Stepping Stones
DAY NURSERY
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Dear Parents and Carers,

Thank you for your interest in our nursery and for considering us as part of your child's early journey.

At Stepping Stones Day Nursery, we provide a warm, safe, and nurturing environment for children aged 6 weeks to 5 years, offering both full-time and part-time care. As a privately owned nursery, we are proud to support up to 97 children each day, ensuring every child feels valued, secure, and inspired to learn.

Our beautifully modernised setting has been thoughtfully designed with children at its heart. Inside and out, our spaces encourage little ones to explore, imagine, and grow through play—whether they are building, creating, pretending, or discovering the world around them.

Each room is carefully equipped with a wide range of high-quality, age-appropriate toys and resources that spark curiosity and make learning fun and meaningful.

At Stepping Stones, we believe that every child is unique, capable, and full of potential. Our ethos is centred on creating a nurturing environment where children feel happy, confident, and secure enough to be themselves. We value kindness, respect, and strong relationships, working in partnership with families to support each child's individual journey. Through play-based learning and meaningful experiences, we encourage curiosity, independence, and a lifelong love of learning, helping every child take their next steps with confidence.

We would be delighted to welcome you for a visit so you can experience our nursery in person. Please feel free to contact us at any time to arrange a tour or to ask any questions—we're always happy to help.

Yours sincerely
For Stepping Stones Day Nursery

J. Finneran

Jacqueline Finneran
Nursery Owner

## Welcome to our rooms

Our nursery is thoughtfully organised into four main rooms, each carefully designed to support children at every stage of their early development, from 6 weeks to 5 years.

### The Baby Room (6 weeks – 16/18 months – Ratio 1:3)

We understand that babies need gentle, attentive care, full of warmth and reassurance. Our Baby Room provides a calm, cosy, and homely environment where your child can feel safe, secure, and loved.

With a wide range of sensory toys and resources, we support early development through exploration and play. There's always time for cuddles, quiet moments, and nurturing interactions with our caring, qualified staff.

We follow each baby's individual routine, ensuring their needs are met just as they would be at home. To keep you connected, we provide daily updates through our online system, iConnect, giving you a detailed and reassuring insight into your child's day while supporting strong communication between home and nursery.

### Duckling room (16 – 24 months - Ratio 1:3 )

As children grow, so does their curiosity and independence. Our Duckling Room offers a warm and welcoming space where toddlers can begin to explore more freely while still enjoying a cosy, comforting environment.

Here, children are introduced to a wide range of hands-on, creative activities including sand, water, and paint play—encouraging sensory exploration and self-expression.

Our experienced staff closely support each child's development and complete the required EYFS progress check at age two. This helps us understand your child's individual needs and ensures we continue to nurture their development every step of the way.

### Cygnet room (2- 3 years - Ratio. 1:4)

Our Cygnet Room is a vibrant, spacious environment full of energy, curiosity, and discovery. With dedicated areas for messy play, sensory exploration, construction, role play, and creative activities, children are encouraged to learn through doing.

At this stage, we gently support children in becoming more independent—whether that's during mealtimes, sleep routines, or personal care. Our caring staff are always nearby to guide, encourage, and celebrate each achievement.

With direct access to outdoor play and children's bathroom facilities, the room is designed to promote confidence, independence, and a sense of responsibility, while ensuring children feel supported as they grow and develop.

## Pre School Room (3 – 5 years - Ratio 1:8)

Our Pre-School Room is designed to prepare children for their exciting next step into school. We focus on building confidence, independence, and strong social skills through a wide range of engaging, play-based experiences.

Led by our highly qualified team, children are encouraged to explore, question, and learn in a fun and supportive environment. Activities are carefully planned to inspire curiosity while supporting each child's individual learning journey.

Children also enjoy access to their own outdoor area, rich in natural materials. This space encourages creativity, problem-solving, and imaginative play, helping children develop essential skills while enjoying the freedom to explore.

***Please see below for answers to some of our most frequently asked questions. We hope this helps provide further insight as you consider the right setting for your child.***

## Settling in and Pre Visits

We understand that starting nursery is a big step—for both children and parents. That's why we offer flexible pre-visits to help everyone feel comfortable, confident, and ready.

Pre-visits usually begin around a 2 weeks before your child's start date, although we are happy to adapt these to suit your family's needs. The first visit is typically around 30 minutes, giving you and your child time to explore the room, meet the team, and begin to feel at home.

During the second visit, which usually lasts between one hour and an hour and a half, parents are encouraged to settle their child before leaving them with our staff for a short period. We gradually build up the length of time your child stays with us, ensuring the transition feels natural and reassuring.

All pre-visits are completely free of charge, and you are welcome to have as many as you feel necessary. We also encourage you to bring along comfort items, such as a favourite toy or blanket, to help your child feel secure.

## Diaries/iConnect System

We use our online system, *iConnect*, to keep you fully connected to your child's day. Each day, our staff update your child's diary with information about meals, sleep, activities, and care routines.

In addition, every child has their own online learning journey, where we share photographs, observations, and examples of their work. This allows you to see their progress, celebrate milestones, and stay involved in their development every step of the way.

## Key workers

When your child joins us, they will be assigned a dedicated key worker. This special person builds a strong bond with your child, helping them feel safe, secure, and supported.

Your child's key worker will also maintain their iConnect profile and will be your main point of contact for any questions or discussions about your child's development and wellbeing.

## Nappies and wipes

We kindly ask parents to provide nappies and wipes for their child. These are stored in a named basket, and staff will let you know when supplies are running low.

Providing these in bulk helps make daily routines easier for both parents and staff.

## Outdoor Play & Clothing

Outdoor play is a very important part of our daily routine, and we enjoy spending time outside in all types of weather. Fresh air and outdoor exploration provide wonderful opportunities for children to learn, develop, and have fun.

To ensure your child is comfortable and able to fully take part in all activities, we kindly ask that they come to nursery with appropriate clothing for the weather. This may include warm coats, hats, gloves, and wellies during colder or wet months, and lighter clothing and sun hats in warmer weather.

We also offer the provision of **Nivea Factor 50 sun cream** for a small additional fee. This allows our team to ensure consistent application throughout the day, giving you peace of mind that your child is protected while enjoying outdoor play. Many families find this to be a convenient and reliable option.

We believe there is no such thing as bad weather—only unsuitable clothing! With the right preparation, children can enjoy outdoor play all year round, whether they are splashing in puddles, exploring nature, or enjoying the sunshine.

All items should be clearly labelled with your child's name, and we recommend keeping spare clothing at nursery where possible.

## Extra sessions

If you require additional sessions outside your usual booking, please speak to a member of the team or contact the office. We will always do our best to accommodate your request, subject to availability. Any extra sessions will be invoiced accordingly.

## Allergies and dietary requirements

Our nursery cook is happy to cater for children with allergies or specific dietary requirements. We will provide you with a full menu for your approval, ensuring your child's needs are met safely and carefully.

All of our staff, as well as our cook, are trained in Level 2 Food Hygiene and Allergy Awareness. This ensures that everyone involved in your child's care understands the importance of managing allergies safely and maintaining the highest standards of food preparation and handling.

We take allergies and dietary needs very seriously and work closely with parents to ensure each child is supported in a safe, inclusive, and caring environment.

## Medication

We are able to administer prescribed medication with prior parental consent. Unfortunately, we are unable to give unprescribed or over-the-counter medicines, such as cough syrups.

## Funding

We are pleased to offer government-funded childcare for eligible children, in partnership with Gateshead Council. Funding is available from the term after your child turns 9 months and this will follow them throughout their nursery journey.

At Stepping Stones, funded sessions are available as 5-hour or 10-hour days, designed to provide a structured and flexible approach to fit your family's needs. Funding can be used either as stretched hours across the year or as term-time only, giving you the freedom to choose the best arrangement for your child.

For 3-year-olds, funding entitlement is updated from the term following their birthday, when children move into our Pre-School room, a small meal fee is applied to cover freshly prepared, balanced meals.

Our friendly team is on hand to guide you through eligibility, session options, and any questions you may have. We aim to make accessing funded childcare simple, flexible, and tailored to your family—while maintaining the highest standards of care, learning, and outdoor play.

## Nursery opening times

Our nursery is open from 8:00am to 6:00pm, Monday to Friday, for 51 weeks of the year. We are closed on bank holidays and for three additional days between Christmas and New Year.

We also offer a pre-booked early start from 7:30am for a small additional fee.

## Nursery Sessions

We recommend that children attend at least two half sessions per week or one full day, as this helps them settle more quickly and feel comfortable in the nursery environment.

We aim to be as flexible as possible and offer a variety of session options:

- Full Day: 8:00am – 6:00pm
- Morning Session: 8:00am –12:45pm
- Afternoon Session: 1:15pm – 6:00pm

## Fees and payment

The below chart shows the nursery fee structure from September 2025-August 2026.

| Sessions | 6 weeks – pre-school | Pre-school |
|---|---|---|
| Full time (Mon-Fri) | £369.00 | £346.50 |
| Full day | £82.00 | £77.00 |
| AM or Pm session | £52.00 | £49.00 |
| Ealy starts | £5.00 | £5.00 |
| Meals | £2.75 | £2.75 |

**A one-month written notice is required to terminate your nursery place.**

We offer a variety of payment options, including all childcare vouchers and online payment methods. Our preferred method is a monthly standing order or Tax-Free Childcare**,** received by the 1st of each month for the month ahead. When your child starts nursery, you will receive a statement of account outlining your fees and payment schedule.

Nursery fees are calculated over 50 weeks per year**,** allowing parents two weeks of annual holiday. Please note that fees are not refundable for illness or absence.

From time to time, we welcome specialist external providers such as Little Kickers or other activity sessions. Additional charges may apply for these services, which will be communicated to parents in advance.

We pride ourselves on offering flexible childcare**,** understanding that families often need options to fit around work or other commitments. Wherever possible, and subject to availability, we aim to accommodate your individual requirements and any additional

sessions outside of your normal attendance can be booked, subject to availability —please contact the nursery office to discuss your specific needs.

## Inclusion

At Stepping Stones, we are committed to providing the best possible experiences and learning opportunities for every child. Our nursery is fully inclusive and accessible to children, parents, and visitors from across the local community.

We actively promote diversity and inclusive practices**,** welcoming children of all abilities and backgrounds. If your child has any individual needs, we encourage you to discuss these with us so we can work together to help them thrive and reach their full potential**.**

# Thank You

Thank you for taking the time to explore our nursery and learn more about what we offer. We look forward to welcoming you and your child to Stepping Stones Day Nursery and sharing the exciting journey ahead.

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# Testimonies

*''My daughter joined Stepping Stones at 2 years old after not settling at another setting, staff were so lovely and reassuring about settling her in, she is now in preschool and she has absolutely loves her time there, I am so grateful to Stepping Stones for everything they have done for my daughter'' – Parent 2026*

*''I seen a big difference in my son from him starting at Stepping Stones, the staff always made myself and him feel so welcomed and supported and it was so lovely hearing what he had gotten up to during his day!'' – Parent 2025*

*''Thank you for everything you have done for my daughter she absolutely loves coming to nursery and that is down to the all the fun and care you have given her'' – Parent 2026*

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