



First Steps Day Nursery and Out of School Facility

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	EY288187
Inspection date	06 December 2006
Inspector	Andrea, Marie Paulson
Setting Address	Newtown Primary School, Newtown Road, Carlisle, Cumbria, CA2 7LW
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Registered person	Dorothy Jane Blacklock
Type of inspection	Integrated
Type of care	Full day care, Out of School 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 good.

WHAT SORT OF SETTING IS IT?

First Steps Day Nursery and Out of School facility is run by the management committee of Newtown Community Learning Centre, a company limited by Guarantee. It opened in 2004 and operates from three rooms in a purpose-built building situated within the grounds and premises of Newtown Community School in Carlisle.

Since then it has been designated as a Children's Centre for the local community as well as providing wrap-around care with the school. The facility is registered to provide full day care and a holiday play scheme. The nursery is open from 08.00 to 18.00 for 51 weeks of the year. The breakfast club is not currently operating as there is a separate provision within the school. The holiday club operates during school holidays including half-terms within the pre-school room, school hall and outdoor play area.

There are currently 96 children aged three months to 11 years on roll including 18 who receive Nursery Education funding. The nursery supports children who speak English as a second language and children with learning difficulties or disabilities.

The nursery employs 13 staff ten of whom, including the manager, hold appropriate childcare and education qualifications. Three members of staff are working towards a qualification. The nursery is part of the neighbourhood nursery scheme and is supported by Sure Start, Cumbria.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Children show a good understanding of how to keep themselves healthy as they follow good hygiene practices as a matter of routine such as when they wash their hands ready for snack time. They are motivated and interested in a wide range of frequent physical activity in which they participate enthusiastically.

The two and three-year-olds take an interest in the good range of activities provided including new, challenging skills such as basketball. They learn about their bodies and what they can do as they copy adults and listen to the music and movement tapes. Children confidently move in and around the spacious indoor and outside areas as they learn to negotiate space well. They develop an awareness of hygiene with very good support from staff which enables them to learn how to do things for themselves, such as trying to put on their own aprons.

The older children really enjoy their time outside. They have much freedom to move between the indoor and outdoor play areas and can choose for themselves where to play. Staff enable this choice by helping them to put coats and boots on any time they wish to play out. They also have an interesting range of play equipment to choose from and enjoy the whole group games such as the train ride game. In this way staff are particularly good at developing physical play, which is enhanced with the regular use of the large equipment in the school sports hall. Children attending the Holiday Club also benefit from good physical play opportunities.

Children bring packed lunches and try to ensure that nutritious foods are eaten first as the lunches vary in their nutritional value. They enjoy a wide range of healthy and nutritious snacks during the morning and afternoon sessions which include fruit such as kiwis and raisins. Meal times are relaxed and social occasions where staff encourage good manners, healthy eating habits and social interaction as children talk with adults and each other.

Staff work closely with parents to share information regularly so that individual needs such as diets are continuously met. The required records and parental consents are in place so that children receive appropriate care. Staff have a high level of interaction with children so promoting their health and general well-being.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

Children are happy and settled in the nursery which is warm, welcoming, bright and colourful. Children's safety is given high priority and staff show a generally high level of awareness, for example, as they are responsible for daily checks of the rooms before children arrive. Comprehensive policies and procedures are in place to protect children. Risk assessments cover all areas of the premises, resources and prior to taking children on outings to identify and minimise risks. The Holiday Club operates with the same premises and procedures to keep children safe.

Highly effective systems are in place to monitor entry to and from the nursery. Resources and furniture are arranged in a way that enables children to access resources easily and move around freely. Children learn to keep themselves safe as they walk not run so as not 'to crash into somebody' and to pull the chair up to the table so as 'not to fall'. Children, however, intermingle when playing outdoors with football, ride on toys and pushing buggies, which creates a hazard. Staff have close interaction with very young children and babies to keep them safe and to reassure them with cuddles, smiles and soothing sounds so that they feel secure.

Staff have a good knowledge of child protection issues and procedures. The procedure is clear to all staff throughout the nursery. Child protection is an integral part of training plans for nursery staff which indicates the level of commitment that the nursery has to the protection of children.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

Children are happy, relaxed and learning to be confident. Staff are actively involved with the children throughout the day. They are skilful in encouraging children's independence, for instance, in choosing activities and in offering support such as for craft activities. The very good relationship fostered with the children helps them to feel settled and participate well.

Children are able to choose from a wide variety of interesting and stimulating activities planned to promote their overall development and based on the 'Birth to three matters' framework. Staff monitor young children's development effectively through daily observations which contribute towards future planning to ensure good individual progress. Children develop their senses generally very well as they make patterns in the tray of custard and are encouraged to explore the texture as it 'plip, plops' into the tray. They listen to shells and taste fruit. Children enjoy working with varied textures such as cardboard tubes, bubble wrap, tissue, wool. They are surrounded by bright, colourful displays including topics such as 'thunder and lightening' as part of the stimulating environment. Babies enjoy many good sensory experiences with the exception being the limited visual stimulation in the room.

Children are involved in much conversation during the nursery day and are encouraged to contribute their ideas at story time so promoting their self-expression and confidence. They listen well and respond eagerly to 'what does the snail move like' and repeat 'squirmy worm'. There are several opportunities to practise letters and sounds with a letter of the week topic.

Children spontaneously count as they enjoy action songs. Staff make the activities particularly interesting, for instance, a role play area set out as a 'winter wonderland' with a fir tree, pretend snow, and large cushions to settle and look at books or play with the 'snow' animals. Children are interested and persevere, for example, as they complete puzzles and staff recognise when they are ready for more challenge.

Children attending the Holiday Club enjoy interesting and challenging activities appropriate for their age and skills such as junk modelling and group games.

Nursery education

The quality of teaching and learning is good. Staff demonstrate a secure knowledge and understanding of all areas of children's learning supported with a continuous training programme. They create a rich and challenging learning environment overall. Staff plan well to ensure the whole curriculum is covered and extend individual learning with effective use of assessments. Children have individual profiles which follow them through the nursery so that staff have a good understanding of individual progress when children begin the nursery education.

The interaction with children is very effective with staff being closely involved in children's play where appropriate. They talk with children continuously and ask questions to encourage children to find things out and talk about what they are doing. Children are keen to learn, engage in play well and are eager to try out new experiences, such as exploring the pasta in the water tray. Children are familiar with the flexible daily routine and settle extremely well, especially after an outdoor activity. They show confidence as they approach adults to ask questions or talk to them about something they have done such as building a spaceship. Behaviour is very good with adults acting as good role models and setting consistent boundaries. Children develop independence and self-awareness as they put on aprons and make their own snacks.

Their communication skills develop well as they speak confidently at circle time and learn to listen to others. They recognise some letters by shape and sound and staff reinforce learning in fun ways, for instance, through linking 'v' sound to the sound of a car and 'w' sound to that of the wind. This makes the learning more meaningful for children who then carry on after the activity to act out the sounds. They particularly enjoy singing and at times children can be heard singing spontaneously and making up their own songs. Children enjoy listening to stories and respond well.

Children have several opportunities to recognise numbers and practise counting as they learn about the number of the week and enjoy number rhymes. There are fewer chances to develop calculating skills such as basic adding and subtracting to extend and reinforce their learning. Children recognise shapes well through fun methods of teaching which involve encouraging them to make the shapes with their own fingers. They have interesting resources to develop their sense of varied shapes and sizes as they pour water using bottles of different volumes, and play in the sand tray with various shapes of tools.

Children show an interest in living things through topics such as 'animals that live underwater'. They enjoy a good range of experiences which help them develop an awareness of the wider

community as they learn about 'people who help us' and enjoy a pyjama party to raise funds for children in need. They learn about past and present and talk about yesterday and previous experiences such as holidays. They develop an awareness of caring for others. Children enjoy role play and use their imagination well to make up games, for example, as part of the Christmas story. Staff provide a wide range of interesting materials and resources for children to explore, build with and create pictures. Children are able to investigate in fun ways, for example, colouring the water green for the hallowe'en topic. There is limited access to IT resources so that the children's IT skills are not promoted sufficiently.

Children move around confidently and with increasing control. They have many opportunities to use small and large equipment with the frequent outdoor play and use of the sports hall. Their coordination and handling of small tools is promoted well as they regularly use an interesting selection of tools in the water and sand trays. Children enjoy music through songs, music tapes and by making sounds with musical instruments.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

Children become aware of their own community through interesting topics such as 'people who help us' with visits including the emergency services. They learn about the needs of others as they have a pyjama party to raise funds for children in need. Children's experiences are extended as they enjoy activities from other cultures based on festivals. Staff are committed to all children being included as they work with parents so that each child can actively participate in the nursery.

Children are very well behaved throughout the nursery with staff constantly giving much praise and encouragement to reinforce good behaviour. Staff give clear explanations to children so they can understand what is right and wrong. Children learn to share and take turns through the effective techniques used by staff who establish good behaviour and are quick to anticipate situations. They are helpful in putting toys away and sweeping sand off the floor. Children's contributions are recognised as their work is displayed and they are encouraged in circle time to share their ideas. They work together as they play with the garage and help each other carry boxes during role play. Their decision-making skills are promoted well as they have continuous opportunities to choose resources so helping to build up their confidence.

Partnership with parents and carers is good. Many useful ways are used to share information with parents about the children's day and their progress including scrapbooks, daily diaries, newsletters and display boards. Parents are informed of the topics and what the children learn from certain activities so that parents can be involved. Staff have created a friendly atmosphere where parents feel welcome in the nursery and can talk informally with staff. Parents speak positively about the effective exchange of formal and informal information and of the high standard of care for their children. Policies and procedures are accessible to parents and parental consents are in place so that each child receives appropriate care. The Holiday Club operates with the same staff, procedures and policies so that children attending benefit from the continuous quality of care.

The provision fosters children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

The high quality of children's care is promoted by the very good organisation and the ongoing professional development of staff. The manager has a clear vision of children's progress throughout the nursery. Staff work well together as a team to ensure the smooth running of the sessions so that children are confident in a familiar routine. They are clear about their roles and responsibilities and are well supported through a clear management structure, appraisals and a training programme. The high standard of care is maintained for children of all ages, including those attending the Holiday Club. Staff are qualified, experienced and knowledgeable about meeting the needs of the age-range for which the provision is registered.

Policies and procedures are comprehensive and underpin the nursery practices. The nursery employs a high ratio of qualified staff with others working towards a qualification. There is a strong commitment to staff training to further develop their professional knowledge and skills. Staff are committed to protecting children, promoting their well-being and planning for their individual progress. The recruitment procedure is thorough except for not always following up references given, following recent revisions to the National Standards. Staff are well deployed and maintain the required staffing ratio so that the children are effectively supervised.

Overall, the provision meets the needs of the range of the children for whom it provides.

Leadership and management are good. The manager and staff ensure the effective implementation of the Foundation Stage. Staff who deliver nursery education meet regularly to plan and monitor the quality of provision. The knowledge, skills and efforts of staff to reach a good standard in delivering nursery education over the last year is impressive so that children's individual progress is very well promoted. They are clear about their roles and responsibilities and ensure the smooth day-to-day running of the provision. A key worker system helps to ensure that individual progress is monitored as staff also share observations and are involved in future planning so that each child can achieve well. The majority of the staff are well qualified as is the manager whose enthusiastic and conscientious approach helps to ensure the effective delivery of nursery education within the nursery.

Improvements since the last inspection

At the previous inspection the nursery was recommended to update the child protection policy and procedures, which is now met and children therefore are further safeguarded.

The operational plan was to be reviewed to include procedures for the breakfast club and the transfer of children to and from school. The plan has been further developed as part of a continuous process to cover the procedures recommended. Children's care is therefore supported through sound policies and procedures.

Complaints since the last inspection

Since the last inspection 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

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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 good.

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):

- review the outdoor play to minimise hazards of children playing with balls, ride on toys and buggies playing in the same space
- consider ways to further promote healthy eating in particular with regard to packed lunches
- provide more visual stimulation for babies to further develop their senses
- ensure that the recruitment system is robust with particular regard to the checking of references

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):

- consider how to provide more opportunities for children to develop IT skills and to practise mathematical calculations such as basic adding and subtracting.

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