

Footprints@netherton

Unique reference number (URN): EY558804

Address: Netherton Childrens Centre, Magdalen Square, Bootle, Lancashire, L30 5QH

Type: Childcare on non-domestic premises

Registered with Ofsted: 21/05/2018

Registers: EYR

Registered person: First Steps Enterprise Limited

Inspection report: 14 January 2026

Exceptional	
Strong standard	● ●
Expected standard	● ● ● ●
Needs attention	
Urgent improvement	

✔ Safeguarding standards met

The safeguarding standards are met. This means that leaders and/or those responsible for governance and oversight fulfil their specific responsibilities and have established an open culture in which safeguarding is everyone's responsibility and concerns are actively identified, acted upon and managed. As a result, children are made safer and feel safe.

How we evaluate safeguarding

When we inspect settings for safeguarding, they can have the following outcomes:

- Met: The setting has an open and positive culture of safeguarding.
- Not met: The setting has not created an open and positive culture of safeguarding. Not all legal requirements are met.

Strong standard ●

Children's welfare and wellbeing

Strong standard ●

Care practices are extremely consistent for children as staff understand children's individual needs so well. Staff support children as they learn about self-care, such as when they use the bathroom independently. Children who may face barriers to learning are given additional time and support as they master new skills. Children have forged secure relationships and attachments with their key person. Staff understand that the voice of every child is important, which helps children to feel secure throughout the day.

Children are supported to understand their physical development, personal safety, health and wellbeing. For example, staff talk with children about riding bikes safely outside and remind children to help themselves to water to keep hydrated throughout the day. Transitions are very supportive for all children and are adapted to their needs. Staff recognise that some children need a staggered approach to help them settle into the next room.

Children's wellbeing is always considered. Children are supported to recognise, express and manage their emotions, and they develop a secure sense of emotional wellbeing. Staff read stories, talk with children, listen to their ideas, value their opinions and take part in role play. Routines such as sleeping and feeding are facilitated extremely well, which means that children explore the world with enthusiasm and are active learners.

Inclusion

Strong standard ●

Leaders and staff consistently observe children and assess children's needs with precision. Children who have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are supported through highly effective strategies. For example, staff adopt a range of meaningful interventions and attend training to strengthen their knowledge of supporting children's individual care and learning needs. In addition, staff work very closely with a range of other professionals. This approach ensures that the needs of children with SEND are fully met and helps to reduce barriers in their learning. Staff are superb at adapting the curriculum and making reasonable adjustments to support children's individual needs. Staff constantly review the impact of any strategies to ensure that they are having the maximum impact on children's welfare, learning and development. Any inconsistencies in the curriculum do not have a negative effect on children who are at risk of falling behind.

Staff work closely with parents to support all children and understand their needs. Some children receive support from other social and health professionals. Leaders are superb at liaising with professionals, attending meetings, documenting concerns and being proactive so that children receive consistently high levels of care. Leaders work with staff to ensure that funding, such as the early years pupil premium, is spent to have maximum benefit for children and reduce the barriers to learning children may face.

Expected standard

Achievement

Expected standard 

The curriculum is tailored to meet children's individual needs. Children progress through the curriculum as learning opportunities are sequenced. This allows children to build knowledge over time and repeat tasks so that they can establish new skills with confidence. However, at times, some activities are too long and do not consistently maintain children's interest. This means that children do not get the very best from every activity.

Children are effective communicators. They are able to express their needs in verbal and non-verbal ways, enjoy taking part in discussions and really enjoy singing sessions where they sing with enthusiasm and confidence. All children, including those who face barriers to their learning, achieve well. They demonstrate that they feel safe and settled and have built strong attachments with staff, which helps to build their confidence and self-esteem. Children are well prepared for the next stage in their learning, including the move to school. They are active learners and explore their environment and resources with enthusiasm and joy.

Behaviour, attitudes and establishing routines

Expected standard 

Staff are positive role models and have high expectations for every child in their care. Children begin to understand routines and expectations. For example, older children enjoy 'sit and natter' time as they eat their snack. Staff realise this is an important part of the day for children as they begin to understand socialising with their peers, making their needs known and sitting down to eat. Staff take time to explain why certain expectations are in place. For example, staff talk with children about collecting resources from the floor so their friends do not fall over. Children understand what is expected of them.

Children build positive relationships with staff. They eagerly invite them to join in their play. Staff support children to build relationships with their peers. Children collaborate with one another and are beginning to understand that they need to wait their turn and listen when others are speaking.

Leaders promote punctuality and are vigilant in following up on attendance. They understand the importance of providing a setting with routines and expectations where children develop high levels of confidence and show a joy for learning. Staff consider

children's age and stage of development, their individual needs and circumstances when supporting them to maintain the expectations of the setting.

Curriculum and teaching

Expected standard 

The curriculum is well planned, with a strong focus on communication and language. Staff work hard to model vocabulary and give children lots of opportunities to enjoy stories with repetitive text. Staff monitor and evaluate the curriculum to ensure that activities and strategies have a positive impact on children's development. The curriculum is inclusive and flexible to meet children's needs, and staff ensure that regular improvements are made so that it supports the needs of all children. Typically, the curriculum supports all areas of the early years foundation stage. For example, children explore their imaginations and develop early mark making skills. However, not all curriculum areas are as well promoted as others, as there are some inconsistencies in the way staff promote and support mathematical thinking.

Staff prioritise children's physical, personal, social and emotional development. They consider the needs of children at all times and ensure the curriculum is accessible for all children, including those who may face barriers to their learning. They adapt activities to support individual needs. For example, they may plan activities on the floor as some children prefer floor play. Staff use assessment well, overall, to identify what children already know and can do. They consider children's starting points and stages of development and recognise that all children progress at different rates.

Leadership and governance

Expected standard 

The leadership team understands the setting's strengths and values self-evaluation from all staff so that areas for improvement are identified. Leaders welcome the views of parents. They are currently running a consultation to involve parents in developing the curriculum. Those responsible for governance take decisions that are in the best interests of all children, particularly those children who may face barriers to their learning. Staff are aware of needs within the local community and are proactive in supporting the needs of all children in their care.

Staff say that they feel very well supported by leaders and their workload is managed well. The setting has a low staff turnover and staff work well as a close-knit team. Leaders coach staff in an influential way and staff say that they feel supported and that they respect the leaders' expertise. Leaders should now focus their attention on strengthening the curriculum to further enhance children's achievements.

Training opportunities and opportunities for staff enrichment are supported by the leadership team. Targeted professional development opportunities have a positive impact on outcomes for children. Some staff have attended training about enhancing children's learning opportunities alongside parents. This has developed ways that staff engage with parents and how home learning is promoted to provide consistency for children.

What it's like to be a child at this setting

Children explore the environment with joy and are enthusiastic, active learners. Staff support children to make their needs known, practise new skills, be independent and develop high levels of confidence. The curriculum is well thought out and staff take into consideration the interests and individual needs of every child in their care. This helps to reduce barriers to learning that some children may face. Children are supported well for the next stage in their learning, including the move to school.

Children are encouraged to express their needs and understand that their voice matters. Even the youngest children are able to point to items to express their needs, such as a nappy at changing time. Staff work hard to give children choices throughout the day, such as choosing a favourite song at singing time. The setting is very inclusive. Children learn alongside children with special educational needs and/or disabilities and children who may have barriers to their learning. Children learn that everyone is unique and valued as an individual.

Staff work hard to engage parents and carers. Families are warmly welcomed at the setting and are invited to be part of assessment processes and to extend children's learning at home. Parents are very complimentary about the care their children receive.

Children develop positive relationships and demonstrate they are settled and happy at this setting. They build strong attachments with staff, who provide children with high levels of nurture and support. Staff understand the importance of attendance and work alongside parents to support children's continual attendance. Every child is valued for their individuality and uniqueness. Children are praised as they attempt to ride a bike for the first time, remember learning from yesterday and use words such as 'roll' as they play with the dough. This high-quality support enables children to attempt new things, build their resilience and develop high levels of confidence. This setting helps children to thrive and flourish.

Next steps

- Leaders should develop the curriculum for mathematics, so that children have consistent opportunities throughout the day to explore mathematical concepts.
 - Leaders should enrich planned activities, so that all children remain engaged in learning, in order to support their achievement.
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About this inspection

The inspector spoke with the senior leadership team, the manager, staff, the special educational needs coordinator, the parental engagement officer, parents and children during the inspection.

We carried out this inspection under sections 49 and 50 of the Childcare Act 2006 on the quality and standards of provision that is registered on the Early Years Register. The registered person must ensure that this provision complies with the statutory framework for children's learning, development and care, known as the early years foundation stage.

Inspector:

Elisia Lee

About this setting

Unique reference number (URN): EY558804

Address:

Netherton Childrens Centre
Magdalen Square
Bootle
Lancashire
L30 5QH

Type: Childcare on non-domestic premises

Registration date: 21/05/2018

Registered person: First Steps Enterprise Limited

Register(s): EYR

Operating hours: Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday : 08:30 - 11:30, Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday : 12:30 - 15:30

Local authority: Sefton

Facts and figures used on inspection

This data was available to the inspector at the time of the inspection.

 This data is from 14 January 2026

Children numbers

Age range of children at the time of inspection

2 to 4

Total number of places

22

Our grades explained

Exceptional

Practice is exceptional: of the highest standard nationally. Other settings can learn from it.

Strong standard

The setting reaches a strong standard. Leaders are working above the standard expected of them.

Expected standard

The setting is fulfilling the expected standard of education and/or care. This means they are following the standard set out in statutory and non-statutory legislation and the professional standards expected of them.

Needs attention

The expected standards are not met but leaders are likely able to make the necessary improvements.

Urgent improvement

The setting needs to make urgent improvements to provide the expected standard of education and/or care.

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