

# First Steps Kindergarten

Inspection report for early years provision

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	200593
<b>Inspection date</b>	13 March 2007
<b>Inspector</b>	Diane Ashplant
<b>Setting Address</b>	42 Arlington Avenue, Leamington Spa, Warwickshire, CV32 5UD
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<b>Registered person</b>	Sue Southworth
<b>Type of inspection</b>	Integrated
<b>Type of care</b>	Full day care

## ABOUT THIS INSPECTION

The purpose of this inspection is to assure government, parents and the public of the quality of childcare and, if applicable, of nursery education. The inspection was carried out under Part XA Children Act 1989 as introduced by the Care Standards Act 2000 and, where nursery education is provided, under Schedule 26 of the School Standards and Framework Act 1998.

This report details the main strengths and any areas for improvement identified during the inspection. The judgements included in the report are made in relation to the outcomes for children set out in the Children Act 2004; the National Standards for under 8s day care and childminding; and, where nursery education is provided, the *Curriculum guidance for the foundation stage*.

The report includes information on any complaints about the childcare provision which Ofsted has received since the last inspection or registration or 1 April 2004 whichever is the later.

### The key inspection judgements and what they mean

*Outstanding: this aspect of the provision is of exceptionally high quality*

*Good: this aspect of the provision is strong*

*Satisfactory: this aspect of the provision is sound*

*Inadequate: this aspect of the provision is not good enough*

For more information about early years inspections, please see the booklet *Are you ready for your inspection?* which is available from Ofsted's website: [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk).

## THE QUALITY AND STANDARDS OF THE CARE AND NURSERY EDUCATION

On the basis of the evidence collected on this inspection:

The quality and standards of the care are good. The registered person meets the National Standards for under 8s day care and childminding.

The quality and standards of the nursery education are good.

### WHAT SORT OF SETTING IS IT?

First Steps Kindergarten opened in 1998 and is one of three privately owned nurseries in the area. It operates from both floors of a property set in a residential area of Leamington Spa. All three age groups of children have their own base room on the ground floor with appropriate toilets and changing area, with the pre-school having access to the first floor for meals. All children have access to a spacious and fully enclosed garden for outdoor play which is divided into different areas for older and younger children. The nursery is registered to care for a maximum 49 children at any one time. Children attend for a variety of sessions and come from the local and wider area.

There are currently 46 children aged under four years on roll, of which 22 are in receipt of funding for early years education. The nursery is open every weekday from 08:00 to 17:30hrs all year round, except bank holidays and Christmas week.

There are currently fourteen staff who work with the children of whom all hold an appropriate early years qualification.

## THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

### **Helping children to be healthy**

The provision is good.

Children's health is well promoted through their opportunities to move freely around the rooms and to engage in adventurous daily outdoor play sessions in the large enclosed garden. Here children enjoy playing games with the parachute and use large equipment and wheeled toys to practise their co-ordination skills such as peddling, balancing, swinging and climbing. Inside, they share in music and movement sessions and action games where they have fun exercising different limbs. Staff carry out thorough cleaning routines to ensure the rooms and equipment are clean and hygienic and maintain efficient nappy changing practices to limit any cross infection. Children have their own named cots, beds and individual linen boxes. Children are learning to carry out their own routines to promote their health such as hand washing before eating and many confidently pull the chain and wash hands without any guidance after using the toilet. Most staff hold a current first aid certificate which means they are fully aware of how to act in the event of an accident or illness to protect children's health and all recording of accidents and medication is appropriately carried out.

Children benefit from a well-balanced and nutritious menu which is freshly prepared in the nursery kitchen and displayed for parents to see. Babies' routines are well known and any individual dietary needs are discussed carefully at registration and recorded so all staff are aware. Snack time provides healthy choices and opportunities for experiencing different tastes such as a range of unusual fruits. These choices coupled with discussion and creative activities around healthy foods and teeth helps the children realise the importance of what they eat in promoting their health. Older children are developing independent skills as they help serve themselves and clear away after. Children and staff engage in a social time around the meal table and children are encouraged to enjoy their food and practise good table manners. Children have regular drinks to keep them hydrated and older children can access fresh water at all times.

### **Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe**

The provision is good.

Children's safety is well attended to at the nursery which means they can move safely around this child-orientated environment as staff are generally well aware of all hazards and have taken appropriate action to protect children from these. At the beginning of every day a visual risk assessment of the nursery takes place and this is continued by staff throughout their working day to ensure all areas used by children are safe. However, some items such as stray leads and pins for securing paperwork may pose a risk to children. All resources and equipment are chosen with regard to children's safety and suitability and these are regularly checked for maintenance and either set out on the floor or in low storage units so that children can access them independently and safely. Children are learning to keep themselves safe as they respond to the guidelines in place and are encouraged by staff to think about the possible implications of certain actions. For example, they understand the need to clear away toys so they do not provide any tripping hazards and older ones move in a very orderly manner up and down the stairs as they walk to one side and hold on to the banisters. Regular discussion with staff and specific activities, for example around road safety involving visiting police officers, provides active role play sessions with equipment which reinforces children's awareness of personal safety. There is an appropriate balance between supervision by staff and encouraging independence in the older children as they, for example, use their prowess on the climbing frame and bars outside.

All appropriate policies and procedures are in place to ensure children's safety at all times such as clear outing procedures and safe collection so that only known adults collect children. All children take part in regular fire evacuation drills and staff are fully aware of the procedures to ensure children are kept safe.

Children's welfare is safeguarded by the staff's clear understating of their role and responsibilities as regards child protection which is reinforced through induction and regular in-house training. This means that all staff understand the importance of passing on any concerns appropriately. There is a comprehensive policy statement which is shared effectively with parents together with other appropriate information.

### **Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do**

The provision is outstanding.

Children of all ages benefit from this very positive and caring environment where they are engaged and stimulated through a carefully planned programme which is linked effectively into the 'Birth to three framework' and provides a wealth of different sensory and explorative experiences for young children. For example, babies enjoy making patterns with foam and young children create pictures as they blow bubbles or make hand prints. The nursery offers a bright and inviting play and learning environment with lots of displays of children's work around which helps them develop their confidence as they proudly identify their own creations. Staff provide a good balance of free and more structured sessions allowing children to initiate their own play as they expand their imagination in the home corner or regularly use the outdoor space to develop their awareness of space and movement. Enjoyable and fun activities are effectively used to extend children's understanding. For example, an exciting session with the parachute helps children to take turns, identify colours and individual characteristics and develop physical skills. Children confidently adapt to the daily routine, lining up at meal times or recognising their symbol on their chair for story time. Positive and extending conversation from staff develops children's interest and understanding as they engage in shared activities. Baby staff are very responsive and interactive with the children and clearly enjoy their time spent with them as they warmly engage on their level and encourage their exploration with lots of smiles, talk and eye contact. All activities are regularly evaluated to make sure they are effective in engaging and interesting the children and helping them develop in all areas, and well-planned themed topics provide constant variation.

### **Nursery Education.**

The quality of teaching and learning is outstanding. Staff who work with the funded children have a very secure knowledge of the Foundation Stage and how young children learn. They are consistently alert to ways of stimulating children's growing minds and use every opportunity to develop their interest and extend their learning through the inspiration and enthusiasm of their teaching. They know and listen to individual children very well which makes all children feel valued and special and helps their growing self-esteem. The vibrant learning environment provides three different areas for children to use which are adorned by bright and attractive displays and children's creations. An excellent range of resources support children's learning in all areas and offers many exciting opportunities for discovery and challenge. The daily and weekly programme is very well planned to provide opportunities for structured and more free play sessions and also regular outdoor play. Older and younger children are given separate activities during the session which enables each child to be supported and encouraged at their particular level of understanding. Staff are currently experimenting with more free flow activities at the end of the week to give children a greater choice of self-selection, which further develops

their independence. Staff relate to children very well; they listen with genuine interest as they recall family events and very effectively reinforce and extend children's learning through using open questions and reflection on past discussions. Staff are able to differentiate very clearly between the abilities of individual children supported by their comprehensive and well-documented monitoring processes. Each child is exceedingly well motivated towards their individual goals by staff who every six weeks use these assessments to plan effectively for the next steps in each child's learning.

Children use language very competently to share experiences and express feelings as they talk with staff and their companions. For example, they explain what different fruits smell, taste and feel like at snack time or describe in detail items brought from home at the show and tell session, confidently using words like 'juggernaut'. They show a spontaneous enjoyment in books as they choose their own or listen with rapt attention at story time. All children are able to recognise their own name as they self-register. They attempt writing for different purposes as, for example, some make marks as they record appointments at the 'hairdresser's' while others write their names on paintings. Children use numbers through the everyday routines such as counting the days of the week at register time or children round the table while others enjoy doing simple addition and subtraction sums with the large foam numbers. They have many opportunities to use shape, space and measure as they enjoy puzzles, make sequences with pegs, and create different shapes with the construction straws. Most children confidently use positional language as they identify who is sitting 'next to' or 'opposite' them at the table. They have a wide range of opportunities to express themselves and explore different mediums in creative play and enjoy making music and listen to different instruments from around the world. They become totally immersed as they mirror adult roles in the hairdresser's, recording appointments on the list or washing and styling each other's hair. Children also learn to value the diversity within the world as they learn about different festivals such as St Patrick's Day and Diwali. They marvel at nature as they grow sunflowers and cress or watch different birds eating from the feeders which they have made. They competently handle tools such as scissors and understand the techniques of the computer. Children have many first hand experiences to inspire and wonder at such as watching the changes in ice cubes or examining the seeds of a pomegranate and learning how this becomes their friends' drink. Children at this nursery make very good relationships with staff and each other and very confidently talk within a large group. They are developing positive self images as they recognise their place in their family, community and the wider world. Behaviour is generally very good which means children concentrate very well on their chosen task both independently or in small groups and therefore enjoy and fully benefit from the many social and intellectual opportunities they receive.

### **Helping children make a positive contribution**

The provision is good.

All children are welcomed into this bright and attractive child-orientated environment and are encouraged to settle in easily through the allocation of key workers who liaise closely with parents. All necessary information is shared and recorded at this time so staff become familiar with children's needs which helps children feel secure and content. Children soon develop a sense of their own individuality through staff who get to know them well and encourage them to share experiences and family events. This, along with outside visitors to the nursery, also develops their understanding of the community in which they live. Within the daily routine children are able to choose from a wide range of play and learning resources which include those which reflect the wider world. Their understanding of the diversity is well fostered through open and positive discussion and activities around cultural celebrations such as Chinese New

Year, St Patrick's Day and Easter. Children also enjoy the experience of tasting different foods in connection with various cultural celebrations. Staff are very aware that some children have specific needs and were able to demonstrate through discussion how they would support and involve all children. Both the manager and some staff have experience in helping children with disabilities and learning difficulties and know the importance of liaising closely with parents and accessing outside support to help all children feel included.

Children at the nursery behave well. They learn from the start the importance of sharing and playing well with their companions and develop a real sense of their own value through the attention and encouragement they receive from staff. Consequently children are learning to respond to the reminders from staff such as lining up or sitting well at tables and they generally concentrate and listen well. Older children demonstrate very good social skills such as manners and talk confidently with friends and staff. They show developing independence as they play confidently on their own or in groups and help with tasks such as serving their own food and clearing up afterwards. Some are naturally beginning to show negotiation skills and be sensitive to the needs of others. Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered.

Partnership with parents is good and the close liaison with the key worker enables appropriate information to be shared from the start, both through documentation and regular discussion. Several notice boards throughout the nursery display important information, including photos of activities and programme planning and a regular newsletter keeps parents up-to-date with all relevant news such as special events and topics. Staff talk frequently with parents as they share the daily report and items of work their children have done, such as the pencil skills books for the older children. All planning and assessment for younger children is based around the 'Birth to three matters' framework which is shared on a six weekly basis with parents so they are fully aware of how their child is getting on. Parents are invited to join in social events like the Easter Bonnet parade and are always warmly welcomed on arrival.

Partnership with parents and carers of funded children is good. There are displays around the pre-school rooms about the Foundation Stage and the short and long term plans, notices and newsletters keep them up-to-date with the current themes and topics. The prospectus clearly explains for parents what the different areas of learning mean and how their child's progress is assessed. However, although staff know children who move through the nursery well, there is limited information taken about a new child's development level which means that staff are not fully aware of every child's starting point. Parents are well informed about their child's progress through the regular assessment records which are shared on a six weekly basis with them when plans for their next steps are fully discussed. Some children also take home books and games to enjoy with their parents. This ensures that parents are kept well informed and can share effectively in their child's learning and celebrate their successes.

## **Organisation**

The organisation is outstanding.

The nursery is very well organised to enable all children to feel secure and happy and to explore their environment by engaging in a well planned daily routine full of rich play and learning experiences. The owner has a very clear vision of the importance of providing firm foundations from which all children can build their future learning and grow towards their potential. The staff provide a very consistent and experienced team, many who have been there for several years. This means they know the nursery and children very well and work very effectively together to create a challenging and exciting programme for all ages within a happy and comfortable environment. All appropriate recruitment and selection procedures are in place to

ensure the suitability of those who work with the children. All staff hold a relevant childcare qualification and on-going professional development is well promoted through an appraisal system and a very good commitment to further training. Staff are actively encouraged to contribute their ideas in the regular staff meetings which helps them feel valued and they have a real sense of involvement in the nursery through the delegation of particular roles and responsibilities. The owner provides an active presence within the nursery where she enthusiastically engages with children and staff on a regular basis. This means she is very effectively able to monitor practice and support and inspire her staff as well as being very approachable to parents.

All the required paperwork for the efficient and safe management of the nursery is in place and this is regularly reviewed to ensure it is kept up-to-date. All staff are fully aware of the daily records needed to ensure the welfare of all children and these are very effectively maintained throughout the nursery.

Leadership and management for nursery education is good. All staff who work with the pre-school children have a good understanding of the Foundation Stage and have created a vibrant learning environment and a well-planned and interesting programme which continually engages and inspires the children. Activities are routinely evaluated to ensure they are effective in helping children enjoy and achieve and each child's individual progress is closely monitored with action for the next steps regularly set. Parents are effectively involved in regular discussions and plans for their child's learning and are also encouraged to share their opinions of the nursery and their child's development. The owner and staff have a strong commitment to providing quality education for each child and offering all children a full range of positive experiences from which they can grow into confident and balanced adults. Overall, the provision meets the needs of the range of children for whom it provides.

### **Improvements since the last inspection**

At the last inspection there were three recommendations set relating to children's safety around the kitchen, the recording of medication and the children's access to resources. Older children have their meals on the first floor where the kitchen is situated. When the kitchen door is not shut children are always supervised and know they must not enter the kitchen. The procedures for the administration of any medication given to children are appropriately recorded and younger children have improved access to resources with more now situated at a low level.

### **Complaints since the last inspection**

Since the last inspection there have been no complaints made to Ofsted that required the provider or Ofsted to take any action in order to meet the National Standards.

The provider is required to keep a record of complaints made by parents, which they can see on request. The complaint record may contain complaints other than those made to Ofsted.

## THE QUALITY AND STANDARDS OF THE CARE AND NURSERY EDUCATION

On the basis of the evidence collected on this inspection:

The quality and standards of the care are good. The registered person meets the National Standards for under 8s day care and childminding.

The quality and standards of the nursery education are good.

### WHAT MUST BE DONE TO SECURE FUTURE IMPROVEMENT?

#### **The quality and standards of the care**

To improve the quality and standards of care further the registered person should take account of the following recommendation(s):

- review the processes for risk assessment to identify and address all hazards to children's safety such as drawing pins and trailing leads

#### **The quality and standards of the nursery education**

To improve the quality and standards of nursery education further the registered person should take account of the following recommendation(s):

- further extend the information gained from parents in order to improve staff's knowledge of each child's starting point.

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the leaflet *Complaints about Ofsted Early Years: concerns or complaints about Ofsted's role in regulating and inspecting childcare and early education (HMI ref no 2599)* which is available from Ofsted's website: [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)