



## First Steps

Inspection report for early years provision

<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	122618
<b>Inspection date</b>	14 September 2006
<b>Inspector</b>	June Fielden
<b>Setting Address</b>	18 Albury Road, Merstham, Redhill, Surrey, RH1 3LS
<b>Telephone number</b>	01737 215136
<b>E-mail</b>	
<b>Registered person</b>	Jacqui Tidey
<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 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 Steps Nursery opened in 2000 and operates from four rooms in a detached Victorian property, it is situated in Merstham, in Surrey. A maximum of 31 children may attend the nursery at any one time. The nursery is open each weekday from 08:00 to 18:00 all year round, excluding bank holidays. All children share access to a secure enclosed outdoor play area.

There are currently 31 children aged from birth to under five years on roll. Of these, three receive funding for nursery education. Children come from a wide catchment area. The nursery currently supports a number of children who speak English as an additional language.

The nursery employs seven members of staff, including the manager. All members of staff hold an appropriate early years qualification.

## **THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION**

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

The provision is good.

Children are well cared for in a friendly, welcoming environment. Efficient hygiene routines ensure that the floors in rooms used by children are always clean, and any spillages are cleared up immediately. Paper towels and liquid soap are used in the toilets to avoid the risk of cross contamination. Children wash their hands before and after eating, to prevent the spread of infection. Appropriate permissions are obtained before medication is administered to children, and the necessary details recorded. However, the medication record used by the nursery does not ensure confidentiality is maintained when this is shown to parents, as there is more than one entry on each page.

Children in each room sit down to eat together at meal time. The food offered at lunchtime is a combination of nutritious meals, and dishes children particularly like. The menu is reviewed regularly with parents, and new meals added at their request. Snacks provided for children include healthy options, such as fruit and toast. Water is always available to children to ensure they are not thirsty. Older children help to pour their own drinks, to develop their independence.

Young children sleep for varying lengths of time after lunch, depending on their parents wishes. Babies follow their own sleep patterns, to provide them with the rest they require. There are ample opportunities for children to gain effective exercise in the outdoor area, where children from the nursery socialise with the pre-school children during their play. They use pushing and pulling movements, and develop an awareness of the space around them playing with the selection of cars and other vehicles available. Children use nets and bean bags to practice throwing and aiming skills, and make large arm movements with the ribbon streamers. They move around confidently in a coordinated manner, as they are used to regular outdoor play. Children strengthen their muscles on the sturdy equipment, such as the climbing frame, allowing them to crawl, slide and use other forms of movement. The recent addition of a play barn enables the children to take advantage of the outside area for exercise even when it is wet.

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

The provision is satisfactory.

Colourful wall displays and mobiles make the nursery attractive and interesting for children. Space is suitably used throughout the nursery, and storage areas are available in all rooms. Sheds are used for the outdoor equipment. Children move around freely within the rooms in which they are based and most resources are accessible to them. There are sufficient toys and equipment to meet the needs of the whole range of children cared for.

Children's welfare is protected by a variety of safety measures. Risk assessments and fire drills are carried out regularly. Gates are in place at the top and bottom of the stairs to prevent children having unsupervised access to them, and there is a secure system for the arrival and departure of children. However, there are currently some minor hazards which impact on children's safety. There are dangerous plants and some uneven surfaces in the outdoor play

area, and the door between the nursery and the pre-school can be swung open and shut by children.

Children are protected from harm, as there is a designated member of staff responsible for child protection, and all staff receive training in this area. If staff suspect abuse they will record their concerns, which will be reported to the appropriate authority when necessary. The nursery has a child protection policy in place, but this does not state the action to be followed in the event of a complaint of neglect or abuse being made against a member of staff. Consequently, this affects children's welfare, as parents and staff are unclear about what would happen should this situation arise.

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

The provision is good.

Babies are cared for by attentive staff, who are sensitive to their needs. They are picked up and cuddled when they are miserable, and given effective support in their play. A free play system is in place for them, which works well with the numbers that currently attend. There is an effective selection of resources to stimulate them, including a small soft ball pit and toys with flashing lights that make music and other sounds. These encourage babies to be inquisitive. They play with them enthusiastically as they crawl around the room independently.

Children in the toddler rooms participate in planned activities, based on the Birth to three matters framework. Their progress is currently recorded by staff colouring and dating sections of flower charts for each child as they achieve something new. As staff become more familiar with Birth to three matters the development records for the framework will be used. Children participate in a wide range of experiences, based on the topic they are covering. The activities children are involved in include investigating different materials, such as corn flour, so that they can see how the consistency of it changes as water is gradually added to it. This also develops children's language skills as they describe the changes that take place. Other activities include dressing up for role play, using play dough and the supervised use of scissors, to experiment with cutting out for themselves. Staff are always close by to support children and offer ideas to develop their imagination. For example, one child playing in the sand pit could not think of what to do, and was shown by a member of staff how he could push the sand together to form sand castles.

### **NURSERY EDUCATION**

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. Staff have a suitable understanding of the Foundation Stage, and the teaching is spread out over the course of the day, as some children attend only morning or afternoon sessions. The activities are often repeated, or input is provided on a one to one basis to ensure children do not miss out. Staff are generally very patient with children, and calmly accept the small accidents they have, such as spilling water on the table and floor. They encourage children to be independent, ensuring they understand that they can help themselves to resources. Children are relaxed enough to enjoy a laugh with staff. For example, one child was being shown how to fill a small glue pot from a push top bottle. When the bottle made a strange sound the member of staff commented on this and the children close by laughed and said it was funny. Staff are positive with children and quick to praise success.

They explain things carefully to children at the start of activities, to ensure they know what they are doing. If children suddenly show interest in something unconnected with their task, such as a crane fly on the window, then staff stop what they are doing to discuss this with them.

Planning for nursery education is completed by the member of staff in charge of the pre-school. Long term plans show what will be covered each month under each area of learning. The weekly plans set out the objectives for each of the areas of learning. It also shows the title of the focused activity, and the resources that will be set out each day. As there are no daily plans giving details of how the activity is to be organised and what will be expected of the children, it would not be easy for another member of staff not involved in the planning to take over if the person in charge was absent. This will have an impact on children's learning. Children spend some time outdoors each day, but as this play is not generally focused on in the planning, opportunities to promote learning during this time are missed.

Staff make regular observations of children, and use photographs to record children's achievements in the Foundation Stage. Children's records include samples of their work, and show that they are making satisfactory progress. Activity assessment forms are completed on a few of the tasks planned each month. Although these show children's level of enjoyment and engagement with the task, they do not give details of their achievement and understanding of the activity. Consequently this information is not available to inform future planning and to ensure activities are aimed at meeting children's needs.

Children listen attentively to stories, and talk about the book that has been read to them. They enjoy books and show an interest in the stories. Children use a variety of pencils for drawing, and add their name to finished art work, ascribing meaning to their marks. They sometimes initiate conversations with members of staff, and answer their questions. They listen to each other in small group activities, such as investigations. For example, when taste testing they each took it in turn to state which food they thought they were tasting, and to state their own opinion about the ones they preferred. Other topics have encouraged children to investigate the different planets, and talk about what they found out.

Staff include maths in most daily activities, such as counting the bowls set out on the table for an a task. Children are involved in setting up the table ready for their snack, counting how many will be eating, and how many pieces of fruit or toast there are to be shared between them. They are encouraged to attempt simple calculations by deciding how many pieces each child can have, and if any will be left. Children find out about the local area by walking to the shops to buy ingredients for cookery activities, and look at the route they have taken. They take a travelling teddy bear on holiday with them, to encourage children's interest in the world around them.

Children use their imagination and hold conversations on the toy telephones. They are encouraged to develop this skill, as members of staff discuss with them what the other person may have been saying. The role play area is used to allow children to be creative and retell stories through drama. Children thread beads in different patterns, using small muscle skills as they develop their hand eye coordination. They use small tools, such as scissors to carefully cut out shapes to stick on their collage work, improving their manipulative skills.

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

The provision is satisfactory.

Children all have equal access to the facilities and resources provided by the nursery. Staff are aware of children's specific needs, such as one child requiring his teddy bear and dummy when he has a sleep. There are suitable resources to reflect positive images of culture, gender and disability, including dolls, books and puzzles. If caring for children with learning difficulties or disabilities the nursery will liaise with parents to ensure they meet the child's needs, and activities will be adapted accordingly. If any of the nursery routines are likely to cause the child any distress, these will be reviewed in order to accommodate their requirements.

Staff use appropriate strategies in their approach to behaviour management. They try to distract younger children when their behaviour is inappropriate. Staff will stop what they are doing to calmly explain to older children what they have done, in order to assist them in learning the difference between right and wrong. As a result, children are fairly considerate, and sometimes offer their help to others without being asked. For example, during a dressing up race the child who finished first decided to assist another child who was having difficulty. The setting fosters children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

The partnership with parents is good. Staff inform parents about the setting, its policies and procedures when their child starts attending the nursery. There are separate notice boards for each area of the nursery. These display necessary information, such as the certificate of registration, menus and liability insurance. Details of how parents can help them by collecting various tokens are also placed on the boards. The notice board for parents of children receiving nursery education shows children's daily routine and the timetable for the week, to make them aware of the focus activities and the different aspects of the areas of learning they will be covering. A notice on the door informs parents of the current theme children are working on and requests their involvement, by asking for resources from home. Parents receive regular newsletters to let them know what is happening, and every six months are given a written report on their child's progress. They can exchange information with staff at the beginning or end of the day, and make an appointment to see them if there is an issue they wish to discuss.

Parents evenings are held once a term and provide an opportunity to see children's work, go over what they have been doing and look at their development record. Staff also inform parents of how they can help their children to make progress. Parents are very pleased with the consistency of care provided by the nursery, as the same staff work in a particular room for some time, and get to know the children well. They feel that they receive effective information about the nursery and their child's achievements. Parents are also invited to the nursery to share special occasions with children, such as birthday parties, leaving celebrations and Christmas events. They also support the nursery by participating in the fund raising events they hold. There is a written complaints procedure available to parents, and all complaints are recorded. However, parents are not fully aware of how any concerns they have will be handled by staff. The complaints procedure has not been updated to reflect changes to the National Standards. Also, parents have not been informed of how to contact Ofsted, should the need arise.

## **Organisation**

The organisation is satisfactory.

The nursery has appropriate recruitment and induction procedures to ensure children are cared for by suitably qualified staff. The necessary policies are in place to ensure the smooth running of the nursery, and are made available to parents and staff. New staff are made familiar with these, and are supervised during their initial period of employment. Arrangements are in place to provide appropriately qualified cover when members of staff are absent. Children are protected from harm when visitors are present, as they are required to sign in and out of the provision, and produce their identification. Staff are keen to update their knowledge, and can select which courses they wish to attend, providing the training will benefit the nursery.

The leadership and management of the setting is satisfactory. The manager is responsible for the day to day running of the nursery, contact with parents, and appointment of staff. She works in liaison with the provider to resolve complaints and discipline issues. The manager and the provider discuss the strengths and weaknesses of the provision, and any changes that need to take place. They update the policies and procedures together, some of which have been overlooked. Monthly staff meetings are held, and members of staff can suggest issues they wish to be discussed. Staff work very much as a team, and are supportive of each other. They are aware of their duties and require little supervision. However, the manager is responsible for overseeing the planning for nursery education, which currently lacks sufficient detail. Although some lessons are evaluated, information that will be useful in showing the next steps children need to take is not recorded. This impacts on children's progress in the Foundation Stage Curriculum. The setting meets the needs of the range of children for whom they provide.

## **Improvements since the last inspection**

The last care inspection recommended that the provider ensure the garden is safe for outdoor play, and that clean hand towels are provided for each child daily. It also recommended that the lost and uncollected child policy includes the action that will be taken if a child is not collected, and that a policy be put in place stating the action to be taken if a complaint of neglect or abuse is made against a member of staff. In addition, recommendations were made that parents are given information about the nursery's child protection policy and contact information for Ofsted, should they wish to make a complaint.

The nursery has made various improvements to the outside play area, which include building a play barn that can be used when it is wet. However, some further work is still required to ensure it is free from hazards. Paper towels are now provided for children to dry their hands on in most areas of the nursery, and the rest of the children bring their own clean towel each day, to maintain appropriate hygiene standards.

A new section has been included in the lost and uncollected child policy, which states the action that will be taken if a child is not collected. All policies, including child protection have been made available to parents, in order to protect children's welfare. However, due to an oversight on the part of the nursery they have not provided parents with contact information for Ofsted, or included in their child protection policy the action to be taken if a complaint of neglect or

abuse is made against a member of staff. These are again included as recommendations in the current report.

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

Since the 1 April 2004 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 complaints 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 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 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):

- ensure confidentiality is maintained when the medication record is completed
- ensure that the door between the nursery and pre-school does not pose a safety problem, and that the outdoor area is free from hazards
- ensure the action to be taken in the event of a complaint of neglect or abuse being made against a member of staff is added to the child protection policy
- ensure that parents are made aware of the full complaints procedure, including details of how to contact Ofsted.

#### **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):

- ensure that plans for focused activities include sufficient detail and show how outside play will be used to promote learning
- ensure that evaluations of activities show children's next steps in learning.



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)