring for their child, whilst also supporting continuity of care.

The new staff team had a mixture of experience and knowledge. Staffing levels and deployment of staff were managed effectively. They worked well as a team and demonstrated a commitment to provide a high quality service.

Staff were motivated and enthusiastic within their role and spoke positively of how continuous professional development supported them, using current guidance and research to inform their practice. This included reviewing the articles as set out in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC). This helped to ensure children experience practice that supported them to feel informed, heard, valued and loved.

Staff understood that continuity of care was important for children and communicated well with each other when tasks took them away from their responsibilities. Staff worked well to ensure children were supervised throughout the day and there was minimal disruption to their play. For example, staff breaks and rotas were planned to maximise children's experiences and ensure minimal disruption to children. Staff were responsive in their deployment according to children needs, this helped to ensure their play and care needs were met. As a result children experienced a calm, nurturing experience.

Whilst staff communicated well within the day-to-day practice of the service, opportunities for team meetings and to be involved in self-evaluation were limited. The service used in-service days as opportunities to come together as a team, however these were not regular. We asked the provider to consider staff deployment to provide further opportunities for professional dialogue and reflections. This would support consistent information sharing and provided opportunities for staff to have professional dialogues to support practice.

New staff had benefitted from the completion of a provider level induction. We discussed where this could be further developed to provide opportunities for staff to reflect on their learning and evaluate their practice. This would also support management to identify further support to enhance staff practice and develop their skills. We signposted the service to 'The National Induction Resource.'

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?	5 - Very Good
1.1 Nurturing care and support	5 - Very Good
1.3 Play and learning	5 - Very Good
How good is our setting?	4 - Good
2.2 Children experience high quality facilities	4 - Good
How good is our leadership?	4 - Good
3.1 Quality assurance and improvement are led well	4 - Good
How good is our staff team?	4 - Good
4.3 Staff deployment	4 - Good

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