



Inspection Report

1st Steps Day Care

**Moriah House
Bedwellty Road
Aberbargoed
CF81 9BA**



Date Inspection Completed

22/07/2021

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About 1st Steps Day Care

Type of care provided	Childrens Day Care Full Day Care
Registered Provider	1st Steps Day Care Ltd
Registered places	77
Language of the service	English
Previous Care Inspectorate Wales inspection	04 November 2020
Is this a Flying Start service?	No
Does this service provide the Welsh Language active offer?	This is a service that does not provide an 'Active Offer' of the Welsh Language. It does not anticipate, identify or meet the Welsh language needs of children who use, or intend to use the service. We recommend that the service provider considers the Welsh Government's 'More Than Just Words follow on strategic guidance for Welsh Language in social care.'

Summary

This is an inspection undertaken during the Covid19 pandemic. We have therefore focused on the priority areas for this setting and not the full quality framework.

Most children are happy and settle well at the service. They have good relationships with staff and are confident to approach them. Children have opportunities to develop independence and skills appropriate to their age and stage of development. They are able to follow their interests and lead their own learning. Children develop friendships and play happily alongside or with each other.

Staff are suitably qualified and experienced. They understand their responsibility to keep children safe and healthy and have good knowledge of safeguarding procedures. Staffing ratios consistently meet requirements. Staff are attentive and know the children well. They are confident in their role and clear policies and procedures support them in this.

The environment is spacious and adequately resourced. Resources are stored at low level enabling children to access them independently. Playrooms have displays of children's work, although the décor is dated and in need of refreshing. All areas are clean and daily risk assessments ensure it is a safe place for children to play and learn. The outdoor play area is well utilised. It is maintained to a good standard and provides children with opportunities to be physically active.

Leaders have a clear vision for the service and have made considerable improvements. Clear policies and procedures support staff in their roles. Recruitment procedures for new staff are robust and there is a formal induction process.

Children are happy and most settle well at the nursery. Children who are unsettled receive lots of attention and cuddles. They have warm relationships with staff who know them well. Children are confident to approach staff because they know they have a voice and all attempts at communication are valued. For example, we saw a child pointing to their water bottle and a member of staff passed it to them.

Children feel safe, happy and valued at the setting. They develop a sense of belonging because they see their work displayed and receive lots of praise. They follow their individual routines and staff recognise and understand their needs. For example, a member of staff cuddled a child and took them for a sleep because they recognised that they were tired.

Children interact well. They are beginning to develop friendships in line with their age and stage of development. They play happily with, or alongside other children and are learning to share and take turns. For example, we observed two younger children crawling together, moving between activities, and playing happily. Staff told us that they tend to stick together. Older children engage in activities and chat to each other whilst doing so. We observed them taking part in an art and craft competition, praising each other for their work.

Children enjoy their time at the nursery and persevere to complete activities and learn new skills. We saw older children engaged in water play, discussing what happens to ice cubes when they get warm. Younger children are curious and inquisitive. They choose resources that interest them and play with them for appropriate lengths of time. For example, pouring cups of tea in the role play kitchen and pretending to drink them.

Most children develop appropriate independence skills. They use the toilet facilities independently and feed themselves with minimal support. They know the routines of the service and understand that they must wash their hands at certain times and put a hat on to play outside when the weather is hot. Children have good opportunities to develop physically with activities such as ride on toys.

Care and Development

No Rating Required

Staff have good knowledge of how to keep children safe and healthy. They are suitably qualified and update their knowledge with regular training in safeguarding, food hygiene and paediatric first aid. Staff record accidents and incidents. Parents sign records and the manager regularly reviews them to identify trends and patterns. Staff administer medication safely and keep appropriate records although they must ensure that they only fill in medication forms once the medication has been administered and not before. We saw that staff had completed one form in advance and then altered it as the child left early on that day. Staff have good understanding of food allergens. They know the children's needs and preferences. They label meals clearly to ensure that children have appropriate food and drinks. Children have access to drinking water and staff encourage them to drink plenty throughout the day. Staff generally supervise children well and communicate effectively, telling each other if they are leaving the room although they must be aware of their positioning when children are playing in areas that cannot easily be seen. For example, one child was able to climb onto a low cupboard as it was around a corner and not within the staff member's line of sight.

Staff manage behaviour well and work consistently in line with the behaviour policy. They are good role models, treating the children and each other with respect. We heard lots of praise for positive behaviour and children respond well to requests from staff. Staff use positive language such as 'kind hands' to manage behaviour. On the day of the inspection, behaviour was very good.

Staff support children's learning and development effectively. They provide a relaxed and nurturing environment where children are confident to learn. Key workers provide consistent care. Leaders produce a daily operational plan so that staff are clear about their responsibilities and know the children they are looking after. They carry out regular observations of children and provide activities to support the development of new skills. Planned activities are appropriate to children's age and stage of development and show progression throughout the nursery. Staff plan topics monthly and produce weekly activity plans. They told us that they share ideas on a messaging app.

Environment

No Rating Required

The environment is safe, secure and provides spacious accommodation for children's activities over two floors. The ratio of staff to children consistently meets the requirements of National Minimum Standards. Staff complete daily safety checks to identify and where possible eliminate any risks to children's safety. On the day of the inspection, we experienced adversely high temperatures. Upstairs rooms were very warm but during the afternoon session when it became particularly warm upstairs, staff took children downstairs to cooler areas of the building. We observed children having water play with ice cubes, playing outside and staff took outer layers of clothing off younger children to keep them cool. Whilst staff took appropriate action to minimise risk, we noted that room thermometers were not working so staff were not able to monitor the temperature of the rooms accurately. The people who run the service addressed this immediately following the inspection.

Registers record the times children arrive at and leave the premises. Managers keep records of all visitors to the setting although during the Covid-19 pandemic non-essential visitors do not enter the building. There are rigorous risk assessments in place for all areas of the setting. Records show all regular and routine maintenance checks for the building and appliances are in place.

Children do not have free flow access to outside but it is well utilised. The outdoor play space has a good range of resources and allows children to be physically active. They are able to take appropriate risks in a safe environment. Children did not have a shaded area to play outside which limited the amount of time they could spend out there. We discussed this with leaders, who immediately purchased a gazebo.

Furniture is good quality and is generally of suitable size and design for the age range of the children. Art and craft supplies are plentiful and allow children variety and choice. The pre-school room is a large, open space. Leaders should give some thought to the layout of this room to make it more interesting and stimulating for children. Leaders have made some investment into resources such as a games table and hand held electronic devices. Resources, in general, are adequate and need to be developed, particularly for older children attending after school and holiday club who have quite limited choice. Whilst resources are stored at low level, it is difficult for the children to see what is available to them and this limits their opportunities to follow their interests and lead their own learning.

Leadership and Management

No Rating Required

Leaders have a clear vision for the service and have made considerable improvements since they have taken over ownership. There is a clear statement of purpose in place, which provides an accurate picture of how the service runs. The person in charge, who runs the service on a day-to-day basis, is highly qualified and experienced. She works closely with the Responsible Individuals to implement the service policies and procedures. They have introduced effective systems and procedures and staff are beginning to embed them into the daily running of the service. Leaders have high expectations of staff and challenge them to do their best.

The people who run the service have a detailed action plan, which outlines the areas for improvement. They have drawn on previous inspection reports and advice from external agencies to identify priority areas. Daily operational plans ensure that the service meets the staffing requirements of National Minimum Standards. Staff told us that these are very effective and they all know what their responsibilities are each day. Leaders have not produced an annual Quality of Care Report, as this is not required until they have been at the service for a year.

Leaders manage staff well. There have been a number of staff changes under the new management structure. Recruitment procedures are robust, ensuring that new staff are suitable to work with children. New staff have a detailed induction program to introduce them to the service. They have clear roles and responsibilities detailed in job descriptions and contracts. All staff and the Person in Charge have regular supervision and an annual appraisal with the Responsible individuals. We discussed the possibility of the Person in Charge undertaking the supervision meetings for staff, as she is responsible for their daily management.

Leaders are developing positive relationships with parents. They have introduced an app, which allows staff to send parents and carers updates of children's progress. Key workers speak to parents regularly on arrival and collection. A parent told us that they know the key worker for their child and receive daily updates and photographs through the app, which is brilliant.

Recommendations to meet with the National Minimum Standards

R1. Ensure that room temperatures are monitored and accurately recorded

R2. Develop the range of resources, particularly for older children

R3. Develop the pre-school room in order to promote independence and interest

Areas for improvement and action at, or since, the previous inspection. Achieved

Areas for improvement and action at, or since, the previous inspection. Not Achieved

None	
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Areas where priority action is required

None	
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Areas where improvement is required

None	
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Date Published 29/09/2021