

Care service inspection report

Stepping Stones Nursery School

Day Care of Children

7 Saline Street
Airdrie
ML6 9BE

Inspected by: Ann Dornan

Aileen Quinn

Type of inspection: Unannounced

Inspection completed on: 27 May 2011



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Contents

	Page No
Summary	3
1 About the service we inspected	5
2 How we inspected this service	6
3 The inspection	10
4 Other information	22
5 Summary of grades	23
6 Inspection and grading history	23

Service provided by:

Stepping Stones Nursery School (Airdrie) Limited

Service provider number:

SP2010010818

Care service number:

CS2010238277

Contact details for the inspector who inspected this service:

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Summary

This report and grades represent our assessment of the quality of the areas of performance which were examined during this inspection.

Grades for this care service may change after this inspection following other regulatory activity. For example, if we have to take enforcement action to make the service improve, or if we investigate and agree with a complaint someone makes about the service.

We gave the service these grades

Quality of Care and Support	5	Very Good
Quality of Environment	5	Very Good
Quality of Staffing	5	Very Good
Quality of Management and Leadership	4	Good

What the service does well

The service provided a pleasant, safe and spacious environment for children to play and learn. The providers and their staff were committed to improving their skills and knowledge to provide stimulating and enjoyable play experiences for children.

Parents and children had been fully consulted about all aspects of the service, and the two owner/managers and staff ensured that views and ideas of children and parents were taken fully into account.

What the service could do better

The service should continue to develop its procedures in relation to monitoring and quality assurance.

What the service has done since the last inspection

This was the first inspection of the service. The nursery had made very good progress since it was registered in 2010.

Conclusion

The service was providing a very good level of care to children in a stimulating and supportive environment. Staff worked well as a team, and demonstrated a commitment to developing their skills and training to ensure the highest standards

for care for children. The owner/managers had introduced monitoring and evaluation procedures within the nursery. These should be developed and formalised to show how the outcomes have been used to develop the service.

Who did this inspection

Ann Dornan

Aileen Quinn

1 About the service we inspected

Before 1 April 2011, this service was registered with the Care Commission. On this date, the new scrutiny body, Social Care and Social Work Improvement Scotland (SCSWIS) took over the work of the Care Commission, including the registration of care services. This means that from 1 April 2011, this service continued its registration under the new body, SCSWIS.

Stepping Stones Nursery School offers early education and childcare for up to 9 children aged from 9 months to under two years, fifteen children aged from two years to under three years, and thirty two children aged from three years to those not yet attending primary school. The service operates during term time and holidays, between the hours of 7.30am and 6.00pm.

The nursery is located in a detached building within its own grounds in the Coatdyke area of Airdrie, and comprises three playrooms. Playrooms for younger children are located on the ground floor, while the playroom for children aged three and over is located on the upper floor. Each playroom has its own toilets and changing area, as well as a snack preparation area. There are well resourced outdoor play areas for all children. A secure entry system is in place, and there is ramp access to the building. An office is available for private discussions with parents or visiting agencies.

The service's statement of aims and objectives is available to parents and families, and aims to provide a 'high quality childcare and education in a caring and stimulating environment, to work in partnership with parents and keep them informed of their child's development and wellbeing at all times". The full statement of aims and objectives is available to families.

Based on the findings of this inspection this service has been awarded the following grades:

Quality of Care and Support - Grade 5 - Very Good

Quality of Environment - Grade 5 - Very Good

Quality of Staffing - Grade 5 - Very Good

Quality of Management and Leadership - Grade 4 - Good

This report and grades represent our assessment of the quality of the areas of performance which were examined during this inspection.

Grades for this care service may change following other regulatory activity. You can find the most up-to-date grades for this service by visiting our website www.scswis.com or by calling us on 0845 600 9527 or visiting one of our offices.

2 How we inspected this service

The level of inspection we carried out

In this service we carried out a medium intensity inspection. We carry out these inspections where we have assessed the service may need a more intense inspection.

What we did during the inspection

This report was written following an unannounced inspection by Ann Dornan and Aileen Quinn. Visits took place on Thursday 28 April 2011 and Thursday 5 May 2011. As requested by the Care Commission, the service sent us an annual return. The service also sent us a self assessment form.

We issued fifteen questionnaires to parents and carers who used the service. Twelve completed questionnaires were returned before the inspection.

In this inspection, we gathered information from various sources, including the relevant sections of policies, procedures and records, including the following:

- certificate of registration
- certificate of insurance
- information relating to partnership with parents
- documentation relating to additional support needs
- parents' and children's questionnaires
- child protection policy
- recruitment and selection policy
- staff files.

Discussion took place with the two owner/managers of the service, two senior staff and staff members. Children were spoken with informally during the inspection process, and the inspectors also spoke to parents who were present within the service.

Grading the service against quality themes and statements

We inspect and grade elements of care that we call 'quality themes'. For example, one of the quality themes we might look at is 'Quality of care and support'. Under each quality theme are 'quality statements' which describe what a service should be doing well for that theme. We grade how the service performs against the quality themes and statements.

Details of what we found are in Section 3: The inspection

Inspection Focus Areas (IFAs)

In any year we may decide on specific aspects of care to focus on during our inspections. These are extra checks we make on top of all the normal ones we make during inspection. We do this to gather information about the quality of these aspects of care on a national basis. Where we have examined an inspection focus area we will clearly identify it under the relevant quality statement.

Fire safety issues

We do not regulate fire safety. Local fire and rescue services are responsible for checking services. However, where significant fire safety issues become apparent, we will alert the relevant fire and rescue services so they may consider what action to take. You can find out more about care services' responsibilities for fire safety at www.firelawscotland.org

The annual return

Every year all care services must complete an 'annual return' form to make sure the information we hold is up to date. We also use annual returns to decide how we will inspect the service.

Annual Return Received: Yes - Electronic

Comments on Self Assessment

Every year all care services must complete a 'self assessment' form telling us how their service is performing. We check to make sure this assessment is accurate.

We received a fully completed self assessment document from the service. We were satisfied with the way they had completed this and with the relevant information they had given us for each of the headings that we grade them under.

The service identified what they thought they did well, some areas for development and any changes they planned. The service told us how the people who used the care service had taken part in the self-assessment process.

Taking the views of people using the care service into account

Children were observed to be happy and content within the nursery environment, and chatted confidently to the inspectors about the activities they enjoyed. They were very busy and involved in a variety of stimulating activities, and shared their excitement with the inspectors about the caterpillars they had monitored until they had turned into butterflies.

Taking carers' views into account

Thirteen parents and carers returned Care Standards Questionnaires, giving their views of the service. All respondents confirmed that they were given clear information about the service, and were able to visit before children were placed in the nursery. Respondents 'agreed' or 'strongly agreed' that staff regularly assessed children's learning and development, and used the information to plan children's next steps. Parents felt that staff shared information about children's learning and development with them, and kept them informed about what was happening in the nursery. Two respondents 'did not know' that staff asked for children's views about activities and outings, and used the information to plan activities. All other respondents agreed that this happened. One respondent 'did not know' that the service made good use of the local community. All other respondents agreed that it did. All respondents said that they were confident that staff had the skills and experience to care for children and to support their learning and development. All

respondents felt that the service offered a safe, secure and stimulating environment, where children had space to be involved in a range of activities. All respondents also 'agreed' or 'strongly agreed' that the service had a suitable range of equipment, toys, and materials for the children.

Parents' comments included:

"The staff are always cheery and friendly. The nursery building, garden, and resources are fantastic".

"I have been extremely pleased with all aspects of the service, from friendly, caring staff to facilities".

"I am extremely happy with the high quality this service has provided".

"Stepping Stones is a great nursery".

"I am extremely pleased with this nursery, and feel that staff and management work hard to make it an excellent service".

3 The inspection

We looked at how the service performs against the following quality themes and statements. Here are the details of what we found.

Quality Theme 1: Quality of Care and Support

Overall grade awarded for this theme: 5 - Very Good

Statement 1

We ensure that service users and carers participate in assessing and improving the quality of the care and support provided by the service.

Service strengths

The service provided a very good variety of ways in which parents, carers and children could influence the quality of care and support provided. Staff offered daily informal discussions with parents, parents' evenings, questionnaires for parents and children, reports on children's development, a notice board, a comments and suggestions box, and regular newsletters which invited responses from families. Parents' views were sought on all aspects of the care and support of children. The 'welcome board' contained information about the service and requested responses from parents. The nursery had its own website and used e-mail to encourage feedback. Parents were encouraged to participate fully in the service by assisting in the playroom. A 'Partnership with Parents' policy was in place. Its aim was to 'work in partnership with parents and keep them informed of the child's development and well-being at all times'. Reviews of all policy documents encouraged feedback and suggestions from families.

Children gave their ideas through the use of floor books and pictorial questionnaires. Children selected the items they wanted included in their profiles, and parents were encouraged to look at these at any time.

The nursery recorded useful information about children at enrolment, and this information was kept up to date. Children's personal interests were used to determine focuses within the nursery, and they were involved in evaluating programmes and choosing resources.

Parents had been asked for their views on a wide variety of subjects. All questionnaires returned were evaluated and acted upon, and parents were informed of the outcomes through newsletters, notices, and parents' meetings. Suggestions on which action had been taken included the involvement of children in snack preparation, action on the buggy shelter, and suggestions regarding the parking area.

One parents said:

"I feel that I am valued and my opinion matters to my child's daily routine in the nursery". Another commented: "I feel the nursery is very well organised, and I am kept aware of what is happening".

Following discussions with parents, staff and children, along with a review of relevant documentation, this service was found to be offering a very good service in relation to this quality statement.

Areas for improvement

The service indicated that the use of floor books would be further developed to clarify the developments in children's learning and development in relation to specific subjects.

Grade awarded for this statement: 5 - Very Good

Number of requirements: 0

Number of recommendations: 0

Statement 3

We ensure that service user's health and wellbeing needs are met.

Service strengths

Not all aspects of this quality statement were examined. The inspection concentrated on the areas of child protection, nutrition, and access to regular exercise and fresh air.

The service provided very good opportunities for children to be involved in a wide variety of indoor and outdoor activities. The outdoor play areas were well resourced and spacious, and it was noted from planning records, photographs and observation, that very good regular use was made of these areas. Indoors, there was space for children to be involved in ring games, drama, and dance, and these activities formed part of the nursery programme.

The service had developed an appropriate policy in relation to the protection of children. Staff had undergone induction in the procedures of the service, and all had undertaken relevant training. The managers were responsible for ensuring that child protection information was updated and communicated to staff regularly.

The service was participating in the Health Promoting Nursery project. A healthy eating policy was in place. Water and milk was available to children throughout the day. Healthy snacks were provided, including a wide variety of fruit. The nursery was developing its own vegetable and herb garden. Staff were trained in elementary food hygiene.

Following discussion with staff, and a review of relevant documentation, including evaluations from parents and children, the nursery was found to be offering a very good service in relation to this quality statement.

Areas for improvement

We discussed children's personal plans and guided the service to the regulations relating to these. The service agreed to take account of the new regulations, and will now develop personal plans for this service.

Grade awarded for this statement: 5 - Very Good

Number of requirements: 0

Number of recommendations: 0

Statement 4

We use a range of communication methods to ensure we meet the needs of service users.

Service strengths

A very wide variety of communication methods had been introduced by the nursery. Included in these were:

- newsletters
- daily diaries
- e-mails
- nursery website
- children's learning books
- children's progress records
- notice boards.

In addition, staff spoke with parents on a daily basis and offered opportunities for private meetings if required. Notice boards were accessible to parents and included topical information. A variety of leaflets was available, and the managers ensured that information was conveyed appropriately to those with a limited command of written English.

Parents indicated that they were kept very well informed about the service and significant nursery events.

The nursery was found to be offering a very good service in relation to this quality statement.

Areas for improvement

The managers said that they would continue to ensure that all those involved with the nursery were kept fully informed of relevant issues.

Grade awarded for this statement: 5 - Very Good

Number of requirements: 0

Number of recommendations: 0

Quality Theme 2: Quality of Environment

Grade awarded for this theme: 5 - Very Good

Statement 1

We ensure that service users and carers participate in assessing and improving the quality of the environment within the service.

Service strengths

The methods employed by the service to ensure that children and parents were able to participate in assessing and improving the quality of the environment were similar to those described at 1.1.

Areas for improvement

Please refer to 1.1

Grade awarded for this statement: 5 - Very Good

Number of requirements: 0

Number of recommendations: 0

Statement 2

We make sure that the environment is safe and service users are protected.

Service strengths

The service had taken every effort to ensure children's safety within the nursery. A secure entry system was in place, and visitors were required to sign the visitors book and be accompanied during their visit. Officials were required to display evidence of their identity.

There was ramp access to the building, and toilet facilities for disabled people. The building was bright, clean and well maintained. Appropriate procedures were in place for identifying and addressing maintenance issues. Risk assessments had been carried out in all areas, and staff completed daily checklists to ensure the continued safety of children. Policies and procedures relating to health and safety and infection control were in place and were known to, and implemented by, staff.

Playrooms were spacious, with interesting and inviting areas for children. There were attractive displays of children's work and interest tables in each playroom. Children were encouraged to take care of the environment both indoors and out. The outdoor play areas were attractive and inviting for children, and the grounds were well maintained.

The nursery was found to be offering a very good service in relation to this quality statement.

Areas for improvement

The managers confirmed that safety measures would be continuously monitored and updated as required.

Grade awarded for this statement: 5 - Very Good

Number of requirements: 0

Number of recommendations: 0

Statement 5

The accommodation and resources are suitable for the needs of the service users.

Service strengths

All areas of the nursery were well resourced, with equipment and toys that were suitable for the needs of children. Equipment was well maintained. Resources were clean, age appropriate, and easily accessed by children. Staff identified the developing needs of children and ensured that appropriate resources were always available.

The outdoor areas were well planned and maintained. Children had regular access to outdoor equipment that was varied and challenging.

Areas for improvement

The managers and staff should continue to review their equipment and resources to ensure that they are suited to children's needs.

Grade awarded for this statement: 5 - Very Good

Number of requirements: 0

Number of recommendations: 0

Quality Theme 3: Quality of Staffing

Grade awarded for this theme: 5 - Very Good

Statement 1

We ensure that service users and carers participate in assessing and improving the quality of staffing in the service.

Service strengths

The methods employed by the service to ensure that parents and children were able to participate in assessing and improving the quality of staffing in the service, were similar to those described at 1.1. Parents' comments included:

"All the staff are lovely, and give the nursery a real family feel".

"All the staff are friendly and approachable".

The nursery was found to be offering a very good service in relation to this quality statement.

Areas for improvement

Please refer to 1.1

Grade awarded for this statement: 5 - Very Good

Number of recommendations: 0

Number of requirements: 0

Statement 2

We are confident that our staff have been recruited, and inducted, in a safe and robust manner to protect service users and staff.

Service strengths

The provider had developed a recruitment and selection policy and procedure.

Prospective employees were required to complete an application form. They were provided with written information and were fully informed about the aims and values of the service.

Recruitment practice required candidates to undergo an Enhanced Disclosure Scotland check, and provide names of two referees, one of which was from the immediate previous employer.

Records about Disclosure Scotland checks were appropriately stored and recorded, and there was a system for rechecking these. There was also a system to ensure that

candidates were physically and mentally fit to undertake the work for which they were employed.

The providers had developed a system to check and record prospective employees' qualifications. A system was in place to check each candidate's registration with relevant professional registers at the point of employment.

Contracts of employment were issued for all staff.

Areas for improvement

It was suggested that the service should sign and date copies of staff qualifications to indicate that originals had been checked, and should ensure that their policy clearly reflects the procedures to be followed where negative Disclosure checks are received.

Grade awarded for this statement: 5 - Very Good

Number of requirements: 0

Number of recommendations: 0

Statement 3

We have a professional, trained and motivated workforce which operates to National Care Standards, legislation and best practice.

Service strengths

The nursery had developed a number of appropriate policies and procedures to support the service. These included policies on child protection and whistle blowing. Staff held a variety of appropriate qualifications. They were registered with relevant professional bodies, and adhered to their codes of practice. Discussions with staff indicated that they would follow correct procedures in relation to whistle blowing and reference to the Scottish Social Services Council.

A wide ranging induction procedure had been undertaken by all staff, who indicated that this had assisted them in carrying out their jobs confidently. They were committed to continued professional development, and had attended both internal and external training, as well as accessing additional information through personal reading and access to the internet. They were aware of national and local guidelines such as the National Care Standards and Child at the Centre, and used these documents to plan appropriate activities for children. It was clear that both the managers and staff knew the children well and were able to provide interesting and challenging activities that children enjoyed. Procedures were in place to access additional support for children and for staff to work co-operatively with other agencies involved in the care and education of children.

The service was found to be performing well in relation to this quality statement.

Areas for improvement

The managers and staff planned to use their observations and evaluations to develop their improvement plan for the service.

Grade awarded for this statement: 5 - Very Good

Number of requirements: 0

Number of recommendations: 0

Quality Theme 4: Quality of Management and Leadership

Grade awarded for this theme: 4 - Good

Statement 1

We ensure that service users and carers participate in assessing and improving the quality of the management and leadership of the service.

Service strengths

The methods provided by the service to ensure that parents and children were able to participate in assessing and improving the quality of care and support within the service were similar to those described at 1.1

Areas for improvement

Please refer to 1.1

Grade awarded for this statement: 5 - Very Good

Number of requirements: 0

Number of recommendations: 0

Statement 2

We involve our workforce in determining the direction and future objectives of the service.

Service strengths

Staff said that due to the support of the owner/managers, they were fully involved in determining the future objectives of the service. They had been involved in the self-assessment process, and felt that their contributions were recognised and valued. They said that they felt part of a team that was working to achieve common objectives. They had offered suggestions in relation to the review of policies and procedures, planning activities, developing playrooms, and purchasing resources.

Minutes indicated that regular staff meetings took place. All staff said that they were encouraged to contribute items for the agenda, and to share ideas from training and personal reading that might help improve the service to children. They said that they were given time to access support materials and to build up a bank of training resources within the nursery.

This is a new service, and it was apparent that the the owner/managers had developed a culture and ethos of sharing and developing knowledge so that all staff members felt that they were able to contribute fully to the development of the nursery.

Areas for improvement

The nursery should continue with its very good practice of involving the staff group in all aspects of service delivery.

Grade awarded for this statement: 5 - Very Good

Number of requirements: 0

Number of recommendations: 0

Statement 4

We use quality assurance systems and processes which involve service users, carers, staff and stakeholders to assess the quality of service we provide

Service strengths

The service had developed a statement of aims and objectives that was shared with families. A partnership with parents policy was in place, and reflected the nursery's commitment to involving families in all aspects of children's care. An appropriate complaints procedure was included in the information given to parents. The service had invited parents to comment on a wide variety of subjects, and their suggestions had been carefully considered and implemented where appropriate.

An initial monitoring system had been introduced by the managers. Staff appraisals had been recently carried out. Staff had been fully involved in this process, and both parties had agreed on the training and development needs of individual staff members.

The service used appropriate local and national quality assurance systems to monitor its performance in relation to curriculum development and other aspects of the service. All staff were involved in this process. Regular staff meetings were held, and staff said they were encouraged to submit items for the agenda.

The managers were aware of the notification procedures required by Social Care and Social Work Improvement Scotland and the Scottish Social Services Council.

The nursery was found to be offering a good service in relation to this quality statement.

Areas for improvement

The owner/managers had begun to monitor and evaluate all aspects of the nursery, including staff performance. Some development was needed to show how this information was used to devise the improvement plan for the nursery.

Grade awarded for this statement: 4 - Good

Number of requirements: 0

Number of recommendations: 1

Recommendations

1. The managers should continue with their plan to evaluate and formalise their monitoring procedures in relation to all areas of the service, including staff development. They should continue to involve all partner agencies as part of the assessment procedure. The development plan should be continually reviewed to ensure that it reflects the ongoing needs of service users and families. National Care Standards for Early Education and Childcare up to the age of 16, Standard 13: Improving the Service

4 Other information

Complaints

No complaints have been upheld, or partially upheld, since the service was registered in 2010.

Enforcements

We have taken no enforcement action against this care service since the service was registered in 2010.

Additional Information

Action Plan

Failure to submit an appropriate action plan within the required timescale, including any agreed extension, where requirements and recommendations have been made, will result in SCSWIS re-grading the Quality Statement within the Management and Leadership Theme as unsatisfactory (1). This will result in the Quality Theme for Management and Leadership being re-graded as Unsatisfactory (1).

5 Summary of grades

Quality of Care and Support - 5 - Very Good	
Statement 1	5 - Very Good
Statement 3	5 - Very Good
Statement 4	5 - Very Good
Quality of Environment - 5 - Very Good	
Statement 1	5 - Very Good
Statement 2	5 - Very Good
Statement 5	5 - Very Good
Quality of Staffing - 5 - Very Good	
Statement 1	5 - Very Good
Statement 2	5 - Very Good
Statement 3	5 - Very Good
Quality of Management and Leadership - 4 - Good	
Statement 1	5 - Very Good
Statement 2	5 - Very Good
Statement 4	4 - Good

6 Inspection and grading history

All inspections and grades before 1 April 2011 are those reported by the former regulator of care services, the Care Commission.

To find out more about our inspections and inspection reports

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

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