



First Steps Mont.Prep Sch

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	405451
Inspection date	06 November 2006
Inspector	Vivienne Rose
Setting Address	5 Sebert Road, Forest Gate, London, E7 ONG
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Registered person	Maria Adesegha
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 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?

First Steps Montessori Prep School opened in 1990, and is privately owned. It operates from three rooms in a two storey converted house in Forest Gate in the London borough of Newham. The property is located in a mainly residential area and is in close proximity to transport facilities, schools and shops. A maximum of 22 children may attend the nursery at any one time. The prep school is open each weekday from 07.30 to 18.30 for 51 weeks of the year. The outdoor area is currently undergoing refurbishment and is not in use.

There are currently 22 children from seven months to four years on roll. Of these, 12 children receive funding for nursery education. Children come from a wide catchment area as most of their parents travel to work in and around the area. The setting supports children who speak English as an additional language.

The nursery employs eight staff, six of the staff hold appropriate early years qualifications. Two of the staff are working towards a qualification. The setting receives support from the local authority. The prep school practices Montessori teaching methods within their curriculum programme.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is satisfactory.

Children learn the importance of good personal hygiene through daily routines. They know, for example, that it stops germs spreading when they cover their noses or hold their hands over their mouth when they cough to prevent infection. Children are cared for in a clean hygienic environment where staff follow good hygiene procedures, for example, ensuring that surfaces are sterilised before children eat. Accidents are recorded appropriately to protect the safety of children and parents sign to acknowledge accidents when they occur.

Children benefit from a healthy diet. All children have access to drinking water throughout the day and older children can help themselves to water at any time. They enjoy a variety of nutritious meals and snacks, for example, fresh fruit salad. These comply with all special dietary requirements to ensure the children's health needs are met.

Vigorous physical play is not a regular feature of the nursery provision as there is no access to a garden at present. However, staff take the children to visit local parks and playgrounds as often as possible to promote their health and development.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is satisfactory.

Children's risk of accidental injury is minimised because staff carry out risk assessments to make sure any hazards are identified to promote their safety. Security precautions, such as video entry, keep children safe in the nursery. However, limited staff ratios at the beginning of the day mean that children sometimes are not adequately supervised to meet requirements.

Children use a satisfactory range of resources which are developmentally appropriate to their needs. Most equipment is stored at child height to enable children to access easily. Staff explain safe practices, such as why children should pick up items dropped on the floor and move furniture and push chairs under tables so that other children do not hurt themselves. This helps children take responsibility for keeping themselves and others safe. Regular fire drills enable children to learn about what to do in an emergency.

Children are well protected. The child protection coordinator ensures that procedures are up to date and that staff understand their responsibilities to record concerns.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is satisfactory.

There are major differences between the quality of experiences offered to children under three and those provided for other children. Younger children under three years have satisfactory relationships with their key workers which supports their sense of well-being. Children begin to play happily together with each other and with adults, however, there are limited opportunities for the children to be appropriately challenged within their play. Children gain confidence when they take part in news time, for example, discussing what they did at the weekend. Staff encourage children to discuss the day of the week and the weather, this helps them to express their thoughts and ideas. Staff are beginning to use the 'Birth to three matters framework' and planning covers all of the areas. However, children do not make enough progress because staff do not provide children with a sufficient range of activities to give them with the opportunity to make choices. Although staff record activities for each area of the 'Birth to three matters' not all the activities are appropriate to the children's age and interests. As a result, some of the children are less focused and become distracted. The lack of evaluation in the provision means that staff are not able to see when they are successful in promoting development and learning, and where there are aspects for improvement. The way that the book area is organised and the limited selection of books made available means that this area is rarely used by the children.

Nursery Education.

The quality of teaching and learning is good. Staff plan a good range of play and learning activities for the funded children. There are medium and short term plans to enable children to reach their full potential in all six areas of learning. Staff know the children very well which helps them to plan effectively for their next steps. There are effective systems in place and assessment records clearly show children's approach to learning and their achievements. Staff have a good understanding of the Foundation Stage and how to plan the next steps for children's learning using the stepping stones approach. Weekly planning and good interaction means that staff are able to meet the needs of children well. Support from the local authorities' peripatetic teacher has supported staff in developing effective planning and recording systems. These are comprehensive and easy to use.

Children communicate well; they are confident to speak in groups and to express their feelings and thoughts. Children listen to stories, concentrate well and use their writing skills to express themselves, for example, 'this is my house'. Children are beginning to recognise their own names on the helper chart, which helps them to read when it is their turn to hand out the plates at lunchtime. They learn the sounds of letters and words and good labelling within the room and on displays enable children to begin to understand that words carry meaning. Children have access to handmade books recording their activities, for example, making transport biscuits. These books contain the recipe and photographs of themselves taking part in the activity, this supports their learning well. However, the way that the book area is presently organised limits the opportunity for children to relax and handle books independently.

Children develop a positive attitude to others and are developing a good understanding of the wider community. They have many opportunities to celebrate festivals, try food and use resources

which show positive images of gender, disability and culture and also text in various community languages. Children are beginning to recite using French which is offered as part of the curriculum. Children behave well. They are given lots of positive praise and encouragement which supports their sense of self-esteem. They learn to take turns and to say 'please and thank you' and to be polite. They enjoy talking about and expressing their feelings when they use 'feelings' dolls.

Children are beginning to develop their understanding of mathematical development as they talk about halves and quarters when they cut their fruit for tea time. They learn about shapes and use positional language and count five minutes when they wait their turn to use the computer. Children use sequencing cards to talk about what happened next.

Children have good opportunities to explore and investigate the environment, visits to the local parks and the 'Discovery Centre' help them to develop and interest in the natural world. Children enjoy using the computer and use simple technology to design and make masks for Carnival celebrations. They are beginning to understand about the growth of living things when they discuss the lifecycle of the butterfly. Regular opportunities for the children to mix ingredients to make cakes and biscuits help them ask questions about why things happen and how things work.

Children have regular opportunities to take part in visits to the local parks and play areas to develop their sense of space, this helps them to develop their skills and understanding of what their bodies can do. They use equipment, such as knives, punches and pencil sharpeners, with skill. Children are developing their finer physical skills when they learn to hold a pencil correctly. They learn about good hygiene when they brush their teeth after lunch and about eating food that is good for you when they eat their fresh fruit at tea time.

Children enjoy singing rhymes and songs. They are developing a good understanding of cultural festivals and religions when they celebrate Diwali, the festival of light. They make good use of the computer and show high levels of involvement in these activities. Children enjoy paint and glue and construct using a variety of recycled materials which helps them to develop their own ideas and imagination freely. They dress up and show great enjoyment in this, however, this play is quite structured. There are fewer opportunities for the children to take part in a variety of role play activities to extend their imagination and to engage in free role play using first hand experiences of the world they live in.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is satisfactory.

Each child is regarded as individual in the nursery. Children from a variety of cultural backgrounds attend the nursery. Staff ensure that resources represent the children who attend. This helps children develop a positive attitude to others and helps to support their self-esteem. Children are generally well behaved and polite and there are clear guidelines for the management of behaviour within the group. All the children are regularly praised for good behaviour when it occurs which supports their self-esteem and well-being. However, the staff working with the younger children are not always consistent in their management of challenging behaviour when it occurs. This means that children are not always given consistent boundaries to support their

understanding of what is expected of them. Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered.

Partnership with parents is good. Parents are given regular newsletters and information to keep them up to date with the activities in the nursery. There is clear information about the setting's policies and procedures. Managers use questionnaires to obtain feedback from parents. This enables them to have their say about the care and education provided for their children. Staff give regular feedback to parents about the child's day and this supports the continuity of care provided for the children. Staff prepare 'leaving' profiles of the children showing their progress and development.

Organisation

The organisation is satisfactory.

Generally the rooms are well laid out; most of the staff show satisfactory understanding of their role in supporting children's play and development. The children are happy to take responsibility to help tidy away activities and to help the staff. However, the management's lack of clear procedures to monitor and evaluate the staff's practice means that staff working with younger children lack confidence in their interpretation of the 'Birth to three matters' framework. The areas used for younger children and the activities provided are quite structured which means that resources are limited and less accessible to children. This does not promote their independence or choice. As a result the activities provided for younger children lack variety which hinders their progress.

Good recruitment and employment procedures ensure that all staff complete the required vetting to ensure they are suitable to work with children. Staff have clear procedures for monitoring the children's arrival and departure times. The nursery maintains a list of staff suitability to ensure all staff working with children are suitable to do so. There are clear policies and procedures for the induction of new staff to ensure the safety and well-being of the children.

The leadership and management are good. The majority of staff are suitably qualified. The management are committed to developing good practice in this area. There are clear observation, assessment and planning methods for all children in place. However, the assessments for younger children are not always used effectively to plan the next steps to suit the developmental needs for their age and stage. Staff working with funded children have a clear direction which is very effective and supports the children's learning well to enable them to reach their full potential. The management encourages all staff to update their training which recently has included level three qualifications for the National Vocational Qualification in Care and Education.

Documentation is well organised and confidentially maintained. Procedures are updated regularly in line with new legislation. The management works hard to ensure that the policies and procedures are well presented and demonstrate clearly the aims and objectives of the setting. The setting meets the needs of the range of children for whom it provides.

Improvements since the last inspection

At the last care inspection the provider agreed to: develop the provision of resources to meet the developmental needs of children under two years; maintain written documentation for children who are lost and uncollected and fire evacuation procedures; maintain suitable information on the checks on staff suitability and develop staff's knowledge of behaviour management.

Resources have now been developed to include additional books and resources to suit the needs of the younger children and now there are small tables and chairs to enable them to access activities more easily. All staff information is clearly maintained to ensure that staff are suitably checked to work with children to safeguard their welfare. The procedures for lost and uncollected children and fire evacuation are clear and staff are aware of their responsibilities to protect children. There are clear policies for the management of children's behaviour within the setting which are displayed in each room. However, the staff working with the younger children still lack some consistency of approach when dealing with challenging behaviour.

The key issues for nursery education have been addressed by the staff who work with the funded children. The written plans now clearly identify how activities are extended for more able children to enable them to reach their full potential. The programme for creative development has been extended and children have regular opportunities for role play, a doctors set has been purchased and a set of super heroes' costumes which are well used by the children. However, children have limited opportunities to extend this role play or to develop their ideas and understanding in the home corner play. Children now serve themselves at mealtimes which supports their independence, choice and sense of responsibility.

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):

- develop a suitable range of activities for the younger children as explained in 'Birth to three matters'.
- develop a rigorous system to monitor and evaluate the quality of teaching
- ensure that all staff are aware of the setting's behaviour management policy to enable them to develop a consistent approach so that children know how to behave and is what is expected of them.

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):

- improve the planning to give children the opportunity to initiate their own imaginative play to enable them to engage in activities based on their own experiences

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