



Early Steps Pre-School

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	301827
Inspection date	28 November 2006
Inspector	Sharon, Amelia Robson
Setting Address	Tirecel Community Centre, Fulmar Drive, South Beach Estate, Northumberland, NE24 3RJ
Telephone number	01670 367971
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Registered person	South Beach Residents Association
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 good. The registered person meets the National Standards for under 8s day care and childminding.

The quality and standards of the nursery education are outstanding.

WHAT SORT OF SETTING IS IT?

Early Steps Pre-school has been a registered service since 1993, has 73 children on roll, and operates from a community centre, located in an estate on the outskirts of Blyth. There is also a mobile classroom within the grounds of the centre which enables the group to be divided into suitable age groups. The group caters mainly for families living or working in the area but is also open to children from the nearby surrounding areas.

In the community centre and mobile classroom there is one main play area which is divided up into various areas to cater for the different child developmental skills. An enclosed play area is available for outdoor play.

All of the staff have an early years qualifications and have a great deal of experience in child care. The pre-school have student placements. Funded education is provided for children aged three and four and the group also receive support from the Early Years Development Partnership.

The pre-school opens five days a week during school term time. Sessions are from 08:45 to 11:15 and 12:30 to 15:00.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Children thrive because the provision follows effective written procedures and practises, which meet their physical, nutritional and health needs. The very good adult support and guidance helps children gain an excellent understanding of hygiene and a real desire to be independent in their personal care. Children are made aware of very good personal hygiene through positive role modelling provided by the staff. They enthusiastically encourage children to wash their hands before snacks and discuss the reason why. Children recently had the opportunity to look at personal hygiene and people who help to take care of us. They also had a visit from a dental hygienist who talked to the children about looking after their teeth and this was followed up with activities in the pre-school. The comprehensive policy and detailed discussion with parents regarding the admission of sick children helps to minimise the risk of cross infection and therefore safeguards children's health. Detailed accident and medication recording systems are in place and staff are clear on how to maintain these. All staff have relevant first aid training.

Children enjoy an extremely healthy and nutritious diet, as staff ensure that fresh foods are provided. Snack times are seen as a social time where children and staff sit together, chatting and enjoying each others company. Water and milk are available at snack time and can ask for a drink throughout the session. However, children do not have opportunities to help themselves to water throughout the session. Children are encouraged to try new foods, especially when celebrating festivals. For example the children recently celebrated Diwali and were able to taste traditional Indian foods. Children have opportunities to grow crops in the pre-school garden, and having planted lettuce and watched it grow, they then had the opportunity to make sandwiches with it for snack time. Children also benefit from the staff's increased knowledge on healthy eating.

Children have great opportunities to take part in stimulating indoor and outdoor activities. Staff's very good knowledge and understanding of each child's stage of development means children are confident to try out new skills and ask for help when needed. Children take part in a wide range of activities that further contribute to their good health, for example opportunities to enjoy the outdoor area on a daily basis. They are able to develop their physical skills, such as climbing, jumping and balancing, through the very good range of high quality equipment available. Children are given lots of positive encouragement by staff to enjoy these activities.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

The premises are extremely welcoming and very well organised for children to use safely. Children confidently access the designated childcare areas, with good age appropriate supervision and support from staff. They are encouraged to be aware of safety both indoors and outdoors. Staff ensure the premises are safe and secure so that children are well protected. Comprehensive safety measures have been taken, for example, there are secure and effective entry systems to the building. Children learn about keeping safe, for example, they learn about road safety in planned role play activities and from time spent with a police officer in the local community. Staff regularly practise fire drills with the children, which further promotes their safety. Through extensive daily risk assessments, staff ensure that all areas accessed by children are very safe. Staff have very high regard for children's safety and have comprehensive policies and procedures in place.

Children use a wide variety of good quality equipment, appropriate to their age and stage of development. It is regularly monitored to ensure it is safe and well maintained. Toys and resources are replaced, updated and added to on a regular basis. Relevant publications are consulted when purchasing new equipment and staff keep up to date with changes in legislations regarding Health and Safety.

Children's welfare is safeguarded and promoted by staff who have a very good understanding of child protection procedures and their role in safeguarding the children in their care. Staff have completed relevant training and have comprehensive policies and procedures in place.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is outstanding.

Children thoroughly enjoy their time at the pre-school, they are very happy and settled. They achieve well because staff are highly skilled and use their extensive knowledge to provide high quality care and education. They have very positive relationships with staff, relating very well to both staff and their peers. They chat, share a joke and are very confident to approach staff for support or to show them what they are doing or have done. They enthusiastically join in both large and small group activities, and also focus and concentrate well during individual tasks. Children's confidence and self-esteem is given high priority as they are offered praise and encouragement for their efforts and achievements. Children's independence is fostered as they make their own choices and decisions.

Children's learning is actively promoted through an extensive range of stimulating activities and resources. Staff interact well with the children, giving lots of attention, encouragement and motivation to play and enjoy activities.

They are able to select toys and activities from the extremely well resourced pre-school rooms. Children are very enthusiastic as they use their natural sense of curiosity and develop their imagination, for example using pieces of material as butterfly wings. They use the extensive range of art and craft materials in many ways to make interesting pictures and models. Children's

art work is clearly displayed and daily discussions and photographs keep parents informed about activities the children have experienced.

Nursery Education

The quality of teaching and learning is outstanding. Children gain an abundance of confidence in their abilities and build very positive relationships with their peers and staff. They participate in new and exciting projects and are encouraged to take an active role in the pre-school. Staff are extremely skilled at using clear and appropriate language and guidance which enables children to learn and develop very well. Staff have a sound understanding of how children gain independence and allow them to explore and investigate in many stimulating activities and projects. These are organised to allow for flexibility and spontaneity, which enables each child to choose what they want to do and develop their own ideas. Children are extremely enthusiastic in their use of the different play areas, allowing them to use their imagination in exciting ways.

Staff have an excellent understanding of the Foundation Stage of learning. Their planning is extremely detailed and creative, and is used very effectively in practice. Staff use lots of impressive teaching methods and tools and there are many play and learning opportunities occurring throughout each session. Staff effectively monitor children as they participate in activities and detailed assessment includes checklists, observations, photographs and samples of children's work. All monitoring and assessment is used extremely effectively to inform future planning and therefore enabling the whole of the curriculum to be delivered over time. Staff ensure that activities are differentiated to provide the correct level of challenge for all children and that the balance of adult-led and child-driven activities is appropriate. Children confidently stand up in large group sessions to talk about what they have done, and remain very focused during adult-led activities, listening well and responding to instructions. They make choices about what they want to do, confidently selecting activities and collecting resources. Children are developing their self-help skills, putting on their coats for outdoor play and attending to their own toileting needs. Children behave extremely well. They take turns and share as they patiently wait for their turn to use resources. They think about the needs of each other, as they make spaces on the carpet for their peers and carefully line up ensuring everyone is ready to go outdoors. They are developing very good manners and consistently say please and thank you to each other and staff. Children use language effectively to communicate their feelings, thoughts and ideas, and are given lots of encouragement from staff to do this.

Children take part in story time with great enjoyment, and they participate in the storyline and enthusiastically join in when appropriate to do so. Children regularly select books spontaneously to look at alone or to share with a member of staff. They also have the opportunity to participate in the book loan system and spend time on a one-to-one basis looking at their book, as well as time at home. Children have great opportunities to learn and develop their understanding of letters, working with their key workers on 'Jolly Phonics', looking at related pictures, sounds and words. Children are able to recognise their own name and those of some of their peers during self registration. Children have excellent opportunities to access mark making materials to develop their skills throughout the session, for example children thoroughly enjoyed using the materials provided in the 'office'. They are able to count very confidently to 10 and beyond and are very enthusiastic when counting the number of children at registration or when lining up for outdoor play. They are very confident in using mathematical language as descriptors,

identifying objects as being little, big, and using words such as 'underneath' and 'on top of'. Children also recognise shape, and use words such as triangle, square and star to describe what they see.

Children learn about the wider world as they take part in celebrating a variety of cultural festivals, looking at books, listening to music and taking part in related craft activities. They learn about their own community from visitors to the pre-school such as fire-fighters and police officers. Children have many opportunities to develop their knowledge and understanding of technology, and use the computer with absolute confidence to complete programmes. Children express themselves well through singing and dance, they move around the room confidently, dancing and moving to music. They play alongside each other whilst engaged in the same activity, creating scenarios with the prams, dolls and role play clothes. Children have excellent opportunities to develop their creativity through their access to paint and an extremely wide variety of art and craft materials. Children use their imagination whilst building models from 'junk' and describing to staff what they doing.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

Staff work very closely with parents to ensure children's individual needs are met. Close and caring relationships increase children's sense of trust and help them develop a strong sense of self. Children are valued and respected as individuals and staff aim to ensure all children feel welcome, happy and settled. They strive to help children reach their full potential and meet their needs. Children have access to a wide range of resources in the pre-school, which reflect differing backgrounds and abilities. Children benefit from the staff's very positive attitude towards diversity and respecting individual needs and differences. They have many opportunities to celebrate festivals, for example they recently celebrated Diwali where children were able to make Diwali lights and dance to Indian music.

Children learn about sharing and valuing others from the excellent role models provided by the staff, who gently and sensitively support, praise and encourage children in their daily routines and activities. This helps them to develop their self-esteem, confidence and sense of belonging. Children are extremely well behaved and very polite. They are happy and relaxed in the group and they respond well to guidance from staff. Children are able to make choices in their play and daily routines and are confident as they select play materials and participate in activities. Staff are adept at encouraging children to share their opinions and take an active role in the group. All children are valued by staff, who have sound knowledge of each child's individual needs, which ensures there is consistency and continuity for them to learn and progress effectively.

The partnership with parents is excellent. Parents are really positive about the very good quality of care and education their children receive. There is a very strong sense of community in the setting, and parents are able to participate in the exchange of information necessary for their child's care. They are kept fully informed about daily issues and have a very good awareness of the planning and topics for activities. There are regular newsletters, an open door policy and the opportunity for parents to look at their child's development files at any time, therefore allowing them to see how their child is progressing. Parents are fully involved in the Jolly

Phonics and book share system, and staff take time to work with parents to ensure they use these appropriately at home. Parents are well informed about the Foundation Stage, the areas of learning, and the stepping stones, and are invited to attend regular reviews in respect of their child's progress. Many examples of children's work is displayed in the pre-school and children have many opportunities to take their art and craft projects home to show what they have achieved.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

Leadership and management is excellent, practice is smooth and consistent, therefore benefiting all of the children and their parents. Staff have an extremely professional approach to their work and the daily care of the children. This is reflected in the pre-school, and in the extremely well organised child care areas, the very effective safety measures taken and in the excellent range of high quality resources and equipment provided. Children settle well and feel secure in the setting, due to the clearly defined daily routines and activities.

Comprehensive files, records and information boards keep both staff and parents well informed of all relevant information and plans. There is a complaints procedure in place, however Ofsted details are not very clear. A wide range of policies and procedures including safeguarding children, diversity and children's behaviour management are used appropriately to inform practice and protect children. There are very detailed recording systems in place including comprehensive individual children's records, and staff continually update and develop these.

Children progress very well and benefit from the care provided and from the staff's very positive attitude towards their own training and personal development. Staff have completed an extremely wide range of appropriate training relating to health and safety, and the Foundation Stage. They continue to look at further development to enhance their considerable knowledge and skills.

The grouping of children, and the effective deployment of staff, reflects and meets children's individual needs.

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

Improvements since the last inspection

There were three recommendations from the last care inspection in relation to the child protection and complaints policy and the structure of activities for older children. The child protection policy now has clear Ofsted details and information regarding any allegation against a member of staff. The complaints procedure for parents now contains Ofsted details, however the address needs to be updated. The structure of activities for older children now gives them lots of opportunities to make decisions.

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 can be seen 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 good. The registered person meets the National Standards for under 8s day care and childminding.

The quality and standards of the nursery education are outstanding.

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 children with opportunities to access drinking water throughout the session
- clearly show Ofsted details in the complaints policy and procedure.

The quality and standards of the nursery education

No recommendations for improvement are made because the quality and standards of nursery education are outstanding.

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