

11 March 2025

Dear Parent/Carer

In December 2024, a team of inspectors from Education Scotland and the Care Inspectorate visited Stepping Stones Nursery. During our visit, we talked to parents/carers and children and worked closely with the manager and practitioners.

The inspection team found the following strengths in the setting's work.

- The inclusive style of leadership of the current manager has brought about a change of culture within the setting. As a result, the nursery is welcoming and nurturing. This is helping children to feel secure and develop confidence.
- There are positive relationships between the manager, practitioners and parents which has improved respect and communication between all. Practitioners and parents feel valued and included in the life of the setting.
- The practitioners use the local community meaningfully to enhance children's experiences. Children are becoming aware of key local landmarks and are developing a range of skills through these real-life opportunities.

The following areas for improvement were identified and discussed with the owner, manager and a representative from Argyll and Bute Council.

- The owner must ensure that the manager and practitioners are fully aware of their responsibilities to ensure the care and welfare needs of all children are met. This means that practitioners will need professional learning and support to better understand the legal requirements when providing early learning and childcare.
- The team need to understand how to evaluate the work of the nursery, plan for improvement and demonstrate the impact of changes made. To do this, the manager and practitioners need to use self-evaluation tools that will help with this process.
- The manager and practitioners should improve further the quality of the curriculum. Children should receive a broad curriculum that supports them to learn in greater depth, particularly in literacy and numeracy. The manager and practitioners will require professional learning and support to achieve this.
- The team should improve further the quality of observations, planning for children's learning and how they review and check on the progress children make. They need to deliver higher quality experiences and learning spaces that will support and extend children's learning more effectively.

We gathered evidence to enable us to evaluate the setting's work using four quality indicators from [How good is our early learning and childcare?](#) Quality indicators help early learning and childcare settings, local authorities and inspectors to judge what is working well and what needs to be improved. Following the inspection of each setting, the Scottish Government gathers details of our evaluations to keep track of how well Scottish early learning and childcare settings are doing.

Here are Education Scotland's evaluations for Stepping Stones Nursery

Quality indicators for the nursery	Evaluation
Leadership of change	weak
Learning, teaching and assessment	satisfactory
Ensuring wellbeing, equality and inclusion	weak
Securing children's progress	satisfactory
Descriptions of the evaluations are available from: How good is our early learning and childcare? Appendix 1: The six-point scale	

We gathered evidence to enable us to evaluate the early learning and childcare setting using the quality indicators from [A quality framework for daycare of children, childminding and school-aged childcare](#). The framework supports settings, providers and inspectors to assess what is working well and what needs to be improved. Following the inspection of each setting, the Scottish Government gathers details of our evaluations to keep track of how well early learning and childcare settings are doing. The Care Inspectorate evaluations are also used by local authorities when considering how settings are meeting the national standard for funded early learning and childcare.

The Care Inspectorate's evaluations for the early learning and childcare setting are:

Detailed evaluations	Evaluation
Key question 1: How good is our care, play and learning?	adequate
1.1 Nurturing care and support	good
1.3 Play and learning	adequate
Key question 2: How good is our setting?	good
2.2 Children experience high quality facilities	good
Key question 3: How good is our leadership?	adequate
3.1 Quality assurance and improvement are led well	adequate
Key question 4: How good is our staff team?	good
4.3 Staff deployment	good

Requirements made by the Care Inspectorate for the early learning and childcare setting.

As a result of the inspection, no requirements were made.

Areas for improvement made by the Care Inspectorate for the early learning and childcare setting.

As a result of the inspection, the following areas for improvement have been made.

Area for Improvement 1

To support children to achieve their full potential the manager and staff should review the current planning cycle to include high quality observations and next steps, with a focus on children's developmental stages. This will ensure that children are supported to lead their own play and learning that is tailored to their individual abilities and needs. This should include, but not be limited to, high quality observations, meaningful next steps and evidence of progression in learning.

This is to ensure that care and support is consistent with the Health and Social Care Standards (HSCS) which state: 'As a child, I can direct my own play and activities in the way that I choose, and freely access a wide range of experiences and resources suitable to my age and stage, which stimulate my natural curiosity, learning and creativity' (HSCS 2.27) and 'My care and support meets my needs and is right for me' (HSCS 1.19).

Area for improvement 2

To improve better outcomes for children. Management should develop and implement robust quality assurance systems with a focus on, monitoring children's personal plans, children's experiences, monitoring of staff practice and evaluating and improving the nursery.

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

Area for improvement 3

To ensure the service continues to grow, develop and deliver best outcomes. The provider should have an active supportive role in supporting and effectively managing the new leadership team to sustain and maximise the best outcomes for children, families and staff.

This is to ensure that management and leadership is consistent with the Health and Social Care Standards which state: 'I use a service and organisation that are well led and managed' (HSCS 4.23) and 'I experience high quality care and support because people have the necessary information and resources' (HSCS 4.27)

A more detailed document called Summarised Inspection Findings (SIF) will be available on the Education Scotland website at: [Reports page | Inspection reports | Education Scotland](#).

What happens next?

As a result of our inspection findings we think that the setting needs additional support and more time to make necessary improvements. We will liaise with Argyll and Bute Council regarding the setting's capacity to improve. We will return to carry out a further inspection of the setting within one year of the publication of this letter. We will discuss with Argyll and Bute Council the details of this inspection. When we return to inspect the setting, we will write to you as parents/carers informing you of the progress the setting has made.

As a result of the Care Inspectorates findings and evaluations, further scrutiny intervention will be considered to support improvements in the early learning and childcare setting.

Sandra Kehoe
HM Inspector

Mags Milloy
Care Inspector