

First Steps Kindergarten

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique reference number	200593
Inspection date	26/02/2009
Inspector	Anne Felicity Taylor
Setting address	42 Arlington Avenue, Leamington Spa, Warwickshire, CV32 5UD
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Type of setting	Childcare - Non-Domestic

Introduction

This inspection was carried out by Ofsted under Sections 49 and 50 of the Childcare Act 2006 on the quality and standards of the registered early years provision. 'Early years provision' refers to provision regulated by Ofsted for children from birth to 31 August following their fifth birthday (the early years age group). The registered person must ensure that this provision complies with the statutory framework for children's learning, development and welfare, known as the *Early Years Foundation Stage*.

The provider must provide a copy of this report to all parents with children at the setting where reasonably practicable. The provider must provide a copy of the report to any other person who asks for one, but may charge a fee for this service (The Childcare (Inspection) Regulations 2008 regulations 9 and 10).

The setting also makes provision for children older than the early years age group which is registered on the voluntary and/or compulsory part(s) of the Childcare Register. This report does not include an evaluation of that provision, but a comment about compliance with the requirements of the Childcare Register is included in Annex B.

Description of the setting

First Steps Kindergarten is one of three nurseries in the country, owned and run by the same private providers. It opened in 1998 and operates from a converted four-storey house in central Leamington Spa, Warwickshire. Access to the main entrance is by several steps. Disabled access is provided through an alternative entrance and ramps are provided in several areas of the building. Facilities for the children are on the ground and first floors. All the children have their own base room on the ground floor with appropriate toilets and changing facilities, with the pre-school dining room on the first floor. 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. Children attend for a variety of sessions and come from the local community and the surrounding urban and rural areas.

The nursery is open from 08.00 to 17.30 on weekdays all year round, except bank holidays and Christmas week. Provision for early and late care is also available. The nursery is registered on the Early Years Register and the compulsory part of the Childcare Register to care for a maximum of 49 children at any one time. The nursery is also registered on the voluntary part of the Childcare Register. There are currently 50 children aged from six months to under five years on roll. Three and four-year-old children receive funding for education. The nursery is able to support children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, and children who speak English as an additional language.

There are 14 members of staff, the majority of whom hold appropriate early years qualifications at level three. Several members of staff are completing level four qualifications. All staff have opportunities to attend short courses and to add to their formal qualifications.

Overall effectiveness of the early years provision

Overall, the quality of the provision is good. Children are making good progress in their learning and development, whilst the setting generally ensures that necessary welfare requirements are met. Strong lines of communication are developed where key staff usually know each child for whom they are responsible very well, and therefore can meet individual needs. Links with local schools and parents means that generally all the children's needs are recognised and met, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Good methods of self-evaluation are in place enabling the setting to identify areas for improvement and to implement any identified change promptly.

What steps need to be taken to improve provision further?

To further improve the early years provision the registered person should:

- review the routine and activities for younger toddlers to ensure that individual needs are met with special reference to age-appropriate pursuits

- and flexible practice
- update written information available to parents in order to reflect the Early Years Foundation Stage.

The leadership and management of the early years provision

The manager and staff team are focused on offering a service to children and parents which meets each family's needs, therefore, enabling children to develop and learn in the friendly setting. Staff are supported and encouraged to add to their qualifications, and to complete short courses including first aid, behaviour management and the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS). This means that children are cared for by staff with the appropriate skills and qualifications, and that the owners and senior staff recognise the benefits of staff development. There are robust procedures in place that ensure the children are cared for by suitable people. All the required vetting processes are completed, and a comprehensive induction is completed with all new staff and students. Visitors are monitored and recorded. Therefore, children are protected very well.

Staff take on additional responsibilities, for example, Special Educational Needs Coordinator and as childcare managers. They recognise that team work in the nursery setting is a great benefit to the children. The staff team, supported by the manager, implement an in depth self-evaluation system, looking critically at their practice, therefore, demonstrating their capacity to improve. Regular staff meetings enable all the staff to discuss and plan the educational programme and to talk about any issues. Staff discuss and evaluate activities, considering how they can be adapted or extended to meet the interests of the children, be made more interesting, or more inclusive. This ensures that change and improvements can be put in place with the support of all the staff. However, the organisation of care of younger toddlers is not always reviewed effectively to ensure that it is always based on the EYFS guidance.

Procedures are in place that help to develop strong, open relationships with new parents and children, including settling in sessions. These are very beneficial because staff can assess care and learning needs specifically for each child. Generally, parents are offered clear information about the setting in the form of a booklet, notice boards and newsletters. However, some information is not up to date, compromising the accuracy of some details for parents. There are comprehensive child protection policies and procedures in place, which are understood by all the staff. Comprehensive risk assessments are in place and reviewed regularly. Therefore children are kept safe.

The quality and standards of the early years provision

The staff team is dedicated to providing a comprehensive and inclusive service to parents and children. They devise planning which can be adapted to meet children's individual interests. Planning for the babies and young children is clear and reflects the progress children make towards the early learning goals. However, sometimes routines and activities for younger toddlers are not age-appropriate, for

example, activities requiring prolonged periods of time sitting on chairs. This means that sometimes individual care and learning needs are not met. Babies are offered lots of cuddles and support as they leave their parent and as they play alongside friends. There is plenty of clear play space in the baby and toddler rooms, effectively encouraging good physical development and exploration. Musical and pop-up toys and an attractive variety of appropriate books ensures that babies develop well and have lots of fun. Music and movement sessions encourage balance effectively. Younger babies play 'peep-ho', and 'round and round the garden' with delight. Older toddlers are developing good independence skills as they put on their Wellington boots for outdoor play. They enjoy circle and ball games in the fresh air, benefiting their health and well-being. Babies and toddlers use their imaginations as they complete collage and painting activities.

The pre-school room is stimulating, bright and exciting for the children. There are den areas where children can role play, develop relationships or sit quietly to look at a book. They enjoy the creativity of making a 'lunar landscape' with foam. They learn about using equipment and observe change as they make biscuits and bird feeder balls. Children are offered valuable experiences studying nature as they complete gardening activities, and there is great excitement as they find some worms. Children have excellent opportunities to become familiar with everyday technology, supporting their future economic well-being. They are supported well by staff as they learn to use a key board and mouse with interesting programmes. Songs and music are used very well to encourage some simple maths, and to encourage the children to be aware of different emotions. Children are encouraged to be kind, helpful and considerate, and they behave very well.

Books, pictures and displays reinforce the inclusive practice in the nursery. Staff are vigilant about safety issues, and these are reinforced with the older children as they have a talk about safety, and act out a 'school crossing', developed for imaginative play. Therefore, children learn to keep themselves safe. Children develop an understanding of the wider world through celebrating different festivals and by raising money for charities. Children enjoy a healthy diet including snacks, lunch and tea, all prepared from fresh ingredients on the premises. The nursery has a Gold Award from environmental services. Snack and meal times are generally happy, social occasions with all the children developing valuable independence skills.

Annex A: record of inspection judgements

The key inspection judgements and what they mean

Grade 1 is Outstanding: this aspect of the provision is of exceptionally high quality

Grade 2 is Good: this aspect of the provision is strong

Grade 3 is Satisfactory: this aspect of the provision is sound

Grade 4 is Inadequate: this aspect of the provision is not good enough

Overall effectiveness

How effective is the provision in meeting the needs of children in the Early Years Foundation Stage?	2
How well does the provision promote inclusive practice?	2
The capacity of the provision to maintain continuous improvement.	2

Leadership and management

How effectively is provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage led and managed?	2
How effective is the setting's self-evaluation, including the steps taken to promote improvement?	2
How well does the setting work in partnership with parents and others?	2
How well are children safeguarded?	2

Quality and standards

How effectively are children in the Early Years Foundation Stage helped to learn and develop?	2
How effectively is the welfare of children in the Early Years Foundation Stage promoted?	2
How well are children helped to stay safe?	2
How well are children helped to be healthy?	2
How well are children helped to enjoy and achieve?	2
How well are children helped to make a positive contribution?	2
How well are children helped develop skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being?	2

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Annex B: the Childcare Register

The provider confirms that the requirements of the compulsory part of the Childcare Register are: Met

The provider confirms that the requirements of the voluntary part of the Childcare Register are: Met