Stepping Stones
Day Care of Children

Unit 5
Baillie Building
Thorn Brae
Johnstone
PA5 8HE

Telephone: 01505 325 226

Type of inspection:
Unannounced

Completed on:
4 September 2025

Service provided by:
Lorna Bradley and Michael Brown, a partnership trading as "Stepping Stones"

Service provider number:
SP2003003346

Service no:
CS2003034567

About the service

The service was registered with the Care Inspectorate on 01 April 2011. The service is registered to provide a care service to a maximum of 38 children not yet attending primary school. The service operates between the times of 07:30 to 18:00. The service is located in the Renfrewshire town of Johnstone, a short walk from the local shops and schools.

About the inspection

This was an unannounced inspection which took place on 3 and 4 September 2025. The inspection was carried out by two early learning and childcare inspectors 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. In making our evaluations of the service we:

- spoke with 29 people using the service and three of their parents
- spoke with nine staff and management
- gathered views from parents and staff using online surveys
- observed practice and daily life
- reviewed documents
- spoke with visiting professionals.

Key messages

- Children experienced warm relationships with staff who knew children and their families well.
- Children enjoyed a range of play and learning experiences indoors and outdoors.
- Strong leadership was creating a nurturing and responsive environment where children and staff felt safe and valued.
- Management and staff had developed strong partnership working with parents and carers.
- Management had developed a process of quality assurance to monitor the effectiveness of practice across the setting and identify areas for continuous improvement.

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

Quality indicator 1.1: Nurturing, care and support

Staff consistently demonstrated positive and nurturing approaches in their interactions with children. It was evident that they knew the children well, enabling them to respond effectively to individual needs, preferences, and interests. One parent shared, "The most positive aspects are the caring and supportive relationships [the child] has built with the staff, and the nurturing environment that encourages [the child's] development".

Children appeared happy, busy, and confident as they played and engaged with staff and friends. They were comfortable seeking help when needed, and care routines supported their growing independence while respecting their privacy and dignity.

Children's rights and the SHANARRI wellbeing indicators (Safe, Healthy, Achieving, Nurtured, Active, Respected, Responsible, Included) were clearly embedded throughout the setting. This included meaningful contributions from parents and carers, who provided key information that helped staff tailor support to each child's unique needs and preferences.

These thoughtful approaches ensured that transitions were child-centred, respectful, and well planned, promoting continuity of care and emotional security. Staff also collaborated effectively with other professionals to support children's development. As a result, children requiring additional support had appropriate measures in place. We suggested further streamlining the children's plans into a single, consistent format to enhance information sharing.

Mealtimes were observed to be sociable and inclusive. Staff sat with children, facilitating meaningful conversations. Some children participated in the setup of lunch and were encouraged to self-serve food and water, promoting independence and an opportunity to practise their fine motor skills. Staff supported children in trying new foods, sharing information about healthy eating while respecting individual choices. Peer encouragement was also evident, and children requiring additional support were assisted through carefully considered strategies that promoted inclusion. These strategies were shared with parents to foster consistency and strengthen partnerships around healthy eating habits. One parent told us "The range of food provided by the nursery caters well to my [child's] needs, allowing [them] to explore new and varied options throughout the week. Daily updates in terms of what foods [the child] has tried are a great help". Elements of best practice were noted, such as the homely table setup in the baby room, which included a tablecloth and plants. We suggested continuing this practice across the setting in all age ranges. Management and staff were reviewing the food distribution process to reduce waiting times for children. This would help to minimise the potential for food temperatures to drop and ensure that children are able to engage in mealtimes promptly, maintaining both the quality of the food and the social experience.

Sleep arrangements were provided in accordance with parental wishes, and staff demonstrated awareness of safe sleep practices. A nurturing approach was evident, supporting secure attachments between staff and children.

Procedures for managing children's healthcare needs required further refinement to ensure staff had access to accurate and complete information. Management assured us that medication forms would continue to be reviewed and updated using the "Management of medication in daycare of children and childminding services".

Quality indicator 1.3: Play and learning

Children appeared happy, confident, and actively engaged across all areas of the provision. A balanced mix of adult-led and child-initiated activities supported the development of key skills in literacy, numeracy, health, and wellbeing. In the 3-5 age group, children accessed a range of developmentally appropriate and engaging activities that promoted creativity, curiosity, and early literacy and numeracy. For example, mark making with pencils and pattern play. Opportunities for choice, self selection, and open ended provocations could be further developed in the younger age groups to offer a similar level of engagement. A review of the layout in the younger rooms was suggested to ensure the space inspires and challenges children, further supporting their play, learning and development.

Children were observed enjoying outdoor play in the garden, engaging in activities such as pouring water down pipes, riding trikes, building dens, and using hula hoops. These experiences supported the development of gross motor skills, problem solving abilities, and engagement in appropriate risky play.

Staff used floor books to collate children's voices, demonstrating a commitment to planning that reflects children's interests. Planning incorporated next steps from observations and tracking, alongside responsive planning approaches. This helped extend children's play and learning experiences.

Staff discussed links with the local care home and local schools, sharing resources and activities such as visits from the dog warden or using their space to hold yoga sessions with the children. These experiences helped children build a sense of confidence and belonging to their wider community. One parent told us "We also really appreciate the opportunities [the child] has for outdoor play and community exploration, which broaden [their] learning beyond the nursery setting".

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

The setting was warm, homely, and welcoming, with comfortable furnishings, good natural light, and ventilation. Cleanliness and maintenance were of a good standard, reinforcing a strong message to children and families that they are valued. Parents told us that they felt welcomed and comfortable, supporting the positive community ethos of the setting. The entrance foyer was clean, informative, and spacious, with informative displays and leaflets that reflected the setting's inclusive approach. Secure entry systems were in place, limiting access to known individuals only. We suggested a sign-in and out system be introduced to support fire safety and further strengthen security procedures.

Children accessed outdoor play daily and children appeared engaged and confident in using the space. Activities such as train spotting through portholes demonstrated children's ownership and voice in the environment.

Risk assessments and safety were effectively managed through a collaborative approach involving children, staff, and parents. Children and staff were familiar with the SIMOA framework (Safe, Inspect, Monitor, Observe, Act), which was embedded in daily practice using a soft toy version of SIMOA in the garden. This visual representation helped reinforce safety messages in a child friendly way. Children confidently articulated SIMOA's role in promoting safety, with one child stating "SIMOA keeps us safe". Staff demonstrated a strong understanding of safety arrangements and actively supported children in developing their own awareness of risk. Good practice was evident in the completion of outing risk assessments, which were thoughtfully tailored to the specific needs and characteristics of each cohort. Management and staff worked in close partnership with parents to identify children with vulnerabilities, such as a history of running off or anxiety around cars and busy environments, ensuring that safety planning was both robust and responsive. This collaborative and proactive approach contributed to a well embedded culture of safety across the setting.

Infection control measures were well established and aligned with current guidance. Management responded promptly and appropriately to evolving advice on infection prevention and control, demonstrating a commitment to health and safety. Children and staff showed confidence and consistency in handwashing routines, which contributed effectively to minimising the spread of infection.

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 key question as very good.

Quality indicator 3.1: Quality assurance and improvement are led well

Staff and management engaged well throughout the inspection, being receptive to ideas and suggestions to improve the practice. Management demonstrated a genuine commitment to valuing and supporting staff. Team members reported feeling well supported and appreciated the leadership's regular presence in the playrooms. A robust system was in place to monitor mandatory professional registrations, training, and ongoing professional development. One staff member told us "All staff are listened to and respected" and "the manager takes on board all staff views".

Regular team meetings supported meaningful reflection, guided by the "A quality framework for daycare, childminding and school-aged childcare" framework. Staff used floor books and self-evaluation during appraisals to assess practice against key quality indicators. Parents were actively involved through questionnaires, informal discussions, and visible updates on a foyer whiteboard. This inclusive and collaborative approach fostered a strong culture of continuous improvement, positively impacting outcomes for children and families.

An established auditing process was in place. Management regularly observed key areas such as mealtimes, the environment, and staff child interactions, providing constructive feedback. The quality assurance calendar was current and comprehensive. We recommended ensuring that when actions are signed off, it is clearly indicated whether changes were made or if the status remained unchanged.

The recruitment process was found to be robust, with effective systems in place to ensure the safe monitoring of essential training and ongoing development for new staff. One parent told us "the staff are consistently professional, friendly, and clearly very well trained".

Parental engagement was a clear strength of the service, supporting continuity of care and collaborative working to meet children's needs. Staff demonstrated genuine care and respect for children and their families. Parents felt welcomed and involved through daily interactions, stay and play sessions, parent's evenings, suggestion box, open door policy and home visits. A child-led settling in approach was supported through one to one work with families.

Information about children's learning and experiences was shared through regular plan reviews and the digital platform. Parents described feeling like true partners and valued the holistic support provided by the nursery.

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 key question as very good.

Quality indicator 4.3: Staff deployment

The staff team were warm, welcoming, and nurturing, contributing to a positive ethos throughout the nursery. Staff demonstrated compassion and enthusiasm in their interactions with children, families and each other, creating a respectful and supportive environment. The ethos of the setting placed children at the centre, with staff treating each child as an individual. Staff worked well together, drawing on their skills, experience and knowledge to enhance the quality of children's interactions and experiences.

Staff had established positive relationships with parents. Families dropped off and collected their children within the nursery, which provided opportunities for daily conversations about their child's day with staff. Very good communication with families contributed to parents feeling included in their child's experiences at nursery and assisted staff when identifying how best to meet children's needs. Parents told us "I can't say enough good things about the staff. They are helpful and supportive" and "The staff are amazing! The communication with parents is second to none".

The nursery was appropriately staffed to meet the needs of the children. Staff were effectively deployed throughout the day, ensuring that children's needs were met in a timely and responsive manner. Staff breaks and lunches were carefully organised to minimise disruption to the children's routines. As a result, the day ran smoothly, supporting continuity in children's care, play, and learning.

All staff participated in an annual appraisal, which provided an opportunity for reflection, goal setting, and identification of training needs. This process supported continuous professional development and contributed to the overall quality of the provision. All staff were registered with the Scottish Social Services Council (SSSC). Staff's qualifications, registrations, and training helped them to better meet children's individual needs. This led to quality care and improved outcomes for children.

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	4 - Good
1.3 Play and learning	4 - Good

How good is our setting?	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

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