



Our Lady's First Steps Pre-School

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	EY244150
Inspection date	16 November 2006
Inspector	Michele Anne Villiers
Setting Address	Clinton View, Widnes, Cheshire, WA8 8JW
Telephone number	0151 420 7423
E-mail	
Registered person	Our Lady's First Steps Pre-School
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 satisfactory. 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?

Our Lady's First Steps Nursery and Out of School Club opened in 2004. The provision previously offered sessional care but this has now been incorporated into the full day care provision. It operates from six rooms in a single storey building that is situated on the grounds of Our Lady's Primary School, in Ditton, Widnes. A maximum of 73 children may attend the nursery at any one time, and a maximum of 24 children may attend the out of school club at any one time. The nursery is open each weekday from 08.00 to 18.00 and the out of school club is open from 08.00 to 09.00 and 15.15 to 18.00. All children share access to a secure enclosed outdoor play area.

There are currently 105 children, from birth to under five years, on roll in the full day care. Of these, 49 children receive funding for nursery education. The provision supports children with

learning difficulties or disabilities and also supports children who speak English as an additional language.

The setting employs 25 staff who work directly with the children. All staff hold appropriate early years qualifications.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is satisfactory.

The premises are suitably maintained and satisfactory steps are taken to help protect children from the spread of infection. Staff wear protective clothing when changing nappies and there are written procedures to follow if children should become sick. Children show an awareness of simple personal hygiene and are reminded to wash their hands at appropriate times. Parental consent is obtained for the administration of medication and staff record any accidents that occur. However, there is only one staff member who holds a current first aid certificate, and that member of staff is on long term leave. Other staff have failed to renew their first aid. This has resulted in the provision being in breach of regulations as there are no staff on the premises holding a current first aid certificate. The manager has acted promptly and secured staff placements on the next available first aid training course, which takes place in the very near future. Children are satisfactorily protected as staff have a good awareness of what to do in the event of a child having a minor accident, and their first aid certificates have only recently expired. One staff member has also completed a short training session on Paediatric Life Support to further help protect children.

Children benefit from a balanced, nutritional diet and learn to make healthy choices. The cook provides many home made meals, such as sweet and sour chicken with vegetables, and fresh fruit is offered daily. Staff plan activities to further help children develop an awareness of healthy food. Children make collage pictures using paper plates and stick on different shapes that represent various vegetables and fruit. In the home corner children play with pretend vegetables, such as broccoli and sweetcorn. Staff offer older children regular drinks of milk or water, although they are unable to freely help themselves to water to quench their thirst. Babies and young children are mainly offered drinks of juice, with occasional water, taking into account parental wishes.

Regular daily exercise promotes the children's health, growth and development. Older children run around in the playground, and enjoy games using large hoops and balls, skilfully rolling them to each other with good control and coordination. Indoors children play on a large climbing frame and slide to develop strength and balance. Children practise cutting with scissors and threading beads to develop their dexterity and small motor skills. Babies learn to crawl and walk, and toddlers gain body control as they climb over large soft play shapes. Staff interact well with young children, forming close attachments fostering the children's emotional well-being.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is satisfactory.

The premises are suitably secure helping to keep children safe. There is an intercom system at the main entrance and staff monitor all visitors to ensure unknown persons do not enter. Children are well supervised during play, and babies are closely monitored when they sleep. However, there is not a thermometer displayed in the sleep room to ensure adequate temperatures are maintained at all times. Children freely access a sufficient range of safe and suitable toys and resources appropriate for their age and ability. There is a good range of child size furniture with small chairs for young toddlers to independently access.

Staff conduct good safety measures to help protect children from harm. Risk assessment is carried out on the premises, toys and equipment, and staff follow a comprehensively written risk assessment manual. Children learn about safety throughout the daily routine as staff remind them to be careful when running around. During planned activities staff talk to children about people who help us, such as fire fighters and police, and on outings they learn about road safety.

Babies are safely strapped into high chairs for meals, and sleep comfortably in cots. Buggies and reins are used when taking young children on outings. Babies and toddlers develop a sense of danger, under the close supervision of staff, as they explore their environment and learn to walk, crawl and climb. The children's welfare is further safeguarded as staff have a satisfactory awareness of child protection issues. The manager is the designated child protection officer and has attended some training.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

Babies and young children enjoy a wide range of interesting play opportunities, helping them to make progress in their emotional, physical, social and intellectual development. Staff plan activities and have started to effectively use the 'Birth to three matters' framework. They use observation to monitor the children's progress and complete development records that are used for future planning. Babies receive cuddles and supportive interaction from staff. Staff sit with babies on the floor, talking, using eye contact, facial expression and voice intonation to develop the babies' communication skills. Staff use repetitive language and ask simple questions to help babies make connections. For example, when toddlers lose their socks staff say 'Where's your sock gone?', raising their arms up in surprise and looking around, repetitively use 'gone' and 'sock'. Toddlers look at their feet, then around the floor searching for their sock.

Staff provide different textured toys and make up treasure baskets, using large beads, cones, mirrors and soft hairbrushes, for babies to explore. Young children learn to make connections when playing with interactive toys. They discover that pressing and turning different knobs results in animal heads popping out of the boxes, causing the children to giggle and laugh. Young children enjoy painting and respond with delight as they paint their hands, feeling the cold and wet paint. Staff talk to them about colour, and children have fun using their imagination as they dress up, listen to stories and sing songs. Children attending the after school club enjoy a wide range of art and craft activities. They enthusiastically become involved in their play and

use their imagination well to create a variety of colourful collage displays and paintings. They learn the concepts of different board games which fosters their language, literacy and mathematical skills, and have fun playing table football and computer games.

Nursery Education.

The quality of teaching and learning of the nursery education is good. Children are interested and happy in their play. They confidently and inquisitively explore their environment, choosing different activities and interacting with staff. Staff have a good understanding of the Foundation Stage and use the six areas of learning to plan and provide a challenging range of activities. There is a good balance between adult led and child directed play with the children's interests being taken into account. However, some activities are disjointed and do not link together to further help reinforce the children's learning. For example, staff plan an activity on looking at mini beasts, but they do not use the activity to link to story time or art and craft throughout the rest of the day, with the use of supporting materials, in order to further foster the children's understanding and learning.

Staff use good observation methods to monitor the children's development and identify individual needs. Progress reports are completed on each child. Staff use these when planning future activities in order to adapt the activity to suit the need of the child. The children's independence is very much encouraged and staff support children well in small group settings. Children demonstrate good concentration skills when completing puzzles and construction, and they play well alongside each other, sharing and taking turns. Children are encouraged to use language to express themselves, and they enjoy reading books and listening to stories. Children freely access the writing table, and they become competent at recognising their written name when using name cards. Written words are displayed around the room, with associated words in certain areas, such as 'liquid' near the water play area, extending the children's vocabulary. However, staff do not always display pictorial images alongside the written word, for example, on toy storage containers, for children to make connections and fully understand the meaning of words.

Throughout the daily routine and during planned activities children develop an awareness of mathematical concepts and number recognition. They discuss 'full' and 'empty' when filling containers with water, and sequence pictures when completing puzzles. Children have fun singing number songs and staff use prompts to capture the children's interests. For example, a glove puppet is used when singing the 'Cheeky monkey' song and children calculate how many monkeys are left as staff remove one monkey face from the finger puppet. Children explore living things and become aware of the world around them. They use the garden to examine bugs, and observe the changing seasons as they explore the colour, growth and new buds of plants and trees. Children freely talk about their home life and become aware of past and present events. They talk about places they visit with their family, such as the park, and birthday parties and celebrations.

Many resources are provided for children to use to explore, investigate and examine objects. They delight in shining torches, using different size magnifying glasses to examine objects, and look at colour and shape in the kaleidoscope. Children access a range of programmable toys and become aware of everyday technology. Staff promote the children's creative skills

and there is a wealth of art work displayed. Children express their own ideas and thoughts when drawing and painting, and they explore various media on the 'Interest table', such as items made of cement, metal, wood and cotton. The children's imagination is fostered well and they access a role play area and have fun dressing up as animals, running and roaring like lions.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

Children confidently enter the nursery, initiate interaction with staff and positively contribute to the nursery. The effective key worker system and the caring relationship staff form with children foster their self-esteem and confidence. The children's artwork and photographs of them playing are displayed throughout the nursery, providing them with a sense of belonging. Children learn about their culture and enjoy celebrating birthdays and festivals. They learn about other cultures through some toys and resources that reflect positive images of race, culture, gender and disability. However, many of these toys are shared, with limited displayed images in each area of play.

The nursery is very proactive in ensuring good support is given to children with additional needs. Staff work closely with parents and other agencies to promote the children's welfare and development. Staff have begun to learn sign language, in order to open up the channels of communication with some children. They have also attended training on how to deal with certain medical conditions and requirements. Activities and play areas are assessed and re-organised to comfortably accommodate and fully integrate all children. Children are well behaved and staff act as good role models to promote the children's good behaviour. Staff are calm and consistent in their approach and encourage children to have manners and respect for each other, and to share and take turns. The children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered well.

The partnership with parents is good. Children benefit from the close relationship staff have with parents. Parents are welcomed into the nursery at any time and staff share information through informal daily discussion. Parental involvement is encouraged and parents have many opportunities to contribute their own ideas, thoughts and views. Staff work with parents to complete initial profiles on the children's stages of development. Questionnaires are used for parents to express their concerns and staff devise action plans to address any issues. There is a written manual titled 'Through play we learn', to help parents understand the Foundation Stage, the areas of learning, and the 'Birth to three matters' framework. Parents speak highly of the provision and of their satisfaction with the care provided. Formal meetings are occasionally arranged for parents to meet with key workers to discuss their child's progress and development reports.

Organisation

The organisation is satisfactory.

Children are settled and well cared for by qualified staff who use their skills and knowledge to support the children and provide a stimulating environment. There are effective procedures in place for the recruitment and vetting of staff, and to ensure staffing ratios are maintained at

all times to help protect and safeguard children. Regular team meetings and appraisal sessions help to identify any staff training needs. However, the manager failed to ensure sufficient staff retained their first aid certificates in order to cover an emergency situation.

The play environment is organised well and children are grouped according to age and ability. All regulatory documentation is in place, with written policies and procedures for staff to follow. The quality of leadership and management of the nursery education is good. The manager has a good awareness of the Foundation Stage and curriculum planning. She has attended a training course to improve her own skills and knowledge, and evaluates the teaching methods through observation and meetings with staff. Overall, the provision meets the needs of the range of children for whom it provides.

Improvements since the last inspection

The previous care inspection recommended that the nursery: make sure the visitors' book is available for signing by all who enter the setting; organise the heating system in the sessional facility so that children are able to enter a warm environment; organise the system for recording children's attendance, and provide details of any concerns relating to child protection issues to the registering body. There is a visitors' book available at the entrance and all visitors sign in on arrival. A new heater has been installed and staff arrive before children to ensure the heating is switched on. The registration system includes the arrival and departure of children. The child protection policy has been updated and includes information about contacting Ofsted should there be any concerns relating to child protection.

The previous inspection of children in receipt of nursery education recommended that the provision: assess the noise levels in the pre-school room; encourage parents to contribute towards their children's assessments; extend the opportunities for children to explore, investigate and discover in their own time, and promote the children's awareness of the changes that happen to their body when they are active and the importance of staying healthy. The pre-school rooms have now been changed and noise levels are no longer a problem or disruptive for the children's concentration and learning. The nursery now include a separate sheet of paper for parents to make written comments and contribute to their children's assessment records. Children now have free access to various resources for exploration and investigation. Staff plan topical activities to help children learn about their bodies, these include discussion with children about the impact of vigorous physical exercise on the body.

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

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 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):

- provide drinking water for older and more able children to freely access, and encourage young children to drink water
- ensure there is at least one member of staff with a suitable first aid certificate, in line with legislation, on the premises or on outings at any one time
- ensure the room where babies and young children sleep is maintained at the correct temperature
- increase the number of toys, resources and displays that reflect positive images of race, culture, gender and disability throughout the nursery.

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):

- use picture images alongside the written words on toy storage boxes and displays, to further help children develop an understanding of written words and their meaning
- continue to develop the planning of some activities, and link them together with additional supportive material, to further foster and reinforce the children's understanding and 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