



## 1st Steps

Inspection report for early years provision

<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	EY263881
<b>Inspection date</b>	16 January 2007
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<b>Setting Address</b>	42 - 44 Irlam Road, Bootle, Merseyside, L20 4AL
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<b>Registered person</b>	Little B's Limited T/A 1st Steps
<b>Type of inspection</b>	Integrated
<b>Type of care</b>	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](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 satisfactory. The registered person meets the National Standards for under 8s day care and childminding.

The quality and standards of the nursery education are satisfactory.

### WHAT SORT OF SETTING IS IT?

1st Steps Day Nursery was registered in 2003 and is owned by a private organisation. It is a designated 'neighbourhood nursery' situated in Bootle and serves families within the local district and surrounding areas. The provision caters for children aged from birth to five years. It operates week days only, all year round except bank holidays from 07.30 to 18.00. Children are accommodated at ground and first floor level in six care rooms with associated facilities. There is an additional sensory room and resource room. Meals are prepared in the kitchen on site. There are three safely enclosed outdoor play areas.

A maximum of 80 children aged under five may attend the provision at any one time. There are currently 90 children on roll, attending a variety of sessions, of whom 23 receive funding for nursery education. The provision currently supports children with disabilities. There are 20 members of staff who work with the children. Of these, 18 hold appropriate early years

qualifications including the provider managers, and two other staff are working towards a qualification. The nursery receives support from the local authority early years team.

## **THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION**

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

The provision is good.

Children are cared for in a clean and healthy environment where staff follow good hygiene procedures. Staff demonstrate to children how to wash their hands thoroughly and older children understand that dirty hands spread germs. Pre-school children are encouraged to brush their teeth and are told how to keep their teeth and gums healthy.

Routines give good support for children's physical and emotional well-being, offering a well balanced programme of rest and activity and daily opportunities to get fresh air and exercise. The individual eating and sleeping patterns of young babies are followed well. Pre-school children have good opportunities to play with a range of equipment to develop skills of coordination and balance and they learn to move about safely and imaginatively. Toddlers are eager to make their first steps as they explore their environment with staff support.

Children's medical and dietary needs are met well. Staff learn procedures to carry out in emergencies for children with specific medical needs. There is a clearly written sickness policy shared with parents and a good number of staff are qualified to administer first aid. Children are given regular meals and snacks which contribute to a healthy balanced diet. The cook discusses menu plans with the children to ensure their likes and dislikes are taken into account. Parents of babies and toddlers are kept well informed about what their children have eaten. Children have good access to drinks of water throughout the day and are also given drinks with their snacks and meals.

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

The provision is good.

The premises are well maintained and secure to keep children safe. The well proportioned rooms afford children plenty of space for safe movement and the layout of equipment is well planned for ease of access. The environment is warm and welcoming for children with displays of their art work in every room and colourful equipment to play with.

Children make good use of the three play areas outside. These are very well designed to provide children with different kinds of experiences whether this is to use the fixed equipment on the safety surface, try a little gardening, play imaginatively in the playhouse or on the marked playground. Inside there is a sensory room and an additional resource room which children regularly use for a change of surroundings. Each room is suitably equipped for the relevant age range and equipment is well maintained.

Good procedures are followed to prevent children having accidents. Each part of the nursery is fully risk assessed and staff use a daily check list to ensure all areas are safe. Children are well supervised at all times. Sleeping babies are monitored frequently and this is recorded.

Children learn to behave and go down the stairs in an orderly way holding on to the banisters. Staff warn them to take care when steps become narrower so that they are aware of dangers. Children are protected well by the staff's good understanding of safeguarding policies. Community police officers visit the nursery to talk to the children about stranger danger and who to come to if they need help.

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

The provision is satisfactory.

Babies and toddlers are encouraged to explore their environment using all their senses with some good resources such as items from heuristic play boxes, a range of materials with different textures, and musical toys. Staff listen and respond to their different ways of communicating, and play turn taking games. Toddlers have great fun exploring what they can do with shredded paper piled up in a ring that they can crawl into. Staff throw paper into the air so that it falls over the children's heads to which some respond with squeals of delight.

Planning for young children is not always based on an understanding of their developmental stage and topics are sometimes unrelated to children's experiences. Children have sufficient opportunities to play creatively with a range of resources and different materials and begin to take an interest in stories and books. Not all staff develop children's listening and speaking skills well and some miss opportunities to develop children's vocabulary.

All staff establish good relationships with children which helps them to develop confidence and self esteem. Their enthusiasm and friendliness encourages children to join in and have a go. Children are able to make choices and the layout of equipment encourages independence. Children sustain their play in self chosen activities well and there is a happy and busy atmosphere.

### **Nursery education**

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. Children make steady progress towards early learning goals. Planning systems are not fully understood by staff and as a consequence some opportunities are missed to promote learning, particularly in some aspects of mathematics and knowledge and understanding of the world. Learning aims are sometimes vague, making adult led activities less well focused and staff are unsure of how to deploy themselves to the best effect within continuous provision. Staff sometimes introduce a topic without finding out first what children already know so that it leads on from their experiences and they do not always have their resources well prepared.

Staff get to know children well through their informal observations and understand some of their different approaches to learning and are able to be flexible to accommodate this. Some good methods and resources are used to engage children's interest. For example they use finger and glove puppets to introduce number rhymes and songs. Big books and story sacks are used to encourage interest in books and stories. Some staff sit alongside children as they play and encourage conversation well, others notice children playing with some play figures and bring over equipment such as a castle for them to use developing the scope of their imaginative play.

Staff do planned maths activities but do not involve children much in practical mathematical activities during every day activities such as at meal times, when preparing to go out and tidying up, and when children are playing so children learn to solve problems. When children use the craft table, staff see scope for creative play and conversation but do not recognise the potential for developing more able children's further interest in designing and making.

Systems for making observations and assessments in order to record children's progress and plan next steps are in place but staff do not know how to make best use of these in practice. Too many observations relate to language and social development where staff have a more secure knowledge and are not balanced well in other areas of children's development. Observations are mostly descriptive and staff use stepping stones guidance too infrequently to evaluate well what these tell them in terms of children's learning. When profiles are completed, staff do not highlight areas for a child's further development or where they need more evidence of achievement to help with planning. This affects the rate and breadth of children's progress particularly in areas staff make least observations.

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

The provision is satisfactory.

Babies and toddlers are settled and secure because they have bonded well with their key workers to whom they snuggle up or come to for help. Young children are given choices so that they can develop personal preferences. Staff give children time to adapt to change. In all rooms, photographs of the children based in the room are displayed to give children a sense of belonging.

Children's individual care needs are met well but their developmental and learning needs are not always identified well enough to ensure they are equally supported to make progress. Staff work well with parents and other agencies to meet the needs of children with disabilities and are well supported by the local authority advisors in developing their policy on inclusion. Children take part in some activities to help them understand and appreciate diversity, but these are not always age appropriate. Positive images of culture, gender and disability are not fully represented throughout the nursery.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered. Staff give mostly good support to help children learn social skills and to behave well, through positive methods such as praise for good behaviour and setting clear boundaries. They do not always have high enough expectations from older children in developing consideration for the needs of others, and learning skills of independence such as putting out equipment and utensils, which affects the progress of some funded children.

Partnership with parents is satisfactory. While there is good involvement of parents over children's care, this does not apply equally to children's learning and development. Because staff are not always sure about their aims for children's learning, they are less able to explain this clearly to parents. They do not find out enough about children's home experiences to build on for planning or invite parents to make a contribution to assessments by recording what achievements children have made at home. Relationships with parents are good. Information given to the parents about how the service operates is comprehensive and they are invited to

give their views on what could be improved. Parents and the extended family support outings well.

### **Organisation**

The organisation is satisfactory.

The nursery has a thorough system for checking the suitability of staff which protects children well. Regulatory records are well maintained to safeguard children. Staff qualifications are good but their knowledge of child development, the 'Birth to three matters' framework and Foundation Stage curriculum guidance is not always secure, which affects their planning for children's progress.

Leadership and management is satisfactory. Ratios are met through appropriate organisation of staff, and key workers are used well for continuity. Staff induction and policies and procedures are used well for children's safety. Staff development plans support staff in achieving qualifications, however this is not followed up with sufficient monitoring to see how well their learning is put into practice. Managers give satisfactory leadership and support through daily contact with staff and monthly meetings. They bring in advisors and help staff to reorganise their rooms. Some evaluation of the quality of provision has begun through joining a quality assurance accreditation scheme, but this does not extend sufficiently to evaluating the quality of teaching and learning.

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

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

There were two recommendations arising from the last inspection which were for childcare only. This is the nurseries first inspection for nursery education. The recommendations related to record keeping. The nursery has further developed use of systems for keeping records of incidents and keeps a full record of checks to monitor babies when sleeping. These recording systems enhance the safeguarding of children.

### **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 complaint 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 system for evaluating how well staff are helping children to make progress in development and learning, and link this to the staff development plan (also applies to nursery education)
- improve the range of activities and resources that help children appreciate diversity and develop positive attitudes towards others (also applies to nursery education).

### **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 ways of recording what children can do and their approach to learning in order to plan their next steps (also applies to childcare)
- develop ways in which to involve parents more in children's 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](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)