



First Steps Pre-School

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	EY319318
Inspection date	20 June 2006
Inspector	Carol Johnstone

Setting Address	The Bungalow, Manor Park C of E V A First School, Mellstock Avenue, Dorchester, Dorset, DT1 2BH
Telephone number	01305 250600
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Registered person	First Steps Pre-School
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

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 Steps Pre-School opened in 2006 and operates from a bungalow within the grounds of Manor Park Church of England school in Dorchester. The pre-school also have use of the reception classrooms and the main hall within the school building. There is a fully enclosed area for outdoor play.

The pre-school operates each weekday in term time only and is registered to provide care for a maximum of 25 children aged from two years to under five years of age.

Sessions are from 09:15-11:45 each day with an optional lunch club until 12:15.

An afternoon session operates on Monday, Wednesday and Friday from 12:30-15:00 for children aged from two and a half years to three years of age. There are currently 38 children on roll.

The pre-school employs six staff, four of whom have early years qualifications.

The setting receive support from the local authority.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is satisfactory.

Children are given healthy snacks of fruit each day. They are encouraged to try a range of different types of fruit on food tasting days and explore the texture and smell of more unusual fruits during projects such as "our senses". Children have independent access to fresh water during the sessions and are given a choice of milk or juice at snack time to ensure they maintain adequate fluid levels.

Staff use disposable gloves when administering first aid or changing nappies to reduce the risk of bacterial infection. They use antibacterial spray to wipe the tables down before snack and lunchtime and are careful to wash their hands before preparing food and drinks. Children wash their hands after the toilet and before snack time, however the procedures currently used do not minimise the risk of cross infection.

Children who are unwell are excluded in order to protect the other children. There are clear guidelines in the sickness policy for parents, informing them of the correct exclusion periods to follow for particular illnesses. Children who become unwell during the day are monitored and sit quietly with a member of staff until parents arrive to collect them. Staff are clear of the procedures to follow when giving medication. Most of the staff have current first aid certificates. Consequently they would be able to assist a child in an emergency.

Children have fresh air and exercise each day. They have access to an enclosed outdoor area which is very spacious. Children are able to roll hoops to each other and wriggle through them. They throw and catch bean bags and balls in a controlled way. There is a climbing frame and parachute that are brought inside during inclement weather. Children also have regular music and movement sessions both indoors and outside. They use stilts to balance and the staff regularly construct obstacle courses for them to practise a range of physical skills. There are regular sessions of keep fit exercises and the "Active Van" regularly visits to encourage the children to enjoy activity. There are also regular visits from the dental hygienist who talks to the children about how to care for their teeth correctly. Children learn about other parts of their bodies through regular topic work where they look at each part of their body and how it works. Children are confident in their movements both inside and outdoors. They are able to negotiate around objects and each other and have

secure spatial awareness. They are able to use scissors, pencils and glue sticks competently to construct models and art work.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is satisfactory.

Children are protected from unauthorised persons entering the premises. There are very effective security measures in place at the front door which means that entry can only be through ringing the doorbell and a member of staff unlocking the door. All visitors sign in and out and are escorted during their visit. The rear door which leads to the outside area sounds an alarm when opened, so staff would be alerted if a child tried to go out by themselves.

There are thorough vetting procedures in place for new staff which ensures that children are not exposed to the risk of having someone unsuitable work with them. New staff undertake a probation period during which time they are monitored to ensure that they are working appropriately with the children. There is an induction procedure which informs new staff of health and safety procedures such as how to get children out if a fire occurs and the importance of mopping up spills immediately to avoid falls. The fire drill is practised with the children each half term so that they become familiar with it.

Staff carry out regular risk assessments to ensure that the areas used by children are safe. However the fence that has been recently installed to enclose the outdoor area is made of unfinished wood which could be harmful to the children if touched.

Children would be supported in the event of a child protection concern arising as all staff understand the four types of abuse and the signs that may be present in a child at risk. They are aware of how and where to record details and they know which agency to contact in order to obtain appropriate assistance for the child. There is a clear child protection policy available for parents which outlines the pre-school's responsibilities in this area.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is satisfactory.

Children can choose from a wide range of resources including construction toys, small world, sand and water, play dough, books, puzzles and role-play. There is a well-stocked home corner and staff change this every few weeks into different scenarios such as a vet's surgery, hairdressers, hospital, restaurant and dance studio. Staff rotate the activities each day and in addition children are able to choose for themselves from the storage boxes which are accessible to them. Children under three have their own sessions in the afternoon and enjoy playing with the duplo, puzzles and play dough. The pre-school is in the process of implementing the Birth to three framework which will give more guidance to the activities for this age group. All children are very settled and comfortable with staff. Interaction from the staff is warm and friendly.

Nursery education.

Children are making steady progress across all areas of learning. They are very confident and clearly feel that they belong to the group when they arrive each day and put their name cards on the board to choose their drink at snack time. Children are making firm friendships with their peers and play well together in pairs and in small groups. There are positive relationships with staff and they chat to them about their news each morning. Children are beginning to understand behavioural boundaries and are learning the difference between right and wrong. Children's independence is encouraged during some parts of the session, for example when putting their hats on to go outside. However at snack time they are not given tasks to do such as giving out beakers or pouring drinks.

Children use language very well in the pre-school. They are able to speak using quite complex sentences to explain their news and what their plans are for the activities. They are beginning to link sounds and letters in circle time and can recognise their names. Children independently access books and are able to turn the pages meaningfully and talk about the stories to each other. During circle time when staff read them a story they are able to anticipate what will happen next and discuss it. Children are confidently making attempts at writing their names, for example on the "passports" they are currently making. Children demonstrate interest in exploring and investigating. They pass round a talking doll and look at and discuss where the batteries go to make it work. There are regular nature topics during which the children learn about trees, mini beasts and birds. Children currently do not have use of a computer, but are able to use remote controlled toys, push button phones and a play computer to learn about technology. Children are competent in counting from one to ten and some can count beyond. They are using calculation when singing songs such as "five fat sausages", however during activities their use of problem solving is limited. Children are beginning to recognise shapes such as triangles. Children are able to help themselves to art and craft materials when they want to make a model or picture. There is a well-stocked writing table available during each session which children use spontaneously. Children enjoy regular music sessions where they try out different instruments and learn about speed and rhythm.

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. The qualified staff have a secure knowledge of the Foundation Stage and the areas of learning. They know which areas are covered during each of the activities. Interaction towards the children is consistently supportive. However the interaction that stimulates children's learning is sometimes limited and could be further developed and extended. Planning of the curriculum is satisfactory and covers all of the areas of learning. There are regular written observations carried out, however these are recorded on sheets used for the whole group as the children do not have separate progress files. Staff know the children well and know which children need additional assistance, however this is discussed informally and the next steps necessary to help children progress are not recorded. Staff manage children's behaviour well and consequently there is a calm environment which helps children concentrate. Resources are used imaginatively by staff to maintain the interest of children and there are weekly meetings to discuss new ideas for activities.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is satisfactory.

Children learn about diversity and disability through using the resources available, looking at the posters displayed around the room and through discussion topics. Children are encouraged to play with all the resources regardless of their gender and there are visits from female fire fighters and police officers to raise children's awareness of equality in the workplace.

Children who have English as an additional language are helped to settle through the use of pictures and basic word reinforcement. Staff also try to learn basic words in the child's first language to help communication.

Children with special needs are welcomed to the pre-school. The manager is a trained special needs coordinator and is able to identify areas where children may need additional support. She works in conjunction with parents to ensure that appropriate assistance is given. There are established links between the pre-school and other agencies such as portage and the speech therapy department which enables children to have individual educational plans followed.

Children learn how to be kind, caring and show respect for each other. The pre-school have a "kind hands, kind face and kind feet" policy which is reinforced with the children each day at circle time and during play. Challenging behaviour is dealt with sensitively and gently by staff, who reinforce positive aspects of the child's behaviour and play down the negative. Any ongoing issues are discussed with parents. Children are generally very settled and behave well.

Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered.

Partnership with parents is satisfactory. There are positive and open relationships with parents and they are invited to approach the staff at any time if they have any concerns about their child. When a child first attends, parents are able to stay during the session if they wish. Information is obtained from parents about the child's likes and dislikes and any medical history. Parents are also asked about what the child can do, although this is not currently recorded. There is an active parent committee and regular newsletters are produced and given to all parents. The pre-school have a parent notice board and the planning of topics is displayed on it for each term. The policies and procedures of the pre-school are available to all parents.

For parents of funded children, there is a leaflet giving an explanation of the areas of learning. There is a transition sheet sent home each term with a short summary of how the child is progressing, however this could be simplified to make it easier to follow and to encourage continued learning at home. Parents feel that staff are very caring, friendly and approachable

Organisation

The organisation is satisfactory.

Children benefit from the staff being clear of their roles each day. The comprehensive operational plan directs staff to their duties throughout the session and this clarity ensures that the sessions run smoothly. However the staff also work with flexibility so that they can meet children's needs as they arise.

The pre-school is bright and inviting for both children and parents. There are colourful displays of children's work, mobiles and alphabet and number posters on the walls.

Documentation is complete and supports all aspects of children's care. Attendance, medication given and accidents that occur are recorded accurately. Parental permission is held for outings, emergency medical treatment and the taking of photographs.

Leadership and management is satisfactory. The manager is a positive role model for the staff. There are regular staff appraisals and any training needs are identified and courses arranged. All staff are involved in the planning of activities and they evaluate which activities have worked well for the children. There are regular team meetings where any issues are discussed openly. The manager evaluates the provision through working alongside the staff to observe their practice and through obtaining feedback from parents. The staff are friendly, have positive relationships with each other and work cohesively as a team.

The setting meets the needs of the range of children for whom it provides.

Improvements since the last inspection

Not applicable

Complaints since the last inspection

There have been no complaints made to Ofsted since registration.

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):

- ensure that the hand washing procedures used minimise the risk of cross infection
- ensure that potential hazards are inaccessible to children

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 the next steps necessary for children's progress are clearly recorded to give focus to the activities
- increase the levels of challenging and stimulating interaction to further extend children's learning.

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