



First Opportunities Group

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	151094
Inspection date	28 September 2005
Inspector	Marilyn Joy
Setting Address	C/O Ashley Junior School, Ashley Road, New Milton, Hampshire, BH25 5BP
Telephone number	01425 629632
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Registered person	First Opportunities
Type of inspection	Integrated
Type of care	Sessional 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

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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 Opportunities opened in 1974. It is an independent registered charity, funded by donations from the community and from parents. It is devoted exclusively to the early year's therapy play education of children with special educational needs. Liaison is maintained with therapists from the Primary Care Trust and the Educational Psychologist from the local authority. The charity has a board of trustees and a management committee. Each has a majority representation of current and past

parents. It is based in a play room made available by Ashley Junior School and serves mainly the New Forest and some parts of East Dorset.

The group has two distinct levels: First Steps and Second Steps. First Steps is from 'birth' to approximately 3 years, depending on development, and Second Steps is from approximately 3 years to the start of full-time education. Sessions are from 09:15 until 11:45. First Steps is on Mondays and Wednesdays and Second Steps is on Tuesdays and Thursdays during term time. Registration is for up to 18 children per session. There are currently 14 children on the roll of whom 5 receive nursery education funding.

There are four full-time and four part-time staff who work directly with the children. There are five members of staff with a relevant early years qualification and one member of staff is working towards a qualification.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Children's health and welfare is given careful consideration. Particular care is taken to ensure the environment is clean and the spread of infection is prevented. Effective hygiene procedures are observed by all staff. Children are encouraged to develop an awareness of health and hygiene practices for themselves, such as washing their hands. Children's individual health and dietary requirements are met because staff have a sound knowledge of what they are. There are clear procedures in place for the administration of medication and responding to accidents and incidents, however some written records are not completed appropriately so parents are not fully aware of the care their child has received.

A healthy lifestyle is encouraged through the provision of healthy and nutritious snacks and regular exercise. Children enjoy daily physical play in the gym where they have the opportunity to use a variety of equipment to develop skills for riding, throwing, crawling and sliding. Older children begin to develop spatial awareness as they manoeuvre the bikes and cars around the room whilst some concentrate on following the lines with their walker. Children learn to control their bodies. Specific tasks and good support from staff helps them maximise their potential.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

Children are cared for in a welcoming, safe and secure environment. They are presented with a good range of developmentally appropriate resources when they arrive and organised rotation ensures their interest is maintained. Specialist equipment is obtained to support children's individual needs and enable them to take part in activities. A cosy area is available where babies and non-mobile children can be cuddled or explore toys safely. Thorough risk assessments are completed

regularly and appropriate measures put in place to ensure children's safety at all times. Evacuation procedures are practised and staff are aware of their responsibilities to ensure children are evacuated quickly, although there are limited details in the fire log book to show whether it was carried out at different times during the session and how efficiently it was achieved.

Children's welfare is safeguarded because there are good systems in place to protect children. Staff have a clear understanding of child protection issues and their responsibilities, although written procedures do not contain sufficient detail to show how children will be protected should an allegation be made against a member of staff. The premises are secure and children are only released to known persons.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

Children receive sensitive and knowledgeable support from staff to enable them to participate fully in the session. Clear systems are in place to plan and provide suitable activities that children enjoy and where they can make progress. Children's language and communication skills are effectively promoted by skilled and experienced staff who express themselves clearly. Makaton is used throughout the session to help children communicate with staff and each other. Children welcome each other at circle time and are introduced to the topic of the week. They smile and respond well to staff.

Children are keen to experiment with painting and craft activities. They are encouraged to develop independence and wash their hands afterwards. Some are fascinated and spend time looking at themselves in the mirror as they clean their faces. They have time and encouragement as they work towards achieving simple tasks for themselves, such as sweeping up the sand. Children acquire and practise new skills. They are relaxed and happy as they move around the playroom choosing what they want to play with.

Individual education plans are prepared in partnership with other agencies and parents, and all children receive individual support to assist them in achieving their targets. Thorough evaluation on a daily basis means key workers have a sound knowledge of what children can do which enables them to plan the specific targets for their development. In agreement with parents information about children's care and learning is sometimes shared with other day care providers. There is, however, little formal contact on a regular basis to exchange details about children's next steps for learning to ensure a consistent approach in supporting their all round development.

Nursery Education

The quality of teaching and learning is good. Inspirational and enthusiastic teaching engages children's interest in the activities offered. Children's personal, social and emotional development is effectively promoted. Clear routines and opportunities to practise enables children to work towards achieving tasks for themselves, making

choices and becoming independent. Children are continually praised and valued which helps them to develop confidence and self-esteem.

Individual education plans set clear targets for children's specific needs which are effectively monitored and assessed by staff, although they are less confident in using the stepping stones and Foundation Stage to monitor and plan their next steps in all areas of learning. Children's achievements are recorded daily and shared with parents. Termly plans are linked to a theme and encompass a variety of activities to promote children's learning in most areas. Equal emphasis is not given to all aspects in each area of learning or fully consider individual children's all round learning, for example offering children regular access to tools for mark making or opportunities to become familiar with sounds and letters. Children are introduced to simple technology such as battery operated toys in the home corner and some learn to use the controls for the computer. Children enjoy looking at books and listening to stories. Some children recognise their name, although opportunities to do so are infrequent.

Children are introduced to mathematical concepts and language during many activities, although reference to numbers and counting is less frequent. They become aware of size, shape and colour. They learn positional language when putting objects in, on or under. Children experience a wide range of activities throughout the year and many are linked to the theme. They make car tracks in the sand, paint aeroplanes and make boats during the transport topic. They explore various media and materials such as sand and water, create their own three dimension models, experiment with growing seeds and tasting food. Occasionally they explore the outdoor environment when they go for a walk around the school grounds. Children enjoy singing and playing an instrument. They express themselves freely when painting and become confident in making their wishes known such as which colour paint they want to use.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

Children's individual needs are met because staff know the children well and understand what they are. Children demonstrate a clear sense of belonging and develop strong bonds with their key worker. Their self-confidence is encouraged well because they receive frequent praise and encouragement. Children become aware of what is expected through consistent and repeated daily routines. They often become engrossed in their own play and are developing their social skills through good support from staff. Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered.

Equality of opportunity is evident in the accessibility of activities for all children. Children begin to become aware of other cultures and beliefs through termly topics, although there are few positive images reflecting the diversity of society within the resources in order to extend their growing awareness. Effective procedures are in place for supporting children with special needs. A strong emphasis is given to working in partnership with other agencies, although encouraging a consistent approach between all the day care settings children attend is not fully promoted.

Partnership with parents is outstanding. Parents receive an excellent range of information about the setting, its policies and procedures. The daily routines and plans are displayed on the notice board so they are aware of the activities their child is going to be involved in. Detailed daily discussions with each parent means they are exceptionally well-informed of their child's progress and well-being. Individual arrangements are made for parents who are unable to meet with staff daily to ensure they are equally well-informed. A high priority is given to supporting parents and maintaining confidentiality, which contributes to parents and children feeling confident and secure.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

A well-organised environment is offered where children are happy and settled. Space is used well to provide clear and safe areas for children to play. Robust recruitment and employment procedures ensure children are cared for by knowledgeable and experienced staff. Children's care is managed by staff who have a clear understanding of their roles and responsibilities. A range of policies and procedures are in place to ensure the smooth running of the setting, although some written procedures do not reflect practice. Most documentation is in place although some is not maintained appropriately. Children's records are detailed, stored securely and assist staff in responding to children's needs.

Leadership and management is good. Leaders have a focussed vision for the group and are committed to the ongoing development of the provision. Training is encouraged and valued for the new ideas that staff bring back to the group. A strong emphasis is given to the personal development and achievement of children. Some aspects of the provision are monitored and evaluated, although there is not a systematic approach to ensure all aspects of learning are given equal coverage. Positive outcomes for children are promoted because staff work extremely well together and have a high regard for children's care and well-being. Children make good progress towards the early learning goals and achieving their potential. The setting meets the needs of the range of children for whom it provides.

Improvements since the last inspection

At the last care inspection the setting was asked to provide parents with written details of the groups policies and procedures and request written permission from parents for seeking emergency medical care. Both of these issues have been fully addressed. Copies of the policies and procedures are available in the parents' room and brief details are included in the prospectus, so all parents have access to information about how the care of their child is organised and what they should do if they are concerned. A request for parental consent to seek emergency medical care is now included on all children's registration forms should it be required.

In respect of the nursery education the setting was asked to provide more opportunities for children to hear and use numbers in daily activities and to consider ways of providing children with access to outside play. Numbers and counting are

included in some routine activities although not sufficiently for all children. Regular opportunities for children to play outside are not provided at present. A possible outdoor area has been identified and the setting is continuing to work towards the development of a dedicated outdoor play area for the children.

Complaints since the last inspection

There are no complaints to report.

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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):

- update documentation to ensure the following records are maintained confidentially and in sufficient detail, namely the fire log, medication, accident and incident records, and ensure that the child protection policy reflects practise
- find ways to promote working in partnership with other day care providers to ensure a consistent approach to planning and supporting children's ongoing development

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):

- develop staffs' understanding of how to use the stepping stones to provide opportunities on a daily basis for children to develop in each aspect of learning
- provide opportunities for children to become familiar with numbers, sounds and letters, and have regular access to tools for writing and mark-making

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