



## First Step

Inspection report for early years provision

<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	EY341003
<b>Inspection date</b>	19 January 2007
<b>Inspector</b>	Caroline Preston
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<b>Registered person</b>	First Step Opportunity Group Ltd.
<b>Type of inspection</b>	Integrated
<b>Type of care</b>	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](http://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 outstanding. 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?

First Step opened in 1988. It is run by First Step Opportunity Group a company limited by guarantee and a registered charity run by a board of trustees. It operates from purpose built independent premises adjoined to RJ Mitchell school. It is situated in Hornchurch, Essex. A maximum of 24 children may attend the playgroup at any one time. The playgroup sessions are open Tuesday to Friday 09:30 to 12:00. There are currently 63 children aged from two to under five years on roll, of these, seven receive funding for early years education.

Specifically structured PACC (Promoting Attention Communication and Co-operation sessions), developed to support children with social communication difficulties or on the autistic spectrum, are held on Monday and Wednesday afternoons.

The setting employs 21 members of staff. Of these, 14 hold appropriate early years qualifications. For two days a week First Step employs a music therapist. The setting also has input from a wide number of professionals providing additional related services, these include; portage services, physiotherapist, occupational therapists, speech and learning therapists, peripatetic teachers for the visually impaired and hearing impaired and educational psychologists. The group works closely with the area Special Educational Needs Co-ordinators, the TEACH outreach team and the Learning Support Service.

## **THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION**

### **Helping children to be healthy**

The provision is outstanding.

Staff pay high attention to children's individual health needs, therefore excellent care is given to meeting any specific needs children have. All staff are highly trained and up to date with administering any specific medication children need. Staff have relevant first aid knowledge and hold current certificates, therefore are able to deal with accidents if they occur. Hygiene is maintained to a high standard, staff wear appropriate gloves and aprons when changing children, they keep records to ensure all children's toileting routines are monitored. Children are supported in hygiene practices, so that the risk of infection is low for example, encouraged to clean their hands after eating. Individual care plans ensure staff follow clear guidance in caring for individual children and that they understand each child's needs and routines.

Children are offered snacks and drinks that are appropriate for them, for example healthy banana's which are soft and easy to chew, because many children have eating difficulties. Children are encouraged by staff to make choices using small pictures of different food for example a biscuit or piece of fruit. Children show delight in being independent, pointing and saying what they want using the pictures, they enjoy happy social snacktimes with each other and staff.

Children develop physical skills by hiding under the large colourful parachute; they laugh and move around promoting their large motor skills. They have opportunities to use the swinging blanket, balance beams, balls and trampet. Staff encourage children to explore their physical skills in the multi-sensory room, where large bean bags allow children to move with fun.

### **Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe**

The provision is outstanding.

The provision has recently moved to a fantastic new setting, which was an unused infant's school. Staff have made excellent use of the rooms available, the two playrooms are utilised very well, allowing children to move confidently. The music therapy room has plenty of space to accommodate a large piano and musical instruments, as well as having a one way window so, staff and parents can observe children learning. The multi-sensory room has been developed to offer children a range of sensory experiences; the room is bright and welcoming. Children also have use of the quiet room which allows them to access the computer at any time.

Play resources are excellent, they are individual to the varying needs of children, well made and safe. They are stimulating and easily accessible, the play resources are arranged around the playroom such as; role play area, book area, creative area, construction area, carpet area. Therefore children can make choices and engage in play covering all the areas of the curriculum.

Safety within the setting is excellent, staff monitor the reception area, a key pad system is used so no unwanted visitors can enter. All adults sign in and out, children are very well supervised on a one to one basis. All fire precautions have been addressed and there are three named fire marshals, daily risk assessments are carried out throughout the premises.

Staff have a very good understanding of child protection issues. They work closely with outside agencies on a monthly basis to monitor any issues that may arise. The setting has a well written policy available to both staff and parents. Therefore children are well protected.

### **Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do**

The provision is outstanding.

Children are happy, relaxed and very well stimulated by the range of learning experiences offered to them. They are given many well planned opportunities to communicate and make choices in their play. For example the PACC sessions that give structure to children's learning but also choice of what they want to do. The sessions encourage and allow children to communicate their thoughts and feelings in a safe well equipped, warm learning environment. Staff have very good relationships with children, they carefully and smoothly get to know children's characters and needs, giving praise and encouragement, building self-esteem.

### **Nursery Education**

The quality of teaching and learning is outstanding. Staff are very knowledgeable of the Foundation Stage Curriculum and Smaller Steps programme. They adapt the curriculum in order to meet each child's learning needs. There are excellent systems in place to observe and monitor children's progress through Individual Educational Plans, which are adapted to follow the early learning goals. Children develop creativity through touching and feeling cornflakes, they feel the texture and shape and weight of them. Children learn about words, letters and sounds through stories being told to them by staff, they feel the different textures inside the book. They follow staff's expressions and voice, supporting communication, language and literacy. They use maketon and picture exchange systems to communicate with staff. They learn about mathematics by stacking toys, placing them in order of size, staff use mathematical language to support this. Children develop knowledge and understanding of the world through role play, pouring cups of tea and playing in the children's play house area.

### **Helping children make a positive contribution**

The provision is outstanding.

Children have access to a very good range of toys that promote diversity such as; books, posters, dolls and dressing up clothes. There are an excellent range of toys available for children with specific needs that support their growing development; staff are always paying high attention to children individually in order for them to progress. The setting supports pre-school children

with learning disabilities very well. Systems in place are extremely well planned and monitored; many outside agencies are part of the support offered. These include; portage services, physiotherapists, occupational therapist, speech and learning therapist, and peripatetic teachers.

Children behave well, they are supported by staff that are very aware of their abilities and plan to ensure they are stimulated and cared for very well. Staff are good role models, they tell children what they want them to do rather than asking them to stop what they don't want them to do. Parents are very well supported by all staff and professionals to meet the needs of their child. Children's social, moral, spiritual and cultural development is appropriately fostered.

The partnership with parents of children who receive nursery education is outstanding. They receive regular information about their child's progress, are invited to be part of it by watching videos of how children are progressing in the sessions. They receive regular reports, and attend regular meeting. Written information given to them about the service and Foundation Stage is very good.

### **Organisation**

The organisation is outstanding.

The setting meets the needs of the range of children for whom it provides. Staff are safe to work with children and have undergone appropriate suitability checks. Staff are very well qualified to at least a level three in childcare and education, they have many years of childcare experience and much expertise. The organisation of the sessions are excellent, which include Play Group, Music Therapy, Promoting Attention, Communication, and Co-operation sessions, Family sessions and Multi –Sensory sessions.

All the relevant policies and procedures are in place to ensure the excellent running of the setting. These are regularly updated and amended accordingly. Staff are very good at maintaining accurate records of individual children's care and educational progress.

Leadership and management of the nursery education are outstanding. They have put into practice an excellent system that ensures all children's individual needs are met, and that they relate to the Foundation Stage Curriculum. They have also devised a curriculum that works especially for children with learning difficulties and that ties in very well with the early learning goals. Very good systems are in place to monitor and evaluate the curriculum, staff attend on going training to maintain high standards and childcare knowledge. Staff are committed and work very closely together to ensure the very high standard of learning experiences are offered to children.

### **Improvements since the last inspection**

Not applicable.

### **Complaints since the last inspection**

Since registration 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 outstanding. 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**

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

#### **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](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)