Forward Steps Nursery Ltd
Day Care of Children

59 Northgate Road
Balornock
Glasgow
G21 3QT

Telephone: 01415 588 815

Type of inspection:
Unannounced

Completed on:
17 June 2026

Service provided by:
Forward Steps Nursery Ltd

Service provider number:
SP2004006558

Service no:
CS2004070243

About the service

Forward Steps Nursery Ltd is registered to provide a care service to a maximum of 48 children: 8 children 0 years to under 2 years, 18 children 2 years to under 3 years, 22 children 3 years to those not yet attending primary school.

The nursery is provided from a converted church hall in the Balornock area of Glasgow. The service is close to main roads, public transport routes, shops, a library and parks. There are three playrooms with two enclosed outdoor play areas. The outdoor area is accessible from one of the playrooms. The baby room was not operating at the time of this inspection, therefore only two playrooms were in use.

There were 24 children attending the service on the first day of the inspection and 21 children on the second day of the inspection.

About the inspection

This was an unannounced inspection which took place on 16 and 17 June 2026 between 09:00 and 17:15 . The inspection was carried out by two 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:

- reviewed feedback from 9 parents using the service
- spoke with five staff and the manager
- observed practice and staff interactions
- assessed core assurances and previous areas for improvement
- reviewed documents
- spoke with children.

As part of our inspections, we assess core assurances. Core assurances are checks we make to ensure children are safe, the physical environment is well maintained and that a service is operating legally. At the time of this inspection, no improvements were identified relating to core assurances.

Key messages

- Children experienced warm, nurturing interactions and felt valued and included.
- Children were happy and engaged in learning through meaningful play, based on their interests.
- Further development of natural learning environments could support [AM1.1]curiosity and explorative play.
- Staff knew children well and planned experiences meaningfully to support their wellbeing and development.
- Strong leadership and self-evaluation were driving continuous improvement across the service.
- Partnerships with families supported positive relationships and improved outcomes for children.

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

Leadership	5 - Very Good
Children play and learn	4 - Good
Children are supported to achieve	5 - Very Good

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

Leadership 5 - Very Good

Quality Indicator - Leadership and management of staff and resources

We found major strengths in this aspect of the setting's work and identified very few areas for improvement; therefore, we evaluated this quality indicator as very good.

The visions, values and aims of the service had recently been reviewed in consultation with families, staff and children. This supported a shared vision for the service. For example, staff emphasised a supportive, professional culture, while children described the nursery as fun and happy. These values were evident in practice, with confident exploration, learning and positive relationships.

The manager had systems in place to reflect upon the quality of the service. Regular observations of practice, environments and individual children's experiences enabled strengths to be recognised and areas for development identified. This meant there was a clear and ongoing cycle of assessment and improvement. As a result, children received responsive care and experiences that supported their wellbeing and development.

Self-evaluation processes were ongoing and informed improvement planning. The manager had gathered feedback about the service from staff, families and children through surveys, observations and discussion. The feedback was then analysed and shared and had resulted in some meaningful changes. This included improved communication with families through digital platforms, clearer information about meals and continued reflection of how to improve the sharing of children's learning. This demonstrated that the service was responsive to feedback and committed to enhancing outcomes for children and families.

The manager had planned to engage staff more within self-evaluation experiences which will further support their knowledge and enhance their confidence in this area.

A quality assurance calendar supported ongoing monitoring across key areas of practice. As a result of this, the manager and staff team were able identify strengths and areas for improvement. The manager planned to track and record the impact of changes over time to demonstrate benefits for children.

The manager demonstrated a supportive leadership style which was valued by staff and parents. One parent told us, "The nursery often asks for parents' opinions on things". Staff described feeling listened to and well supported. One member of staff told us, "[manager] is very supportive, I can see a massive positive change since [manager] started" and others agreed. Regular one to one meetings supported staff wellbeing and ongoing professional development. This meant that children benefited from motivated staff and continuity of care.

Staff training was important to the service and was supporting children's learning positively. For example, recent biodiversity training had resulted in enhanced knowledge on outdoor play experiences for children. One child told us, "Come and see our garden, we have made cress". One member of staff told us, "I love being outdoors, the training was really beneficial".

Children play and learn 4 - Good

Quality Indicator - Playing, learning and developing

We evaluated this quality indicator as good, where there were important strengths within the setting's work and some aspects which could benefit from improvement.

Children experienced a range of play and learning opportunities which supported their wellbeing and development. They were happy, settled and engaged in their play. Children freely accessed experiences which reflected their interests. They had the opportunity to lead their own play or join in bigger group experiences. This meant children were developing confidence, independence and a sense of ownership over their learning.

Children were developing positive relationships as they played together. In the home area, a group of children assigned each other different family roles and used imagination to create shared scenarios. At the water tray, a group of children enjoyed exploring bubbles, sea animals and shells and used tins to pour and scoop water. Elsewhere children experimented with texture in the wet sand and discovered how tins made patterns. Another child was engaged in their own play with the coloured letter cubes, recognising colours and letter sounds. These experiences were encouraging social skills, literacy, numeracy and exploration and were supporting children within progressing their learning. One child proudly showed us the block area and told us, "This is where we can build if we want".

Staff played alongside children and some used 'I wonder' questions to extend learning through play. There were opportunities to further enhance staff skills within supporting learning through deeper conversation and questioning during play. The manager planned to focus on supporting this moving forward.

Outdoors, children explored their interests in mini beast and developed their physical skills by climbing on the small play steps. They also read stories, explored the mud kitchen and enjoyed learning about wildlife and planting. Older children were excited to show us around the garden and were proud of the sunflowers they had grown. One child told us, "I took one home" and another said, "You can come and see the flowers; you can smell them too". They searched for birds, discovered insects and worked as a group to hang apple feeders for the birds. Children were engaged in these experiences and showed genuine enjoyment and sustained interest. This supported the development of their social skills, physical development and understanding of the natural world.

While children experienced positive learning opportunities, we suggested that developing a range of natural materials and open-ended resources. This could support deeper curiosity, creativity, and engagement. The manager acknowledged this and intended to prioritise it as a focus for improvement.

Planning for children's learning was responsive to children's interests and needs. Staff used observations to identify next steps and planned a balance of child-led and intentional learning experiences. This meant that experiences were meaningful to children. Weekly reflections of play experiences encouraged staff to evaluate the impact of play on children's outcomes. From this, staff were identifying what worked well and what could be developed. This was promoting a culture of reflective practice and improved experiences for children.

Staff had recently received support from their local authority in supporting observations and phonological awareness for children. This was progressing older children's learning in literacy, rhyming and

communication which was evident in learning journals and trackers. One parent told us, "My child has lots of opportunities at nursery and has come on so much since they started there". This demonstrated children are engaged in learning experiences that are helping them develop key skills.

Children are supported to achieve — 5 - Very Good

Quality Indicator - Nurturing care and support

We found major strengths in this aspect of the setting's work and identified very few areas for improvement; therefore, we evaluated this quality indicator as very good.

Children benefited from warm, nurturing interactions from staff who knew them well. They had clearly developed secure and trusting relationships. Staff responded to children's needs both verbally and non-verbally with sensitivity and respect, offering comfort and reassurance when needed.

This was supporting children to feel secure and confident and promoted a sense of belonging. One parent told us, "The staff at this nursery is what makes this place special. The care and attention that the kids get here is next level".

Children experienced an inclusive environment where their rights, choices and voices were respected. For example, children helped design and name a new quiet space, sharing ideas about how they wanted to use it. We saw that these suggestions had been implemented, creating a calming and meaningful space for children to play and relax. This demonstrated that children's voices were heard, making them feel valued and supported. Similarly, experiences such as the 'chatter-cups', where children spent one-to-one time chatting with the manager, were supporting children's wellbeing. These experiences gave children dedicated time to share their feelings, interests, and nursery experiences in a calm, nurturing way. Some conversations led to changes of resources to support children's ideas, re-enforcing that their opinions were valued.

Personal plans were created in collaboration with parents and detailed children's needs, preferences, interests and developmental stages. Plans for children were informing staff practice and interactions and were supporting children's wellbeing and development. For example, where support strategies had been set for children, we could see these being promoted in practice through the introduction of visuals and supporting language and communication.

Parents were offered regular opportunities to meet with staff to discuss their child's wellbeing and learning. They were invited to six-monthly parents' evenings and additional development meetings where needed. Information was also shared through digital platforms, wall displays, and newsletters. One parent told us, "I was able to review my child's personal plan at parents' night which was a great insight into my child's progress, it had all been recorded and put to me in book form which was lovely to flick through and see".

Mealtimes for children were positive social experiences for most children. They helped prepare tables, counted out cups and napkins and confidently self-served their own food. This was promoting independence, responsibility and a sense of pride. Staff sat alongside children, offering support and encouraging conversation. We discussed with the manager that further reflection on a more flexible lunchtime routine may support all children's choices and reduce noise level and minimise disruption to play.

During a social visit to the Church beside the nursery, children had the opportunity to link with the local community and buy resources for play. This supported children's choice, independence and wider social interactions.

What the service has done to meet any areas for improvement we made at or since the last inspection

Areas for improvement

Previous area for improvement 1

To ensure that children experience high quality play and learning, the manager and provider should ensure that staff access training and apply it in practice.

This is to ensure that care and support is consistent with the Health and Social Care Standards (HSCS) which state that: 'I am supported to achieve my potential in education and employment if this is right for me' (HSCS 1.27) and 'I experience high quality care and support based on relevant evidence, guidance and best practice' (HSCS 4.11).

This is to ensure staff skills and knowledge are aligned with the national practice guidance for early years in Scotland, Realising the ambition: Being me.

This area for improvement was made on 16 June 2026.

Action taken since then

Impacts of training and leader of early learning support were evident in practice. The LEL had recently completed a block of support sessions around observational writing and phonological awareness. Children's learning journals and trackers showed that because of this, children were progressing learning within rhyming, language and communication. Staff were also able to recognise clear next steps for progression.

Training calendars and discussions with staff evidenced the impact of training on their own professional learning. For example, staff had recently carried out biodiversity training. This was positively impacting children's play and learning in the outdoor area, experiences here were enriching and engaging.

Whilst there is scope to continue to develop play and learning opportunities, overall, we could see that staff training and play was supporting children's overall learning and development.

This area for improvement had been met.

Previous area for improvement 2

To ensure children's health and safety, the manager and provider should ensure that children's health and safety is supported within an environment where the risk of cross infection is minimised through good hygiene practices. This should include but not be limited to:
a) ensuring areas where children eat are safe and hygienically maintained
b) ensuring staff model and support effective hand hygiene with children, for example after coming inside, after outdoor play and before mealtimes.

This is to ensure that care and support is consistent with Health and Social Care Standards which state that: 'My environment is secure and safe' (HSCS 5.19) and 'I experience an environment that is well looked after with clean, tidy and well-maintained premises, furnishings and equipment' (HSCS 5.24).

This area for improvement was made on 16 June 2026.

Action taken since then

Areas were safe and clean indoors and outdoors during our visit. Regular handwashing was carried out with staff and children. Hands were washed after outdoor/messy play and before lunch.

Infection prevention control measures were in place to support a hygienic lunch time experience for children. For example - tables where sprayed and cleaned before and after children ate and table covers were used. A separate table with cover was used to place food on upon arrival and the area was clean.

All staff had carried out infection prevention control training which supported their knowledge and understanding in this area.

This area for improvement had been met.

Complaints

There have been no complaints upheld since the last inspection. Details of any older upheld complaints are published at www.careinspectorate.scot.

Detailed evaluations

Leadership	5 - Very Good
Leadership and management of staff and resources	5 - Very Good

Children play and learn	4 - Good
Playing, learning and developing	4 - Good

Children are supported to achieve	5 - Very Good
Nurturing care and support	5 - Very Good

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