



First Steps Community Playgroup

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	105976
Inspection date	09 January 2007
Inspector	Julie Neal
Setting Address	Stoke Hill, Exeter, Devon, EX4 7DB
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Registered person	First Steps Community Playgroup Committee
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 good.

WHAT SORT OF SETTING IS IT?

First Steps Community Playgroup has been registered to operate in Stoke Hill First School since September 2000. It serves the residential Stoke Hill area and surrounding areas of Exeter. The playgroup is registered to provide sessional care for 24 children from three to five years and is open 9:05-11.35 and 12:35-15:05 on weekdays during term time. The premises is shared with an after-school club and comprises a detached classroom with its own toilet facilities. They use a variety of outdoor play areas within the grounds. There are currently 60 children on roll, most of whom are in receipt of funded nursery education. The playgroup supports children who have special educational needs. There are children attending who speak English as an additional language. The playgroup is managed by a voluntary committee. Six staff are employed to work with the children, one of whom is also employed as the administrator. Two members of staff have Level 3 childcare qualifications.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Children are protected from illness and infection within the setting. Staff have good daily cleaning routines that ensure children benefit from a consistently hygienic environment. For example, toilets, washbasins, and floors are cleaned before each session. Children's health and wellbeing are supported by the setting's clear sickness procedures. All staff have up to date first aid certificates, and they undertake additional training where necessary in order to support children with individual health issues. Documents such as records of medicine administered and accidents to children are maintained by staff but are not consistently countersigned by parents.

Children learn to manage their own personal hygiene independently and staff are proactive in supporting younger children as they learn to wash their hands thoroughly. However soap provided is not always adequate, and children share bars of soap which presents a possible risk of cross infection.

Children enjoy the healthy snacks provided. These include a variety of fruit each day and children also have rice cakes, breadsticks, and crackers, ensuring they do not become hungry. The setting promotes its healthy eating policy well, ensuring that items provided are sugar and salt free where possible. Milk and water are provided at snack times, and children have access to water throughout the session as a jug is available for them to freely help themselves. However, children share beakers when pouring themselves drinks, risking cross infection.

Children enjoy the health benefits of regular fresh air and exercise. They play outside each day, making good use of the large playground as they engage in energetic games that promote muscle development and physical co-ordination. They confidently run, jump and skip, and use equipment such as balls, hoops and bikes confidently.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

Children benefit from a welcoming and child friendly environment where space is used well to provide a good variety of play and learning experiences. For example, children have areas where they can freely engage in messy play, and there is a comfortable book corner that children use independently. Wall space is used very well to display examples of children's work and seasonal projects. The excellent variety of resources are arranged to be easily accessible and add to the inviting environment for children. Comprehensive risk assessments are made of the premises and of resources, and these are regularly reviewed. These are supported by good daily safety routines carried before each session. Children's safety is supported by the very secure premises, and all visitors are recorded and supervised. Children learn about aspects of personal safety, for instance taking part in regular fire drills, which are recorded and evaluated by staff.

Staff have a very good understanding of child protection issues and all staff have had training in this area. The setting's child protection policy is thorough and staff show clear understanding of their responsibility to safeguard children.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

Children take part in a good variety of activities that support individual learning and development. Staff organise the sessions well to ensure a good range of play and learning opportunities. Children move freely between activities and have access to an excellent range of resources, from which they confidently make choices.

Nursery Education

The quality of teaching and learning is good. Children are making good progress towards the early learning goals in all six areas of learning.

Staff have a good knowledge and understanding of the Foundation Stage curriculum and implement this confidently. This is demonstrated in the willingness of staff to adapt planned activities and routines to benefit children, for example allowing them time to complete tasks to their individual satisfaction. Involvement of all staff in the planning process ensures all are clear about the key learning intentions of activities. Effective curriculum planning ensures there is a good balance of activities that promote children's learning in all areas. Clear written plans make effective links with the early learning goals and identify where activities can be extended to challenge more able children. Staff make good observations of children and use these effectively, for instance to identify individual children's preferred learning styles, and to update their progress records. Children's progress towards the early learning goals is monitored effectively, and individual assessment records generally reflect this. Staff discuss the next steps in learning for each child, but do not consistently record these, however they use their knowledge when planning.

Children make good progress towards the early learning goals in all areas of learning. Children are confident and on entering the setting happily select activities and resources and quickly become engrossed in their play. They develop friendships with each other and play well together, sharing and taking turns. Children are confident communicators. They initiate conversations with each other and with adults and are eager to share their thoughts and ideas. Children are learning to identify letter sounds and older children consistently identify the letters in their names correctly. They are confident writers who have a variety of opportunities to practise mark making in different contexts, for instance making shopping lists and taking phone messages in imaginary play. Children independently select books in their play, they handle these well and enjoy reading favourite stories to each other.

Children count well because they are encouraged to do so in a variety of contexts. For example, younger children enjoy joining in counting rhymes and clapping rhythms as they count together in a group; older children count objects in their play, such as lining up farm animals and correctly identifying '15'. Children learn to recognise numerals effectively and enjoy activities such as number matching games. Children are learning to use mathematical problem solving skills

effectively, for instance they predict 'how many more' objects are needed to fill the length of a ruler, and they are confident with simple calculation such as 'one more' and 'one less'. Children learn about the natural environment and the wider world. They go on nature walks and collect seasonal materials to make collages and pictures, they visit country parks and farms to learn about animals. Activities that introduce them to aspects of different cultures are very well organised to be relevant and meaningful to children in the setting. For instance, children and their families share their own cultural traditions and the activities they participate in to celebrate important festivals.

Children use a good variety of media and materials to express their thoughts and ideas. They have very good opportunities to express themselves creatively and make excellent use of these. For example, they use paints, chalks and crayons to create their own pictures and designs; they use puppets and a good range of role play equipment in imaginative play; they thoroughly enjoy using musical instruments such as xylophones to compose their own tunes. Children have good hand-eye co-ordination because they have free access to a variety of tools and materials that develop these skills. For example, they enjoy manipulating play dough, and use rolling pins, cutters, scissors and knives safely and competently.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

Children are happy and confident in the setting because their individual needs are met well. Very good settling in procedures, which include a series of visits prior to formally starting pre-school, ensure that children are familiar with the setting and quickly feel secure. Children benefit from an extremely inclusive environment where staff work closely with parents to meet the needs of each child. Children learn to respect different cultures because they learn well about the different traditions in their local community. Staff ensure that children who do not have English as their home language are supported well, working with parents to develop strategies to enable participation. For example, learning simple words and phrases in the child's home language and playing 'point and name' games where everyday objects are named in both languages. Children with learning difficulties and disabilities are supported very well. Staff work closely with parents and other agencies involved in children's development to ensure consistency in care and learning. Individual learning plans for children with additional needs are positive, focusing on children's strengths. However, these do not consistently identify the next steps in learning for children.

Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered because they learn respect for each other and for different cultures and communities.

Children are well behaved and show clear understanding of expectations and ground rules. They share well and are kind and helpful to each other, for example when a child spills a drink another child quickly comes to help clear up. Children respond well to the staff team's calm and consistent approach. They receive ongoing praise and encouragement which results in children who have good self esteem. The very good variety of interesting activities available ensures children are occupied and engaged, which supports positive behaviour.

Partnership with parents and carers is good. They are generally well informed about the setting and their children's care, and regular newsletters keep them updated regarding current events at pre-school. Staff develop good relationships with parents and information is shared well, resulting in consistent care for children. Parents have access to policies and procedures that underpin the care of children. Staff provide opportunities for parents to discuss their children's progress in learning, and make suggestions about activities they can do at home with their children. However, some parents do not feel they have suitable knowledge regarding the early learning goals for children.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

The provision meets the needs of the range of children for whom they provide. Effective employment procedures ensure that staff working with children are suitable to do so, and induction procedures ensure they are aware of their roles and responsibilities. Ratios are well maintained at all times, with children benefiting from a high number of adults in the setting to provide support as needed. Registers clearly show when adults and children are present, and other regulatory documents, such as accident and medicine records, are kept, although these are not consistently signed by parents. Policies and procedures that support the care of children are in place and regularly reviewed.

The leadership and management of nursery education is good. The setting has a strong commitment to staff training and development, with several members of staff updating their professional qualifications. Staff also regularly attend courses that develop their skills in areas of the Foundation Stage curriculum, such as creativity and literacy. Effective systems of appraisal are in place and these are used well to inform the setting's training and development plan, in order that children benefit from skilled practitioners. Activities are evaluated well and staff use these, along with their observations and assessments of children's progress, to inform planning to ensure all children are challenged appropriately. However, written records are not complete for all children. For example, records identifying the next steps in learning for individual children are not consistently updated to reflect practice.

Improvements since the last inspection

At the last inspection it was agreed to review and put in place some procedures that support the care and wellbeing of children, with particular regard to child protection, administration of medicines, procedures to follow should a child go missing from the setting, and health and safety. These have been addressed, and there is now a process in place to regularly review and update written procedures. The setting was also asked to ensure the registration certificate is displayed at all times, and this is now done. It was agreed to develop staff's knowledge and understanding of child protection issues. This has been done effectively, with all staff undertaking child protection training in order to develop their skills in safeguarding children.

In order to improve the quality of nursery education, it was agreed to develop planning to ensure a balance of learning in all areas and to identify key learning objectives; and to devise and implement a process of assessing and recording children's progress towards the early learning goals, using these to identify the next steps in learning for children. Sessions are well

planned to ensure children learn and develop in all areas and provide a good balance. Learning objectives are clearly identified and understood by staff. Systems of assessment are in place and overall these are used effectively, although records do not consistently identify the next steps in learning for all children. It was also agreed to develop opportunities to involve parents in children's learning and ensure they are suitably informed regarding their children's progress. These have been addressed, parents have opportunities to meet with staff to discuss their children, and staff suggest activities that parents can do with their children at home that support learning.

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 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):

- reduce the risk of possible cross infection by ensuring that children have access to suitable soap, and that they do not share cups when helping themselves to drinks.
- ensure records such as accident and incident records are consistently countersigned by parents and carers.

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):

- ensure that assessments records are consistent in identifying the next steps in learning for all children.
- ensure that all parents and carers are aware of the early learning goals and the Foundation Stage curriculum.

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