



First Steps Children's Nursery

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	EY259683
Inspection date	07 March 2007
Inspector	Patricia Webb
Setting Address	67a Compton Road, Wolverhampton, West Midlands, WV3 9QZ
Telephone number	01902 833155
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Registered person	First Steps Children's Nursery
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 good. 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 Nursery has been registered since 2003. It is privately owned and operates from premises near to the city centre of Wolverhampton. Care is accommodated within five base rooms and two specific play rooms laid out over the ground floor and the first floor with additional staff facilities on the second floor.

There are currently 53 children under five years of age on roll of whom 12 are in receipt of funding for nursery education. The setting supports a number of children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and children for whom English is an additional language.

The nursery is open Monday to Friday, from 07:30 to 18:00 throughout the year with the exception of bank holidays.

There are 11 staff work directly with the children of whom most hold an appropriate early years qualification. The setting receives support from the early years department of the local authority.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is satisfactory.

Children are encouraged to learn about following good personal hygiene through effective daily routines. Older children attend to their own care needs and know that hand washing is important in keeping them healthy. Staff employ suitable care routines for younger babies and toddlers ensuring that the risks of the spread of infection are minimised. Accidents are managed with care, taking account of comforting children and attending to any injuries appropriately. Staff hold first aid certificates and have regular opportunities to update this training. Detailed recording of such incidents are shared with parents and are also used to inform risk assessments to minimize hazards to children. Medication is administered and recorded for individual children. However, the arrangements for the use of some non-prescription medicines has the potential to hinder children's continued good health as written parental permission has not always been sought prior to administration.

Children enjoy healthy and nutritious meals and snacks throughout the day. Close liaison between the management of the setting and the organisation providing the midday meals ensures that a varied and interesting menu is offered. There is a healthy balance between fresh fruit, freshly cooked meals and some biscuits eaten at morning snack time. Children's individual dietary needs are carefully recorded and strictly adhered to. Some older children understand their own particular dietary requirements and are praised by staff who, whilst knowing the particular need, acknowledge the child's 'reminder'. Parents of babies provide made up bottle feeds which are appropriately stored. First solids are offered by the nursery, freshly prepared following discussions with parents. Individual arrangements are made for parents who wish to continue breast feeding.

Good use is made of the outside area to offer opportunities for children to have plenty of fresh air and rigorous exercise. Although the outdoor play space is limited, children enjoy manoeuvring around the various levels and surfaces such as the decking, the paved patio and the sunken play area accessing natural materials such as wooden logs, bark chippings and log stepping stones. They negotiate space indoors and outside with skill and care avoiding encroaching on other's space. Babies and young toddlers benefit from activities provided by staff who use their knowledge and understanding of child development to offer toys and games to stimulate and promote progress in crawling, early walking skills and developing head and body control. Older children use tools and implements with increasing skill, dexterity and a developing sense of safety.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is satisfactory.

The nursery offers children a warm and welcoming environment. The setting is light, bright and airy, with very little need for any artificial lighting ensuring that particularly babies have

natural light for the majority of the day. Children enter eagerly accessing the various rooms and areas with confidence and ease. The care bases are clean and well maintained with newly carpeted areas and laminate flooring to facilitate easy cleaning thereby reducing the risk of cross infection. Children are able to develop their own independence as they hang up their coats in the entrance hall, pointing out their picture above the hook to parents. They also have easy access to toilet facilities to promote their independence. Good use is made of the outdoor play area for active play and the sensory room where children can rest and relax. Occasionally, during the early morning arrival, space ratios are hindered on the ground floor. This is due to staff using one room for arrival, early play and accommodating some children who are having breakfast. This results in a slightly chaotic time and increases the risk of younger children tripping as they attempt to negotiate round the activities.

Risk assessments are carried out regularly to identify and reduce hazards to the children and adults on the premises. Secure entry is fixed to all exterior doors and requires staff attendance to admit visitors ensuring that children are safeguarded. Older children are developing an understanding of their own safety as they participate actively in fire drills and use proper tools and implements with care under close staff supervision. This enables them to develop a sense of risk and learn how to use such equipment in a responsible manner. There are times when some electrical socket covers are not replaced thus posing a risk to children.

Children have access to a wide and varied range of equipment, resources and toys throughout the day. Staff carry out regular checks to ensure the resources are clean, safe and suitable for the ages and stages of children attending. There is an interesting balance of commercial equipment offered alongside natural materials offering children a range of play opportunities.

Staff receive regular training with regard to child protection and hence children's welfare is effectively safeguarded. Staff are aware of signs and symptoms of abuse and are familiar with the procedures for reporting any concerns. Parents are informed of the nursery's duty of care to act in the best interests of their child at all times as they have access to the setting's child protection policy.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

Staff provide a stimulating and varied programme of activities to promote children's enjoyment, developmental progress and education. Children are happy, content and are helped to achieve by knowledgeable and enthusiastic staff who promote caring and warm relationships with the children. Staff have implemented the 'Birth to Three matters' framework effectively, using this to guide and plan appropriately for each child's age and stage of development. Detailed planning is in place with clear links to the skills and competencies within the framework. Assessment and progress is plotted carefully and discussed with parents to demonstrate how children learn and develop, supported by the use of photographs and labels indicating the learning objectives within various activities.

Nursery education

The quality of teaching and learning is good. Staff have a sound knowledge of the foundation stage resulting in children making strong and steady progress towards the early learning goals given their starting points. Staff are fully aware of how children learn and offer practical experiences to promote their enjoyment as they learn. For example, visits are made to the Forest School where children engage in woodland activities discovering the natural world around them. They also plant seeds and seedlings, learning to care for living things in their environment. Planning and assessment is clear and detailed linking activities to each of the areas of learning. This ensures that the stepping stones are covered across a period of time providing children with a wide and varied curriculum. Assessment of individual children's progress is clear and staff use their observations of the children to inform the next steps in their learning. Staff have high expectations of what and how children learn and support this by using interesting and exciting activities. They also introduce children to a wide vocabulary such as when discussing the eating habits of dinosaurs who are herbivores and whether they would have liked the green beans the children are eating for their lunch.

Children are eager to be involved in the activities provided. They can accomplish many of the tasks and activities for themselves due to low level storage and a wide range of resources. Designated areas are set out to specific aspects of learning and children know they can transport such resources round the setting as they wish. For example, writing paper and pens are moved to the café in the home corner so that 'customers' orders' can be recorded.

Children are confident and articulate speakers who engage spontaneously in conversations with their peers and the adults as, for example, they listen intently when a member of staff reads the instructions from the packet of seeds for the planting of their sunflowers. Children seek out their favourite books in the book corner and enjoy a range of topic-related stories delivered by staff who use undulating voices and props to enhance story time. They are skilfully encouraged to practise their early writing and mark making using a range of media from sand and paint to usual pencil and pen activities.

Many children count confidently up to 12 and then have sensitive support to achieve higher numbers, particularly when relating the date and days of the week. They understand the meaning of amounts and costs as they relate the cost of the items for sale in the 'café' with much laughter ensuing as staff express concern at the high price of a doughnut being £50. Children do not have the opportunity to see number labels in their environment hindering how they begin to recognise the written numbers or develop an awareness of the use of numbers. For example, staff request that only three children at a time play at the sand tray. There is no label to indicate this and so children are not aware of the limit.

Children show an avid interest in the world around them as they make regular visits to the Forest School and participate in woodland activities. They delight in seeing the changes in the seasons and plan work alongside such events for example, they are asked to look closely at the changing colours of the leaves and undergrowth through the year, with their work and 'charts' displayed to acknowledge and value their work. Many children show skilled prowess in using the computer, manoeuvring the mouse and responding to instructions from the games. They delight in exploring the properties of magnets as they find different surfaces and items which will attract the magnets. They respond eagerly, for example, when a skilled student demonstrates 'magic', placing a piece of laminated card between two magnets and showing how the top one

appears to move unaided as the bottom magnet is moved. Children are delighted when they then discover how to do this for themselves.

Imaginative play is a particular strength in the setting as children dress up as their favourite characters. They also use props and articles such as large wooden blocks to create a car, driven by an adult, who is then directed by the children to take them on a picnic. Sand and water play is offered daily and staff are working to develop the art and craft area in each care base. The current arrangements for creative activities hinders children's spontaneity in this area of their development. They do however enjoy making models and proudly show off the dragons and the flower displays they have created.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

Children's individual needs are carefully identified and addressed by caring and knowledgeable staff who know the children well. Specific care routines are followed closely especially for babies and children under two years of age to ensure that wherever possible they are consistent with home routines. The equal opportunity policy is regularly updated and reflects the nursery's commitment to identifying and addressing any specific needs. Children develop an awareness of their community and the wider world as they visit local shops, parks and the library, travel on public transport into the nearby town and celebrate various festivals. A recent topic followed the Buddhist festival of flowers, Hanamatsuri and children visited a nearby florist to purchase flowers. Children proudly show visitors their dragons made during celebrations for Chinese New Year. Some staff have linguistic skills which are used to assist in settling some children from families where English is an additional language. Posters around the setting reflect different languages and scripts and children have access to a range of toys, games and books which offer positive images of the diversity of society.

Whilst there are currently no children attending with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, staff are familiar with the Code of Practice for the Identification and Assessments of special needs. Past records and discussions indicate how staff have worked with parents and other professional agencies to ensure a consistent approach to meeting individual needs and developing each child's full potential. Recent changes in staff responsibilities means that the role of the special needs co-ordinator (SENCO) has changed and training is booked to develop knowledge and skills in this area.

Children's behaviour is exemplary. Staff have high expectations of children's behaviour and place a strong emphasis on good manners and consideration of the needs of others. This is effectively promoted as children have positive role models in the staff who praise and encourage each child within their own level of understanding and maturity. Staff understand that some behaviour such as biting or snatching can be an integral part of a young child's stage of development and monitor such incidents closely working in partnership with parents to address and reduce such incidents in a caring and gentle way. Children develop strong friendships with their peers and the adults in the setting as their self-esteem is promoted. Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered.

The partnership with parents and carers is good. Children benefit from the effective settling-in policies in place assuring parents that their requests and specific requirements will be discussed and adhered to wherever possible. For example, parents can arrange to come to the nursery to continue breast feeding should they wish. The nursery has an 'open-door' policy encouraging parents to share relevant information with staff to promote the sense of partnership. This is further supported by social gatherings when parents accompany children to events such as a sports day, the Christmas concert and a barbecue at the Forest School. There are parents evenings held regularly when key workers are available to discuss each child's progress in detail. For children in receipt of nursery education, detailed information is given about the Foundation Stage and exactly what topics children will be following over the year. Parents and carers are encouraged to become involved in their child's learning as, for instance, they bring in items for interest tables and enjoy looking at the many photographs of their children engaged in purposeful activity. There are development targets set for each child which are recorded in their 'busy book'. These are discussed by the key worker and assist parents in how they can contribute to the next steps in their child's progress. Effective procedures are in place for handling any complaints or concerns parents may have regarding the care of their child. A format is in place for sharing appropriate levels of information from complaints with parents on request demonstrating the management's commitment to keeping parents fully informed of matters affecting the care and welfare of the children.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

Children's care, welfare and well-being are effectively promoted in the well-organised setting with the relevant documentation and records maintained for the smooth running of the nursery. The staff team is enthusiastic, caring and committed to offering stimulating and exciting experiences for the children. Staff recruitment and selection procedures are rigorous and ensure that children are cared for by suitably qualified, experienced and motivated staff who enjoy the role they play in each child's development and progress. All staff, students and volunteers have sound inductions in the policies and procedures of the setting to ensure a consistent delivery of practice for the children. Students attending the setting are fully supervised and have input from a designated member of staff to ensure that children are safe, well cared for and that the students are observing and participating in positive practices.

Whilst overall ratios of staff on the premises are met, there are times when the ratios for the direct supervision of children are not fully adhered to. This is an issue mainly during sleep time after lunch and has the potential to put children at risk should there be an emergency as the babies and children under two years of age are cared for on the first floor. The owner and the manager are however supernumerary and are available to assist at such times.

The quality of leadership and management is good. There is a clear and positive ethos within the setting to offer broad and exciting experiences for the children and this is clearly detailed in the aims and objectives within the operational plan. Staff training is a high priority for the management resulting in a skilled and enthusiastic team who feel valued. Staff appraisals are used positively to identify strengths and areas for improvement and to build on specific staff interests and skills such as special needs, baby sign language and languages. Self-evaluation

is used effectively at regular intervals to monitor progress and assess how strengths and weakness are identified and improved. The management is forward-thinking with plans in place to refurbish the outdoor play area and improve its use as an outdoor learning environment.

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

Improvements since the last inspection

At the last inspection the nursery was asked to improve the following areas of practice: develop staff's knowledge of child protection procedures; develop the planning of activities for babies and younger children; ensure accidents are recorded fully; ensure hygiene practices are effective in reducing the spread of infection; review the process for conducting risk assessments to indicate actions taken; provide children with fresh drinking water throughout the day. The management and staff have worked effectively to address all of the recommendations. A detailed action plan was put in place and has been implemented to deal with the recommendations and as a result the outcomes for children have been improved. For example, staff have attended a range of training in child protection and further plans are in place take account of recent changes to the local authority's procedures. A keen understanding of the needs of babies and younger children has enhanced the programme of activities for this age group. Effective use of the 'Birth to three matters' framework ensures that each area of their development is promoted. Hygiene practices are effective in reducing the risk of cross infection and children are encouraged to follow good routines for themselves, understanding why hand washing is important in keeping them healthy. They also have fresh drinking water available throughout the day.

Following the last inspection for nursery education, the setting was asked to develop the use of assessment to plan for children of differing abilities; increase opportunities for children to compare numbers and use writing for a purpose within their play. Again, these have been addressed to improve children's experiences. Assessments are carried out with clear references to individual children's starting points and levels of ability. This results in each key worker being aware of how to challenge, extend or support each child within their given range of development. Children calculate within everyday routines such as counting the numbers of children present and working out the differences between the number of boys and girls attending. They are also developing an early concept of adding and subtracting as for instance they sing number rhymes such as 'five little speckled frogs' and use number cards to indicate the reduction as the frogs 'swim away'.

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 good. 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):

- review the medication policy to ensure that written parental agreement is obtained prior to administration of all medication
- ensure that space ratios are met at all times
- ensure electrical sockets are made safe
- ensure staff deployment is effective in meeting ratios at all times.

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):

- develop opportunities for children to access resources that promote spontaneous creativity with particular regard to art and craft (this also applies to care)
- increase children's access to mathematical labels in the setting to promote the recognition of numbers

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