



First Steps Nursery

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	205542
Inspection date	16 October 2006
Inspector	Jill Scargall
Setting Address	Ice House, Victor Street, Grimsby, North East Lincolnshire, DN32 7QN
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Registered person	First Steps Grimsby 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 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 Nursery, established in 1988, is a privately owned facility in central Grimsby. The Pre-school Learning Alliance accredited setting operates from a large ground floor room in a building that was formerly an ice house. The nursery also has the use of a kitchen, toilets and a small, soft-surfaced outdoor play area.

A maximum of 26 children aged from two to eight years may attend the nursery at any one time. The owner also has another nursery nearby that cares for babies and children under three years of age. There are currently 50 children who attend throughout the week, mainly from the local area. These include 15 children who are in receipt of nursery education funding. The nursery also cares for children who have special educational needs. Opening hours are from 08.00 to 18.00 on Monday to Friday all year apart from public holidays and Christmas week.

In April 2004 the nursery formed a partnership with the local Sure Start programme and is now a satellite of the East Marsh Children's Centre. Nine full and part-time staff are employed, including a qualified teacher. All staff hold, or are working towards, a relevant childcare qualification.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Children are kept healthy and cross-infection is minimised because the nursery places a strong emphasis on health and hygiene. Children are encouraged to wash and dry their hands after toileting or messy activities. They try to blow their own noses and dispose of tissues and paper towels hygienically. Children are doing their best to fasten their own coats and take shoes on and off, and staff praise their developing independence.

Children receive appropriate care when they are ill as many of the staff have received first aid training. There are detailed policies and procedures in place that are shared with parents to make sure that sick children are kept at home. Records are accurately kept and staff are particularly sensitive to the needs of children who need regular medicines administered. Children have regular opportunities for exercise outside when the weather is suitable. They learn about their bodies when they are trying to control wheeled toys or balancing on beams outside. They can rest inside on comfortable furniture if they are tired.

A snack bar is available for children in the mornings and afternoons and they can help themselves to drinks and snacks. They are adept at using the drinks machine and can butter their own crackers and help with preparing fruit and tidying up after themselves. Children are provided with nutritious meals cooked on the premises, for example, sweet and sour pork with rice and vegetables, followed by a milk whip pudding. Children are good at setting their own places and most of them are able to use cutlery correctly. They are well mannered to adults and to one another and they are helpful to their friends, fetching one another drinks and helping to clear away. Children with special dietary needs are well supported, for example, a child with a poor appetite is given a smaller portion and lots of encouragement. A child who attends afternoon school is given a head start at lunch time, so he has plenty of time to digest his food and get to school. Children and staff sit together and enjoy meals as a pleasant social occasion.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

Children are welcomed into a safe nursery where staff place a strong emphasis on providing a colourful and interesting environment for children. The premises are warm and well maintained and as there is little natural light in the room, walls have been painted in attractive primary colours. There is a strong emphasis on imaginative displays of neatly labelled children's work and children identify and enjoy seeing their names and work on the walls. For example, displays illustrate 'What's in a pond' and 'All kinds of people'.

The safety of children is paramount. An excellent health and safety file of policies and procedures is regularly updated by staff to make sure of children's continued safety in the nursery. Children can move independently around a wide variety of developmentally appropriate toys stored at child height. Many more are centrally stored and regularly rotated. All toys are regularly checked for cleanliness and safety. They are reminded to help keep themselves safe by picking up toys when they drop them, so no one falls over them. They are advised to stay on the rubberised area when they are outside, so that they do not hurt themselves if they fall. They are also protected from harm by staff's secure understanding of child protection procedures.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

Children enjoy their time at the nursery. They learn well in a calm and relaxed atmosphere. Staff are skilled at supporting their play and learning. Activities for younger children are planned using the Birth to three matters framework and this planning is linked to the planning for older children. A key worker system is in place. This means that children separate from their carers with confidence as they know the member of staff well and feel secure within the nursery. Children are beginning to become good communicators and they enjoy daily opportunities for creative and imaginative play.

Nursery education

The quality of teaching and learning is good. Children greet staff and visitors to the nursery in a sociable manner and they are polite to one another. They are gaining independence by voluntarily helping with simple tasks like mopping the floor if they have spilt water. They are familiar with everyday events in their lives, like birthday parties and they are comfortable with nursery routines, for example they greet the milkman as an old friend. They have many opportunities throughout the day to talk to one another and to staff and visitors. They are becoming confident and skilled speakers. When they are asked questions they answer in sentences and they are happy to tell their friends at circle time what their name is and discuss what they have been doing.

Children are familiar with books. They routinely go to the book corner to choose a story to read alone or with a friend. They can match text to pictures and are aware that print carries meaning. They can follow the sequence of a book from left to right and open books correctly. Children are very good at using tools and equipment. Pencils and scissors are held correctly and the majority of children are attempting to make marks by trying to make lists, write their own names and cut out shapes. Staff use mathematical language in everyday activities, for example, full and empty in water play. Children count confidently and they are beginning to compare numbers in everyday situations, for example, they count how many children there are in the group, how many conkers there are in the compost.

They begin to make sense of the wider world through their topic based exploration and investigation. They are using a camera to photograph the local environment to compare changes throughout the seasons. They are becoming familiar with information and communication technology by routinely accessing interactive computer programs and using the 'phone when playing in the home corner. Children use their imaginations well during creative activities and

imaginative play. They enjoy music and movement to music. However, these are usually floor exercises so they are not making full use of activities like climbing and scrambling at different levels. They are developing a sense of their own health and bodies. They are aware that they are hot and sweaty when they have exercised and that they need a drink to cool down.

Staff have a good understanding of the Foundation Stage guidance and they provide a stimulating range of planned activities. Different activities are outlined for younger children but it is not always clear if activities are available for more and less able children. Staff have a positive attitude to promoting children's learning and they ask children open ended questions and challenge them. They vary their teaching techniques, working individually with children and in small and large groups. Children are developing self-control and motivation as a result of these teaching techniques. Activities are evaluated on a daily basis and key workers are skilled at recording observations of children, which contribute towards their records of achievement. However, evaluations of planned activities are general and do not show individual children's achievements or needs.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

Children relate well to staff. They enjoy a meaningful range of activities and resources to promote a positive view of a wider world. For example, they have celebrated different festivals, Chinese New Year, Divali, Christmas and Easter. They are also able to talk about their local community and recent experiences, for example, their birthday party and travelling by aeroplane to go on holiday.

Children are respected and valued as individuals. Staff are aware of the procedures to follow when they identify a child with learning difficulties. There is a high level of expectation of children's behaviour. Children respond well to the consistent methods used by staff to manage children's behaviour. They are aware of the few simple rules in place. Staff are calm in their approach to children and praise and encourage them. They have high expectations of children and use a sticker system to reward children; when they have helped to tidy up they are given 'well done' stickers.

The partnership with parents and carers is good. Children benefit from their parents welcome into the nursery and close liaison with their key workers. They get to know the children well and keep parents informed with regular doorstep chats or with more formal meetings where they can discuss their children's records of achievements. Parents receive well-organised detailed information about the nursery, including information about Foundation Stage guidance. Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered.

Organisation

The organisation is outstanding.

Overall, the provision meets the needs of the range of the children for whom it provides. Their needs are met effectively because they are cared for by a skilled staff who work as a team to provide a rich, varied and imaginative planned programme of activities. Staff fully contribute

in helping to plan activities and observing and assessing children. They organise their time so that children can be cared for in small, mixed age groups. .

Documentation is a strength of the nursery. Comprehensive policies and procedures are in place, together with an excellent portfolio of information showing how the nursery delivers care to children linked to the National Standards. This is part of their accreditation material for the Quality Assurance award through the Pre-school Learning Alliance. All records and information about the nursery are shared with parents.

The leadership and management are good. Staff development and regular staff meetings contribute to the smooth running of the nursery. Meetings are used as an opportunity to evaluate the running of the nursery and assess strengths and weaknesses. Staff regularly access further training to enhance the quality of care given to children. New members of staff receive a comprehensive induction and they all take part in an appraisal system and a system of peer observations.

Improvements since the last inspection

At the last inspection the nursery were asked to make sure that there was no cross-infection when children dried their hands. Children are kept safe from cross-infection by the use of paper towels after hand washing. Towels are binned after use.

The nursery was asked to provide large play equipment to develop the use of large muscle skills. Children can now access a slide and climbing frame during their free play activities. Few children were taking advantage of this equipment. Children have daily opportunities to practise mark making and they are guided in linking mark making to letters, by staff's constant identification of letters and sounds. They discuss words and letters in every day play and games, and offer activities helping children to identify and form letter shapes. At the last inspection staff were asked to make sure all aspects of the Foundation Stage guidance were covered over a period of time. There is ongoing monitoring of curriculum areas covered by staff as they plan their work. They are in the process of developing an easy method of checking stepping stones, covered by monitoring planning, which is recorded on the computer.

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.

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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):

- encourage use of equipment to develop large muscle skills by climbing, scrambling, swinging, and sliding

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):

- make sure that differentiation of activities includes more and less able children
- make sure evaluation and monitoring of activities identifies individual children's achievements and this information is used to inform future planned activities.

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