



First Footsteps Ltd

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	EY227324
Inspection date	19 May 2006
Inspector	Sylvia Cornock
Setting Address	17 Oakfield, Anfield, Liverpool, Merseyside, L4 2QH
Telephone number	0151 260 5143
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Registered person	First Footsteps Ltd
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 satisfactory. 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 Footsteps has been registered since 2002 and is part of a chain. It operates from a house in the Anfield district of Liverpool. All children share access to an enclosed outside play area.

The nursery is registered for a maximum of 43 children. It operates from 07.30 to 18.00 Monday to Friday for 52 weeks of the year. There are currently 56 children on roll, of these, 14 children receive funding for nursery education. The nursery currently

supports children with special educational needs. There are no children who speak English as an additional language.

The nursery employs fourteen staff of whom twelve work directly with the children on a full or part time basis. Eleven staff, including the manager, hold appropriate early years qualifications.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is satisfactory.

Children are cared for in a warm, stimulating and hygienic environment. They thrive because staff follow effective procedures, which meet the children's individual needs. These include effective cleaning systems to prevent the risk of cross infection, such as cloths and aprons for specific tasks. Children learn the importance of good personal hygiene through daily routines, for example, washing their hands after playing in the garden. Older children attend to their own personal needs competently.

Adults help the children to gain a thorough understanding of staying healthy, for example, when children use tissues to wipe their nose. Cross infection is minimised through staff adhering to the sick child policy. Staff are attentive to children's individual needs and ensure they are not exposed to foods that may trigger allergic reactions. Children benefit from sensitive routines, such as being able to sleep when they are tired.

The effective documentation enables the staff caring for the children to provide consistent care. Most children have independent access to fresh drinking water and adults ensure that they have plenty of drinks provided throughout the day. Effective systems are in place to ensure children's individual dietary needs are met at all times. A range of healthy and nutritious snacks are provided. This includes breadsticks and fresh fruit daily.

The children enjoy an interesting range of planned activities which enables them to develop their capabilities. They are confident when using a range of wheeled toys and balancing equipment. Children are encouraged to practise their developing skills, as they participate in circle games. These early experiences enhance their physical development and nurture healthy living. They are encouraged to play outdoors and experience wet weather conditions on occasion, although greater challenges for the more able children are sometimes limited. The children use a range of small tools with increasing control and confidence, for example, glue spreaders and scissors. They have many opportunities to explore their environment, and are supported well by the staff working alongside them during play.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is satisfactory.

Robust safety procedures are in place to keep children safe and effective staff

teaching develops the children's awareness of potential hazards. This includes the children learning about hazards, such as activities and visits from the fire officers and the police. Children learn how to keep themselves safe through daily discussions with the staff, for example, they know how to use outdoor resources safely and how to remain safe on outings. Effective systems are in place to ensure children are collected by named persons, with suitable arrangements for emergencies. Risk assessments are carried out by staff to ensure the children's safety indoors, however, this has not been extended to the outdoor area.

Children freely explore the warm, stimulating environment. This is supported by effective cleaning systems and the organisation of the setting. Children have access to a range of resources that stimulate their interest and expand their learning, such as playing with shaving foam. Young children benefit from natural materials being used to support their play. Children are confident to select resources from low level storage units which successfully fosters their growing independence.

Staff have a sound knowledge of child protection issues and the action they would take in order to protect children from harm. Staff are aware to report concerns to the appropriate agency, should they have any concerns regarding children's welfare. This is supported by the staff attending child protection training. The procedure to follow should an allegation be made against a member of staff, however, is currently under review as it lacks clarity.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is satisfactory.

Enjoying & Achieving

Babies are provided with lots of sensory experiences that are good for their early development, including messy activities. They enjoy sounds, intonation and musical instruments, and they explore instruments by putting them to their mouths and chewing them. Close contact is promoted by all staff and lots of laughter and communication between the babies and the staff is experienced.

Young children enjoy investigating natural materials, through the use of a treasure basket containing, different materials made of wood, cloth, and metal. The toddlers enjoy water, sand, and creative play as they express their ideas eagerly. They feel different textures in a feely bag, as they try to identify different fruits by smelling and touching them. They make discoveries as they learn about early science through mixing ingredients to make cakes, and they are exposed to these experiences from an early age. They observe, smell, touch and taste different materials and enjoy investigating how things work, what they are made of and what they taste like. Staff plan purposeful and exciting activities under the Birth to three matters framework. They make note of children's achievements, however, these records are not updated frequently enough to provide sufficient detail to plan for children's individual needs. This is, however, developing extremely well and support is accessed through an Early Years advisor.

Children recite rhymes and the younger children make sounds excitedly as they find

their voice and experiment. Children express their delight at visitors as they loudly greet them saying 'Hiyah' to attract attention. Staff, however, do not use enough descriptive language with the younger children during play and routines to support and extend their growing vocabulary.

Children are happy and contented. They enjoy the company of the adult carer's and good relationships are evident, as the younger children actively seek out familiar adults when they are unsure. This supports children's holistic development and fosters their emotional security.

Nursery Education

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. Some staff have a good knowledge of the Curriculum guidance for the foundation stage and plan a range of interesting activities across the six areas of learning. The staff team work well together and are developing the planning systems with the help of the advisory teacher. Assessment systems are in place to record children's progress and how they have achieved the various stepping stones. These are used to identify and plan the next steps in children's learning. Staff provide children with a good range of interesting and well planned activities that engage their interest. However, there are times throughout the day when children become a little restless, for example, whilst waiting for their lunch to be served and whilst some activities are prepared. Staff communicate well with the children, they ask open ended questions that enable children to think and to solve problems, for example, investigating the seeds that they are growing in the garden. The children have also enjoyed undertaking an interesting project on water, which included aspects of the wider world.

Children register themselves confidently on arrival as they find their name in the basket and place it on the board. Staff and older children support those who need help in finding their name. All children are confident in their letter recognition as they enjoy water play and carefully fish out a letter made from foam. Some children are confident as they select the letters to spell their name. Other children refer to the letter and match this to a word, such as 'f' for football. Children are inquisitive and ask lots of questions like, how do they stick together, as they play with the magnetic blocks. Children practise their mark making skills in the writing area and have good opportunities to write for different purposes in other areas. This enhances and contributes to the children's emergent writing skills and development. They enjoy books and story time, however, concentration is often interrupted as small groups of children, in the middle of the story are asked to go and wash their hands before lunch. This results in children not being able to follow the storyline and some of the children's interest and concentration is lost.

Children are confident in their mathematical skills as they count and recognise numbers, many count to ten with others counting beyond. Posters and children's art work, such as the interactive number lines, contribute to children's understanding of number operations. Children sing songs and rhymes which help them learn about counting and simple calculation, for example, 'five little ducks'. They have opportunities to solve simple problems regarding volume and capacity, as they transfer water from one receptacle to another with great dexterity and levels of concentration.

Children enjoy playing outdoors and they care for flower seeds, plants and vegetables in the bedding boxes. They learn to take care of them by watering them daily and by observing, and measuring them grow. They enjoy visits to places of interest, such as the farm, the museum, and the planetarium. This helps to develop their understanding of the environment, and fosters an early interest in nature and wildlife. The children construct with a range of building materials and make models using their fine movements, and developing their hand and eye coordination. They are able to select from a wide choice of art and craft activities. This enables the children to be independent and to use their vivid imagination and natural creativity. The children enjoy good opportunities in role play as they pretend to book holidays for people at the travel agents. They show skill as they access the computer and other programmable toys to support and extend their play. They have fun as they dress up and become their favourite character, pretending to be 'Spiderman' or 'Cinderella' as the other children all join in to make their own play.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is satisfactory.

Children with special needs are supported by staff, however, they do not have individual education plans in place, which inhibits their progress. There is a named member of staff who also takes responsibility for behaviour management in place, however, these roles are still in their infancy. This results in the needs of the children identified not being sufficiently planned for, such as the setting of targets and monitoring children's progress towards identified goals. Staff do, however, work with other professionals and they understand the children's needs, such as providing bright colours to attract the children's interest.

Behaviour Management is well promoted through children being encouraged to drive their own learning, accessing materials of their choice, and through the effective relationships with the staff. There is a 'star of the week' board displayed in some rooms within the nursery, which shows positive methods are used effectively to promote good behaviour. Children behave well. They are polite, they share and take turns, for example in group games and when using equipment. Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered.

The procedures to ensure that children are fully safeguarded are securely in place. The child protection policy in respect of allegations made against staff is in the process of being reviewed. This demonstrates the policies are working documents that are reviewed and updated according to changes over time. Effective complaint records are securely in place and any concerns are promptly investigated and acted upon appropriately.

Children are learning about the wider world and different lifestyles through discussion and activities. They have many good opportunities to learn about the similarities and differences in our society. All children are included in activities and staff encourage positive attitudes to race and disability.

Partnership with parents is well established through effective communication and the welcoming environment. Parents, however, could be consulted more on their

children's development through dialogue with staff regarding their child's progress.

Organisation

The organisation is satisfactory.

The leadership and management is satisfactory. All staff are fully inducted which means that they have a secure understanding of their roles and responsibilities. Clear, effective recruitment and vetting procedures ensure staff appointed are suitably qualified, experienced and have a child centred approach. The provider ensures staff's development and training needs are fully met. Regular staff meetings ensure staff work well as a team and in a consistent manner.

Detailed policies and procedures are in place, although, there are some omissions with regards to the child protection policy and assessments for children with special needs and the younger children on placement. All the legally required documentation which contributes to the children's health, safety and well-being is, however, satisfactorily in place, including medication, accident and incident records. This maintains children's safety and welfare at all times.

Staff work with the children consistently on a daily basis, ensuring that they are fully supported with their learning and development needs. The environment is well organised to enable children to move freely between different work areas, successfully extending their ability to make informed choices and exert their growing independence. Overall, the provision meets the needs of the range of children for whom it provides.

Improvements since the last inspection

At the last inspection actions were raised in respect of staff's knowledge of the Foundation Stage Curriculum. The provider has made good progress with the issues raised. Children are now encouraged to make progress according to their individual needs through planned, and stimulating play experiences. The children now have many opportunities to express their own ideas freely using a range of resources that enhance their natural creativity. Children's interest in illustrations and the written word are enhanced by easy access to quality books and stories. Children's knowledge and understanding of the world is well developed through investigation and dialogue with staff as they play. They also enjoy outdoor play experiences that help to develop their climbing and balancing skills.

Complaints since the last inspection

There are no complaints to report.

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 greater challenges for children to exert their growing independence by including them more in routines throughout the day, such as serving themselves at mealtimes, and the younger children being able to access drinking water semi-independently (also applies to Nursery Education)
- develop the systems already in place for the implementation of the Birth to three matters framework and the Foundation Stage and encourage parents to become more involved in assessments on their children (also applies to Nursery Education)
- provide a supportive framework for children identified as having special needs, including individual education plans being established. (also applies to Nursery Education)

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):

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the leaflet *Building better childcare: Compliments and concerns about inspectors' judgements* which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk