Little Steps Childcare
Day Care of Children

Garrybank
Bankfoot
Perth
PH1 4DX

Telephone: 01738 788 188

Type of inspection:
Unannounced

Completed on:
17 September 2026

Service provided by:
Claire Bell trading as Little Steps Childcare

Service provider number:
SP2009975690

Service no:
CS2009233142

About the service

Little Steps Childcare is a day care of children service, registered to provide care to a maximum of 60 children from birth to an age not yet attending primary school. Of those 60 no more that 12 are under two years of age, no more than 25 are age two to three and a maximum of 23 are age three to an age to attend primary school.

The nursery is located in the village of Bankfoot, Perthshire. Children are accommodated within three playrooms designated for different age groups of children. A cabin located in the outdoor space is also used as a play space for children. The children have access to two fully enclosed outdoor areas.

About the inspection

This was an unannounced inspection which took place on 15 and 16 September 2026. 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 registration information, information submitted by the service and intelligence gathered throughout the inspection year.

In making our evaluations of the service we:

- spent time with children using the service
- received feedback from 11 families through an online survey
- spoke with five families during our visit
- spoke with staff and management
- observed practice and daily life
- reviewed documents.

As part of this inspection, we assessed 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

- Leaders were committed to improving the service and had made positive changes following the previous inspection.
- Effective self-evaluation and quality assurance processes helped leaders monitor practice, identify improvement priorities, and support positive outcomes for children.
- The staff team was more settled and confident. Improved staffing arrangements provided greater stability and consistency for children and families.
- Children could follow their interests and lead their own play. Improvements to daily routines and increased access to outdoor play reduced interruptions and helped children stay engaged in their learning and play for longer.
- Children appeared happy, settled and secure. Warm, nurturing and responsive relationships helped them feel safe, valued and supported.
- Improvements since the previous inspection were having a positive impact. Ongoing monitoring and reflection will help sustain progress, strengthen consistency and support continued improvement across the service.

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	4 - Good
Children play and learn	4 - Good
Children are supported to achieve	4 - Good

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

Leadership 4 - Good

We evaluated different parts of this heading as good and very good, with an overall evaluation of good. Several strengths impacted positively on outcomes for children and clearly outweighed the areas for improvement.

Quality indicator: Leadership and management of staff and resources

The service provided a welcoming ethos and positive atmosphere. Following the previous inspection, leaders were proactive in driving change and used areas for improvement identified at the last inspection to prioritise and guide meaningful developments. This had resulted in positive change for children and families.

The service's vision, values and aims were understood by staff who used these to guide relationships, interactions and daily practice. The vision, values and aims had been reviewed with children, families and staff, helping to ensure they reflected the needs and aspirations of the service community. Children were supported to develop an understanding of the values through discussions to help them recognise these during their play and experiences.

Self-evaluation had been developed and established, supporting to evaluate practice and identify areas for improvement. Evidence gathered through self-evaluation activities helped staff identify strengths and recognise development needs. Findings were regularly reviewed, enabling progress to be monitored and actions followed up. This supported a culture of continuous improvement and helped the team make informed changes to enhance outcomes for children. Shared leadership was promoted across the team, with staff actively involved in peer monitoring and champion roles. This supported a collaborative approach to improvements.

Quality assurance processes were effective. These enabled leaders to monitor procedures and practice, and support children's safety, wellbeing and learning. Procedures were guided by current guidance and policy, helping to promote positive outcomes for children and families and drive ongoing improvements.

Children and families were actively involved in service developments. A range of consultation methods, including daily discussions and a 'question of the month', provided opportunities for people to share their views and contribute to decision-making. One family shared, "Frequent opportunities to provide input, as well as a culture of being open to conversation and input". This demonstrated a commitment to a collaborative approach and ensured developments reflected the needs of those using the service. Where changes had been made, these were shared with families, helping them remain informed, engaged and aware of how their views had influenced service improvement.

Recruitment procedures had been strengthened in line with best practice guidance, supporting safer recruitment and informed decisions about applicants' skills, knowledge, values and experience. Additional measures, including practice monitoring, had been introduced to support the assessment and development of staff who were new to post. New staff completed an induction programme, supported by mentors and the national induction resource. This helped new staff develop their understanding of their role, service's expectations and best practice. This supporting consistency and positive outcomes for children.

Quality indicator: Staff skills, knowledge, values and deployment

The staff team appeared more settled and confident. Although there had been some staffing changes, core staff working within each room provided continuity of care and consistency for children and families. Improved staffing levels further enhanced stability.

Contingency planning had been developed to support staff absence and changes. This reduced the service's reliance on agency staff and promoted greater stability and consistency for children and families. As a result, children benefitted from relationships with familiar staff who knew them well and understood their individual needs, preferences and routines.

Current guidance and relevant practice resources were used to support staff understanding of good practice and inform improvement planning. This helped maintain a focus on improving outcomes for children and families. Team meetings and practice discussions supported reflection and contributed to a shared understanding of expectations for practice. Recognising that staff were at different stages of their development, leaders should continue to build the skills, knowledge and confidence of newer team members to promote greater consistency in practice across the service.

Training supported staff to continue developing their knowledge and skills. A training overview was in place to monitor learning and development needs. Leaders acknowledged that the service was in the process of embedding a new training platform. Continued monitoring of training completion would support oversight of staff learning and help ensure staff remain up to date with learning. Extending the use of training reflections across the team could encourage staff to reflect on their learning, consider how it could be applied in practice and evaluate its impact on outcomes for children.

Staff deployment was mostly effective and supported a responsive approach to care, engagement and supervision. Staff communicated well to support deployment and respond to children's needs. Leaders recognised the importance of continuing to monitor and evaluate practice during busier periods, such as mealtimes, personal care routines and family handovers, to ensure children consistently experienced high-quality support.

Staff wellbeing was supported through regular opportunities for staff to reflect on their role, discuss their wellbeing and identify any training or support needs. Staff spoke positively about the support available and felt listened to by leaders. This helped to promote confidence, wellbeing and a positive team culture. To maintain positive staff morale and strengthen engagement, leaders can continue to promote a supportive culture by encouraging staff involvement in decision-making, valuing staff contributions and recognising individual and team achievements.

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's choice, independence and confidence were promoted through opportunities to lead their play and make decisions about their experiences. Increased opportunities for free-flow access to outdoor play created a more flexible and child-centred environment, allowing children to choose where and how they played. Children were engaged in their play as they followed their interests across indoor and outdoor spaces. Experiences were led by children's curiosity and individual preferences. This supported their wellbeing and sense of ownership over their learning.

Improvements to daily routines helped minimise interruptions to children's play and learning, supporting deeper engagement in experiences. Continuing to build on this approach at key points of the day, including following sleep times and during the lead up to lunch, would help ensure children consistently benefit from high-quality, child-led experiences.

Children benefitted from a range of experiences that supported their play, learning and development. Opportunities to engage with open-ended and real life materials encouraged creativity, imagination and problem-solving. Interesting resources were used to spark children's curiosity and encourage exploration. Experiences allowed children to develop their own ideas and lead their play in fun and meaningful ways. As a result, children were engaged and motivated. One family told us, "The activities in the rooms are great and always different. My child loves the messy play and tough trays. These are always engaging and imaginative".

Opportunities for children to develop literacy and numeracy skills were promoted throughout the nursery. Initiatives such as Word Aware, story times, mark-making opportunities and the use of print within the environment supported children's early language, communication and literacy skills. Early numeracy was observed through everyday conversations, play experiences and planned learning activities, helping children to develop mathematical thinking in meaningful and enjoyable ways.

Staff were warm and responsive in their interactions with children. They joined in play, responded positively to children's requests and provided support to sustain engagement. We observed examples of skilled practice where some staff used questioning and discussion to extend children's thinking and curiosity. Continuing to build on this practice across the team will help develop consistently high-quality interactions that promote children's learning, development and meaningful engagement.

Tracking and assessment of children's learning had been strengthened. This helped staff to monitor children's progress, recognise achievements and identify next steps in learning. Children and families were supported to celebrate progress through approaches such as certificates, recognition of achievements and the use of a 'Proud Cloud'. Floor books had been developed to provide a more meaningful record of children's voices, interests and learning journeys. This supported their involvement in the planning and evaluation of experiences.

Children are supported to achieve — 4 - Good

Quality indicator: Nurturing care and support

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 appeared happy and settled. Staff were nurturing, caring and attentive. Interactions were consistently warm, sensitive and respectful, with staff responding appropriately to children's individual needs and emotional cues. This supported children to develop secure attachments and feel safe and valued.

Transitions were generally supported well. Staff took time to get to know families and develop an understanding of children's preferences and needs. This helped children to feel supported as they settled into the service. Feedback from families was largely positive. While one response highlighted that settling-in arrangements had not always been tailored to individual children and families, the family confirmed that this had since been resolved. Continuing to strengthen approaches across the team would support personalised transitions and help children build secure connections as they move into the setting.

Sleep times were calm, nurturing and tailored to children's individual needs and routines. Children had access to their own sleep mats and bedding, helping to promote comfort and effective infection prevention and control. Sleep spaces were clean, well maintained and free from hazards. Staff monitored children effectively while they slept and monitored room temperatures. This supported children's safety, wellbeing and comfort.

We observed personal care being carried out sensitively and respectfully. This included nappy changing and recognising when children required clean and dry clothing. These approaches helped children to feel comfortable, cared for and supported. Feedback from a few families suggested that children's personal care routines could be responded to more promptly. Continuing to develop consistency in practice would help ensure children's individual care needs are met throughout the day.

Children's healthcare needs were supported well. Staff demonstrated a good understanding of children's individual health needs and were confident in the procedures in place to support them. Effective information sharing within the team helped promote children's safety and wellbeing. Mealtime procedures were well managed, helping to ensure children received food that was safe and appropriate for their individual dietary needs. As a result, children experienced consistent support that promoted their health, safety and wellbeing.

Children experienced calm and nurturing mealtimes where they were encouraged to make choices, develop independence and enjoy time with their friends. Staff supported children with warmth and encouragement, helping them to do as much as possible for themselves, including serving their own food. The relaxed atmosphere allowed children to eat at their own pace, supporting their wellbeing and enjoyment. Ongoing review of mealtime arrangements could support the continued development of routines and practices, including waiting times before lunch and responding flexibly to children's individual hunger needs throughout the day.

Personal plans provided clear information about children's individual needs and how these were supported. Records reflected a child-centred approach and helped promote consistency of care across the staff team. Plans could be strengthened by ensuring they are consistently dated, signed and clearly evidence who had completed or reviewed records. Greater use of wellbeing indicators would also support a better overview of children's wellbeing, needs and progress. Leaders were in the process of reviewing and updating 'All About Me' documents to further strengthen personal planning arrangements.

The service had established positive relationships with children and their families. Staff recognised the importance of partnership working and used a range of approaches to encourage family involvement. Initiatives such as the home-link programme strengthened connections between home and nursery and supported the sharing of children's experiences. Parents spoke positively about the service and described feeling welcomed, involved and well informed through regular communication and opportunities to participate in nursery life.

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

The provider should ensure that all children are cared for and kept safe by safely recruited staff. Recruitment procedures should be developed to support employers to fully assess the skills, knowledge and experience of those applying for employment.

This is to ensure that care and support is consistent with the Health and Social Care Standards (HSCS) which states that:

'I am confident that people who support and care for me have been appropriately and safely recruited' (HSCS 4.24).

This area for improvement was made on 23 October 2025.

Action taken since then

Safer recruitment procedures had been developed using key guidance documents including safer recruitment, values-based recruitment tools and the Care Inspectorate self-evaluation tool. Safer recruitment checks were carried out prior to staff commencing their role and interview and application procedures were more effective in supporting assesing the skills, knowledge and experience of candidates. This supported leaders in decision making and helped to promote children's safety and wellbeing.

Monitoring procedures had been developed to support leaders to continue to assess the suitability of employees and identify where support would be beneficial and to assess the quality of staff practice in regard to outcomes for children.

This area for improvement has been met.

Previous area for improvement 2

To promote a culture of continuous improvement so that outcomes for children and families improve, the provider should enhance the current approaches to quality assurance and self-evaluation.

This should include but not be limited to:

a) providing consistent support and monitoring of staff practice

b) developing self-evaluation processes

c) developing and implementing an improvement plan that supports continuous improvement.

This is to ensure that care and support is consistent with the Health and Social Care Standards (HSCS) which state that: 'I benefit from a culture of continuous improvement, with the organisation having robust and transparent quality assurance processes' (HSCS 4.19).

This area for improvement was made on 23 October 2025.

Action taken since then

Monitoring of children's experiences and staff practice was ongoing and regular. This helped to identify where improvements were needed and monitor progress and developments within the service.

Self-evaluation processes were in place and involved the whole staff team. This helped to promote a culture of continuous improvement.

Monitoring procedures had been established and carried out regularly by the leadership team.

Quality assurance and self-evaluation informed a meaningful improvement plan. Ongoing monitoring and reflection of progress supported assessing the impact of developments and identifying where further improvements could enhance the quality of children's care and experiences.

This area for improvement has been met.

Previous area for improvement 3

The provider should ensure that contingency plans are in place to account for staffing challenges, including recruitment issues and staff absence. They should consider staffing levels and skill-set in the deployment of staff to support and minimise disruptions to children's care.

This is to ensure that care and support is consistent with the Health and Social Care Standards (HSCS) which state that:

'My needs are met by the right number of people' (HSCS 3.15); and

'My care and support is provided in a planned and safe way, including if there is an emergency or unexpected event' (HCSC 4.14).

This area for improvement was made on 23 October 2025.

Action taken since then

Contingency planning had been developed to support periods of staff absence and workforce changes. This had reduced the service's reliance on agency staff, resulting in greater stability and consistency for children and families. Staffing levels were more stable, and leaders had carefully considered staff skills, experience and knowledge of children when planning room deployments and delegating roles. As a result, children benefitted from continuity of care and consistent support from familiar staff who understood their individual needs, preferences and routines.

This area for improvement has been met.

Previous area for improvement 4

The provider should continue to support staff to develop their skills, knowledge and understanding of how children develop and learn. A range of training and professional development should be provided to support inform practice and ensure that children receive high quality care and are supported to thrive.

This is to ensure that care and support is consistent with the Health and Social Care Standards (HSCS) which state that: 'I have confidence in people because they are trained, competent and skilled, are able to reflect on their practice and follow their professional and organisational codes' (HSCS 3.15).

This area for improvement was made on 23 October 2025.

Action taken since then

Targeted professional development and training opportunities focused on developing staff skills and knowledge in delivering high-quality play and learning experiences. This had resulted in positive changes to children's daily routines and strengthened staff practice. Staff were more responsive to children's interests, choices and emerging ideas, supporting a more child-led approach to play and learning.

This area for improvement has been met.

Previous area for improvement 5

The provider should ensure that all staff consistently demonstrate warm, sensitive and nurturing interactions with children. Staff should be supported to develop their understanding of how interactions impact on children's emotional wellbeing, including recognising and responding to children's emotional needs.

This is to ensure that care and support is consistent with the Health and Social Care Standards (HSCS) which state that:

'My care and support meets my needs and is right for me' (HSCS 1.19); and

'I am supported to communicate in a way that is right for me, at my own pace, by people who are sensitive to me and my needs' (HSCS 2.8).

This area for improvement was made on 23 October 2025.

Action taken since then

Staff consistently demonstrated warm, nurturing and caring approaches in their interactions with children. Interactions were responsive, compassionate and respectful, with staff taking time to listen to children, respond to their cues and provide reassurance when needed. Children appeared secure, settled and confident within the setting. Staff's sensitive approaches supported positive relationships and contributed to children's emotional wellbeing.

This area for improvement has 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	4 - Good
Leadership and management of staff and resources	5 - Very Good
Staff skills, knowledge, values and deployment	4 - Good

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

Children are supported to achieve	4 - Good
Nurturing care and support	4 - Good

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