



First Steps Day Nursery

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	EY216277
Inspection date	17 February 2006
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Type of inspection	Integrated
Type of care	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.

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 satisfactory.

WHAT SORT OF SETTING IS IT?

First Steps Day Nursery is one of two provisions that are run by First Steps Day Nursery. It opened in 2001 and operates from its own 2 storey premises in the centre of Great Wilbraham, Cambridgeshire. A maximum of 35 children may attend the nursery at any one time. The nursery is open each weekday from 07:30 to 18:00 for 51 weeks of the year. All children share access to a secure enclosed outdoor play area.

There are currently 51 children aged from 0 to under 5 years on roll. Of these, 18 children receive funding for nursery education. Children come from a wide catchment area. The nursery currently supports a number of children with special educational needs.

The nursery employs 13 staff who work with children: 7 of the staff, including the manager, hold appropriate early years qualifications; 6 staff are working towards a relevant qualification.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is outstanding.

Children learn about personal hygiene through regular routines such as washing their hands before eating and they know that washing your hands 'gets rid of germs'. Staff act as excellent role models, wiping down surfaces before serving food and wearing slippers indoors, to help children to stay healthy. Effective procedures, such as wearing gloves for nappy changing, cleaning bathrooms and kitchen appliances, are carried out routinely by staff to make sure the nursery is scrupulously clean in all areas. Children learn about leading a healthy lifestyle through everyday, practical experiences. They are able to run around and exert themselves outdoors in the garden or on the nearby recreation ground, so that they learn the importance of regular fresh air and exercise. They develop new physical skills such as riding bicycles or climbing on the climbing frame and access a suitable range of small tools and equipment to acquire new manipulative skills.

Children's nutritional needs are extremely well met. Staff use computer software to help them plan a varied and well balanced range of meals for children. Food is freshly prepared each day by the very experienced cook, who takes account of children's allergies and special diets. Staff working with babies follow individual weaning programmes and feed children according to their own routine. Children choose fresh fruit and water or milk at snack time and can help themselves to a drink of water from the jug on the side when they want one. In addition, children learn about healthy eating in meaningful ways. They share stories about food; prepare fruit salad for lunch; grow cress, carrots and beans; and talk with adults about the importance of eating healthy food 'because it makes you grow big and strong'.

The needs of children under 3 years-old are very well met by adults who have a good understanding of their developmental needs. Babies have a sleep in a cot when they need it and older children can rest on comfortable snooze mats after lunch if they want to. A suitable range of large and small equipment inside and out enables babies and toddlers to develop new physical skills according to their stage of development. For example, babies explore the carefully selected items that staff provide in the 'treasure baskets'. They examine familiar items such as a spoon or food whisk, investigating the taste and texture with their tongue and mouth, developing co-ordination and manipulative dexterity.

If the children become unwell or have an accident whilst they are in the care of the

nursery, suitable records are in place to make sure that appropriate care is given.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is outstanding.

Children move around safely under the constant supervision of the nursery staff. Children learn how to keep themselves safe, waiting for their turn to come down the slide so that they do not bump into each other and reminding each other not to throw sand because 'it gets in your eyes'. High locks and stair gates prevent children from accessing areas that are not safe, such as the main entrance area, without adult supervision. In addition, children learn about staying safe outside the setting, holding hands with their key-worker if they go for a walk around the village or to the recreation ground. The Community Police Officer visits the nursery to help children to learn about 'stranger danger' and road safety. Children use resources that are appropriate for their age and stage of development; these are checked and cleaned regularly by the nursery staff to ensure they are in good condition and are safe.

Children's welfare is safeguarded and promoted by staff who hold current first aid certificates and have a very good understanding of child protection procedures, which are in line with those set out by the local Safeguarding Children Board. All staff receive child protection training during their induction at the nursery so that they are able to act in children's best interests. They record any existing injuries or concerns that they have for children's welfare and are confident to seek advice from child protection professionals if they need to.

An effective risk assessment of the premises is carried out by room leaders and this addresses any potential hazard to children's safety. In addition, staff are pro-active in keeping themselves informed of current guidelines that promote the safety of sleeping children, including checking the temperature and ventilation in the baby sleep-room.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

Children enjoy their time at the nursery and form good relationships with each other and key adults. They access a range of interesting activities that help them to learn. For example, they use musical instruments to learn about sound and rhythm: playing 'soft' or 'loud' sounds while singing familiar songs. Babies and toddlers actively explore colour and texture when they play on the floor with paint and smear it over their body. Children tell their own stories in the role play house, using the 'cooker' to make 'lunch' and 'talking to mummy' on the mobile telephone, while they learn about everyday technology and develop their imagination. They investigate and manipulate a wide range of interesting materials with their hands, such as shaving foam, jelly and ice, to learn about the world they live in, to develop their language and extend their thinking.

Staff working with under 3's plan activities in line with the 'Birth to three matters'

framework. Key-workers observe children daily and assess their development. However, they do not use children's progress records to help them to plan activities that build on children's existing skills. In addition, children are not always able to extend their learning beyond the planned learning intentions because they are unable to easily access further resources or to initiate their own activities.

Nursery Education

The quality of teaching and children's learning is satisfactory.

Children use their imagination in the role play 'cafe' or small world play. They engage in art and craft activities, such as making necklaces with pasta or building large scale 'junk models'. Children talk about numbers and use the language of mathematics at lunch time when they count tableware, discussing 'more' purple plates. They communicate effectively and use a wide range of vocabulary to express their ideas and talk about what they know. Staff skilfully extend children's thinking, asking questions to help them deduce that 'Australia is a very long way away; you need to go on an aeroplane'. Children talk about their families and discuss what they do at home, extending their understanding of culture and lifestyles. Good strategies are in place to enable children with special educational needs and those with English as an additional language to make progress.

Children listen well to stories at circle time, join in with repeated refrains and understand that print carries meaning. Children point to text and ask adults 'what does that say?'; they recognise their own name and older children know the initial sounds of familiar words. However, suitable resources are not easily accessible to enable them to read and write for a purpose or to use numbers and calculations in every-day activities and routines, or in role play situations. Some activities lack challenge for older or more able children. For example, sticking activities that involve the use of pre-cut shapes with no additional resources on the table, do not encourage children to learn to use scissors independently or to extend their learning beyond the planned learning intentions.

Staff working with funded 3 and 4-year-old children lack experience and knowledge of the Foundation Stage curriculum. They do not fully understand how the activities they provide contribute to children's progress towards the early learning goals. Curriculum plans lack detail and do not identify adequate resources; because 'free play' sessions are not included in the plans, staff can not be sure that they are providing a balance of activities over time. Key-workers carry out regular observations of children and are skilled in using them to evaluate children's progress. However, they do not use children's progress records to inform their planning so that activities offer appropriate challenge for all children and build on what they already know and can do. This impacts upon children's learning.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

Children show a good sense of belonging as they greet key-workers and each other upon arrival. They share experiences and talk about what they do at home when they

sit together for meals and snacks. Adults encourage children to work together co-operatively during group activities; children take turns to find pairs in the memory game. Adults provide careful explanations that young children can understand, to help children know what is expected of them and respect each other's needs. For example, when younger children throw sand, adults gently remind them not to 'or it will get in somebody's eyes'. Children have opportunities to learn about the world they live in and all members of society. They play with small world figures, look at books and take part in a wide range of cultural and religious celebrations. This enables children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development to be fostered.

However, children of all ages have limited opportunities to help themselves to additional resources or to initiate their own activities, except for those set out by staff. Whilst a portable drawer unit, with assorted mark-making resources is set up for older children, it remains in the Topic Room and is not accessible to children unless they use that room. This limits children's ability to extend their ideas and compromises their independence.

The partnership with parents and carers is good and contributes to children's overall well-being and the progress of children who receive funded nursery education. Parents receive very good information about nursery activities in regular newsletters, on the web site and notice boards around the nursery, so that they can support their child's learning at home. Key-workers share information informally with parents on a daily basis so that children's individual needs can be well met. An individual diary, with key-workers observations of what children have achieved each day, enables parents to be well informed about their children's progress. However, parents' observations of what their children achieve at home are not included in children's assessment records. This impacts upon staff's ability to plan activities that build on what children know.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

The nursery environment is well organised and promotes positive outcomes for children. Children access a suitable range of activities so that they are stimulated and make progress. The registered person uses effective recruitment procedures, which ensure that the staff have suitable qualifications to work with children. The induction programme and individual information file for each member of staff, provide up to date information to ensure that all members of the team are secure in their knowledge of procedures for child protection and maintaining children's overall safety. All legally required documentation, which contributes to children's health, safety and well-being, is in place and regularly reviewed.

The leadership and management of nursery education is satisfactory. Regular staff and management meetings ensure that everyone works together as a team. A comprehensive management structure enables responsibility to be delegated amongst members of the team who have appropriate skills and experience and promotes further professional development. However, due to recent changes, some staff working with funded children lack experience and have not received training in

the Foundation Stage. Furthermore, systems for monitoring the provision of nursery education have not yet been established; this impacts upon the quality of teaching and learning.

Overall, the provision meets the needs of all of the children who attend.

Improvements since the last inspection

Since the last inspection the nursery have made improvements to help babies enjoy what they do and achieve as much as they can; babies access a wide range of sensory experiences, such as paint, jelly and water play, so that they can learn about the world they live in. The nursery has also improved the prospectus and notice board displays with information for parents and carers. In addition, formal systems have been established to help parents to be updated on their children's progress, so that they are well informed and children's individual needs can be met. However, improvements that were made to the nursery education programme for funded 3 and 4-year-olds following the last inspection have not been maintained. This has impacted upon children's learning and as a result, further recommendations will be brought forward from this inspection.

Complaints since the last inspection

There have been no complaints made to Ofsted since the last inspection.

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

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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):

- provide children with opportunities to access additional resources freely and initiate their own activities, so that they can extend their knowledge beyond

the planned learning intentions, pursue their own interests and satisfy their natural curiosity as learners (also applies to nursery education)

- ensure the records for administration of medicines are maintained consistently in all rooms, to include parents' signature acknowledging each dose of medication that is given to their children so that they are properly informed

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 the systems for curriculum planning and assessing children's progress; ensure written plans have enough detail to enable staff to provide ample resources and understand how the activities contribute to learning. Use key-worker and parents' observations to plan a balanced range of activities that provide appropriate challenge and build on children's existing skills (also applies to care)
- develop the programmes for mathematics and communication, language and literacy so that children have more opportunities to use calculation, write numbers and develop early reading and writing skills in every-day activities and routines and in role play situations.

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