



Inspection Report

1st Steps Day Care Ltd

**Elim Community Church
Waterloo Terrace Pontlloftyn
Bargoed
CF81 9RG**



Date Inspection Completed

13/07/2022

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About 1st Steps Day Care Ltd

Type of care provided	Children's Day Care Full Day Care
Registered Provider	1st Steps Day Care LTD
Registered places	19
Language of the service	English
Previous Care Inspectorate Wales inspection	First inspection since registration with CIW
Is this a Flying Start service?	No
Does this service provide the Welsh Language active offer?	No. 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 people /children who use, or intend to use their service.

<u>Well-being</u>	Good
<u>Care and Development</u>	Good
<u>Environment</u>	Adequate
<u>Leadership and Management</u>	Good

For further information on ratings, please see the end of this report

Summary

Children benefit from a very good play and care environment in which they have formed secure relationships with staff and positive friendships with other children, and this contributes significantly to their well-being. All children in this service are able to engage in activities of their choosing and are free to develop that play in collaboration with their peers. They are listened to well and their views are taken into account.

Staff are skilled practitioners who have a good understanding of child development and want to make a positive difference to the children in their care. They are responsive and respect the children in their care and the decisions they make. Children remain safe and healthy because staff understand their responsibilities and are aware of the policies and procedures in place to support them in their roles. The staff group work very well together as a team, and as staff have a good understanding of children's individual needs, this helps to ensure that those needs are well met.

Children benefit from an environment which aspires to a high standard, is clean and welcoming, and where risk is well managed. The indoor play spaces have begun to be developed in a high-quality manner, with consideration as to the resources being real life and natural as far as possible. The items available are interesting and engaging for children and allow them freedom to follow their interests. However, there are insufficient resources for the number of children attending which can be accessed freely.

Parents and children receive a consistent, reliable service, which is well run. Managers are committed to improving outcomes for children, reflecting on practice, and being proactive in planning for improvements to the service and for the continuing professional development of staff.

Well-being

Good

Children have a very strong voice in this service and their rights are very well respected. All children are able to move freely between the activities available to them. Children are confident to approach staff because they know they have a voice and all attempts at communication are valued. This is particularly evident in the experiences of children who have challenges with communication and we saw that these children have the space and opportunities to communicate their needs and wishes in the most appropriate manner for them. This significantly improves the well-being of these children and contributes to them flourishing in this setting.

Children feel safe, happy and valued at the setting. They are relaxed in the care of staff with whom they have developed warm relationships, enabling them to explore their environment and engage with activities as they wish. We saw all children happily and enthusiastically engage in play of their choosing, smiling and laughing as they did so. They develop a sense of belonging because they see their work displayed attractively and receive lots of praise. They follow their individual routines and staff recognise and understand their needs. This is a great benefit for children who have additional needs, as we saw that they have the freedom to move as they wish and to choose to not participate in activities (such as circle time) that may be unnecessarily distressing for them.

Children co-operate, take turns and share, and they are developing sensitivity to the emotions of others. In the main, they demonstrate a good understanding of what is expected of them whilst they are at the setting. Children negotiate their play well and older children play co-operatively. Children enjoy the praise they receive for positive behaviour, and they interact well with staff and peers. They are developing a sense of right and wrong and are becoming self-disciplined.

Children are interested and excited in the play-based activities in which they engage. Children are active and curious. They are happy and confident to move between activities freely, but also sustain interest in activities of their choosing as well. Outdoors, we saw children enjoy a 'mocktail making' activity set up in the water tray with fancy plastic glasses, plastic ice cubes and other resources for the children to 'make' and 'sell' their creations. All children we spoke to told us they enjoyed their time at the setting.

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.

Care and Development

Good

Staff are effective in their roles. They are clear about their responsibilities and they have good knowledge of how to keep children safe and healthy. Meals provided are healthy and nutritious, and strong procedures are in place to safely manage food allergens. However, children do not always make nutritious choices at mealtimes, for example we saw several children who chose to just be served plain pasta rather than the bolognese the meal had been designed as. Children require encouragement to ensure they eat a balanced meal. Staff know how to raise safeguarding concerns. They speak confidently about safeguarding procedures and know that managers will be responsive to any concerns they raise. There are procedures for recording the administering of medication, accidents, incidents and existing injuries. Managers monitor these monthly to identify any trends and take any necessary action. We noted that on occasions staff mistook the use of incident and accident forms, and not all were signed by parents to acknowledge the entry.

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 set realistic boundaries, taking into account children's age and very differing levels of needs and understanding. We observed that staff have a very calm manner when managing behaviour. No significant issues of behaviour management occurred during the inspection, largely thanks to the positive approach taken.

Staff provide a nurturing and caring environment in which children's play and well-being are well promoted. All staff have a relaxed, happy and caring nature when interacting with the children. The staff group are keen to ensure they are good facilitators of play and development. They are also patient and very conscious to ensure that children have lots of time and choices, particularly children who are unable to voice their likes and needs directly. Staff are very respectful of these indirect communications and act on them responsively. Staff plan a good variety of activities, which follow the children's interests. There is an appropriate system for recording and identifying children's progress and next steps.

Environment**Adequate**

The environment is safe, secure and very welcoming. Staff are vigilant and supervise children closely at all times. Registers record the times children arrive at and leave the premises. Managers keep records of all visitors to the setting. There are 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. Regular fire drill practises are carried out to ensure staff and children are familiar with the emergency evacuation process. On the day of the inspection, we experienced unusually high temperatures. The physical environment of the setting amplified this problem. We fed this back to managers who confirmed they had ordered air conditioning units in order to create a safe environment for the following days which were to be hotter. Staff ensured that children had access to lots of water play and moved them around the outdoor space to take best advantage of the shade available.

The premises provide a rich and stimulating environment for children to play and learn. It is well maintained and in good decorative order. There are daily cleaning schedules in place. Toilets are clean and provide children with suitable privacy. The outside play space is well utilised and we saw the children enjoy the resources made available to them outside. The playroom is very attractively decorated, in a calm and welcoming manner. Children's own work displayed framed all across one wall, which would help them to feel valued and a part of the setting.

There is an adequate range of good quality resources and the layout promotes children's independence. Furniture is of suitable size and design for the age range of the children. Resources are of a nice quality and provided thoughtfully and purposefully. The setting is introducing elements of 'loose parts play' and the 'curiosity approach'. Children have access to primarily real-life resources, such as baskets of pinecones and shells, and large and small cans for construction. There are also lots of role play resources for imaginative play, including a shop, and lounge area and a bedroom area, which we saw was well used, particularly as a quiet space for children who need it. However, there are insufficient volumes of resources for the size of the setting and the number of children attending.

Leadership and Management

Good

Managers are skilled and experienced and overall, manage the service well. There is a clear vision for the setting, reflected in the statement of purpose. There are clear policies and procedures which reflect the setting and current practice. Staff work consistently in line with these to support the smooth running of the setting. Operational records contain the necessary information. Records of children's information are complete. Managers employ an appropriate number of suitably qualified and experienced staff to care for the children.

Children and parents benefit from a service which is committed to improving outcomes for children. There is a suitable quality of care report detailing what the setting does well and an action plan of what they want to improve. Managers undertake this review annually as required, and take into account the views of children, parents, staff and any relevant outside agencies. Managers work hard to ensure that they deliver good quality care.

Managers are effective in overseeing staff, managing their time and prioritising activities responsively to ensure that children's needs are met in a timely manner. We observed staff to be well organised and we saw that this allowed them to remain calm whilst delivering care. This calm and relaxed care environment has a positive impact on the children's mood and their interactions. Staff feel supported, knowing they can approach managers for help or support if needed. Robust recruitment procedures ensure that suitable staff are employed to work with children. There is a system in place to keep track of staff training. Staff receive regular supervisions and appraisals to reflect on their practice.

Positive relationships with the community are valued at this setting. Staff told us that they value the relationships they have built with parents and are keen to ensure that parents feel they can approach them at any time. We spoke to parents who were very complimentary about the service and they were all confident to leave their children there. They all reported that staff are friendly and approachable.

Recommendations to meet with the National Minimum Standards

R1. Ensure the correct use of incident forms is clear to staff, and they should be signed by parents to acknowledge the entry.

R2. Ensure the meals children consume are nutritionally balanced and in line with Welsh Government guidance.

R3. Ensure the quantity of resources available provide sufficient variety to keep occupied the numbers of children attending.

Summary of Non-Compliance

Status	What each means
New	This non-compliance was identified at this inspection.
Reviewed	Compliance was reviewed at this inspection and was not achieved. The target date for compliance is in the future and will be tested at next inspection.
Not Achieved	Compliance was tested at this inspection and was not achieved.
Achieved	Compliance was tested at this inspection and was achieved.

We respond to non-compliance with regulations where poor outcomes for people, and / or risk to people's well-being are identified by issuing Priority Action Notice (s).

The provider must take immediate steps to address this and make improvements. Where providers fail to take priority action by the target date we may escalate the matter to an Improvement and Enforcement Panel.

Priority Action Notice(s)

Regulation	Summary	Status
N/A	No non-compliance of this type was identified at this inspection	N/A

Where we find non-compliance with regulations but no immediate or significant risk for people using the service is identified we highlight these as Areas for Improvement.

We expect the provider to take action to rectify this and we will follow this up at the next inspection. Where the provider has failed to make the necessary improvements we will escalate the matter by issuing a Priority Action Notice.

Area(s) for Improvement

Regulation	Summary	Status
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N/A	No non-compliance of this type was identified at this inspection	N/A
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Ratings	What the ratings mean
Excellent	These are services which are committed to ongoing improvement with many strengths, including significant examples of sector leading practice and innovation. These services deliver high quality care and support and are able to demonstrate that they make a strong contribution to improving children’s well-being.
Good	These are services with strengths and no important areas requiring significant improvement. They consistently exceed basic requirements, delivering positive outcomes for children and actively promote their well-being.
Adequate	These are services where strengths outweigh areas for improvement. They are safe and meet basic requirements but improvements are required to promote well-being and improve outcomes for children.
Poor	These are services where important areas for improvement outweigh strengths and there are significant examples of non-compliance that impact negatively on children’s well-being. Where services are poor we will take enforcement action and issue a non-compliance notice.

Date Published 16/09/2022