

First Steps Day Nursery

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	113485
Inspection date	21 June 2007
Inspector	Lisa Jane Cupples / Amanda Shedden
Setting Address	Chichester College, Westgate Fields, Chichester, West Sussex, PO19 1SB
Telephone number	01243 532043
E-mail	firststeps@chichester.ac.uk.
Registered person	Chichester College
Type of inspection	Integrated
Type of care	Full day care, Out of School care, Crèche

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 Day Nursery has been registered since 1990 and is owned by Chichester College. It operates in purpose built premises on the campus of Chichester College, to the west of the city. A maximum of 142 children may attend the nursery at any one time. The nursery is open each weekday from 07:30 to 18:00 for 51 weeks of the year. All children have access to secure enclosed outdoor play areas that have been designed to meet the needs of the specific age groups.

There are currently 245 children aged from three months to under five years on roll. Of these, 91 children receive funding for early education. Children attend from a wide surrounding area. The nursery supports children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and also supports children who speak English as an additional language.

The nursery employs 35 members of staff who work directly with the children. Of these, 33 hold appropriate early years qualifications and two are working towards a qualification. There are also eight support staff who work on site. The nursery offers outings to local sites and

closely liaise with First Steps Crèche and the Child Care Centre, offering after school and holiday care.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Children are actively encouraged to wash their hands at appropriate times and are beginning to learn the importance of good personal hygiene. Older children wash their hands independently and staff gently remind them if they forget, by talking about 'washing away the germs'. Children's good health is promoted effectively because staff implement stringent hygiene procedures across the nursery. The nappy changing routines are consistent; all staff wear disposable gloves and aprons and the nappy changing areas are cleaned thoroughly after each use. The nappy bins are emptied twice a day to help prevent the possible spread of infection. Most records are maintained well, keeping the parents informed at all times. However, when staff check the sleeping children every 15 minutes it is recorded on a wipe clean white board and no hard copies of the records are kept. This makes it difficult to see when the children were last checked and who was on duty if an incident occurred.

Children are healthy because the staff have a clear understanding of the procedures for recording all accidents. Clear systems are in place to monitor accidents that occur across the nursery, enabling staff to monitor possible problem areas or faulty equipment. The manager ensures a member of staff who holds a current first aid certificate is in each of the rooms at all times when the children are present. This ensures the children will be treated effectively and quickly in the event of an emergency.

Children learn about healthy eating as the staff discuss what type of foods are good for them at snack and meal times. They know that fruit and vegetables are good for them and 'help them to grow big and strong'. Children are encouraged to be independent throughout the nursery at meal and snack times. They are actively encouraged to feed themselves or pour their own drinks and older children help to prepare their snacks, peeling and chopping the fresh fruit and vegetables. All allergies, medical, cultural needs and parental preferences are discussed with the parents and recorded on the children's registration forms. A list is displayed in each room to ensure all staff are fully aware, enabling them to meet the needs of the individual children in their care.

Children of all ages have ample opportunities to develop their large muscle skills and take part in an extensive range of indoor and outdoor physical activities. They enjoy musical movement, learning to move in different ways with control and co-ordination. Excellent use is made of the well-equipped outdoor play areas, which have been designed for the specific age groups; staff set up activities to cover all aspects of development and learning. Children from the younger groups are able to free-flow in and out of their base rooms during the day, reaping the benefits of the fresh air. They enjoy sand and water play, large and small group games and during warmer weather most activities take place in the outdoor areas.

Older children choose when they would like to go outside to play. They have an area of the garden which is suitable to challenge their physical abilities and allow them to play, at times, without having to be concerned with younger children. In this area they enjoy the challenges of the climbing wall and the balance ropes. They can dig the ground or play in the house. Many resources are taken outside so that children can paint, use pens and paper or complete puzzles

in the fresh air. Children also use the other areas of the garden where they confidently negotiate their way around; steering their bikes confidently around obstacles. They instigate games such as 'duck-duck goose' sitting on and running around the wooden mushroom seating, laughing and jumping up and down with glee as the staff member gets caught.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

The premises are warm and welcoming and the children's work is displayed brightly around the walls. Photographs of the entire staff team are displayed in the entrance foyer for parent's information. Key worker photographs are also displayed outside each of the rooms, helping to build good relationships as parents know who they are talking to. Children's independence is fully encouraged from the time they arrive; they are able to hang their own coats and bags up on low-level, clearly labelled coat pegs outside of their base rooms.

Children benefit from a safe and secure environment because staff are vigilant and carry out written risk assessments daily before the children arrive. Staff are fully aware of their responsibilities and sign the forms when the checks have been completed, providing a record of who carried out the checks in each room. Children are protected because all visitors have to ring a security buzzer to gain access into the building. A member of staff greets all visitors and they are required to sign in and out of the building, helping to keep children safe. Fire procedures are displayed in each room of the nursery and children learn about keeping themselves safe through daily discussions and practising regular fire drills.

Children benefit from an extensive selection of resources, play materials and equipment, most of which are used appropriately and are suitable for the age and stage of the children. Each room has its own core selection of resources and children have independent access to the free-play areas, which greatly increases their choice of activities throughout the day. All the equipment and resources are clean and well-maintained, providing a safe play environment for the children.

Children are well protected because staff have a clear understanding of child protection and the procedures to follow if any concerns are recognised. Existing injuries are recorded and parents are required to sign to acknowledge the entries, helping to keep children safe.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

Children settle quickly on arrival as they are met at the door by staff. Children are encouraged to hang up their coats and bags, increasing their independence, while staff and parents ensure younger children are assisted as necessary, building their self-esteem. Children are extremely happy and they laugh and giggle throughout the activities, for example, singing and dancing to nursery rhymes. Staff interact with the children exceptionally well, talking to them all the time, making eye contact, playing at their level and showing affection. They hold the children when giving them bottles and talk to them when they are in their high-chairs, ensuring they are comfortable and relaxed. Children enjoy experimenting and exploring the materials during craft activities. Staff praise and encourage the children helping them to learn different skills.

Staff use the Birth to three matters framework to observe the children's achievements, although some records are not being kept up-to-date and staff do not use the information collected to identify the children's next steps. Although children take part in an extensive, well-balanced

range of experiences, the activities are not planned to meet their individual needs, as staff work systematically through the long and medium term plans. Therefore, new experiences may not be introduced at the best time for the individual children accessing them.

Children throughout the setting have great fun. Babies playfully babble and copy sounds, learning to communicate with one another. Staff give the children time to learn about themselves, for example, children investigate their own fingers and toes on the floor, smiling and cooing. Older children are beginning to sit quietly and enthusiastically join in during story time. They laugh as they make the animal noises and snapping actions when the crocodile is mentioned. Then they hiss and make wiggling movements with their arms as they see the snake. Staff read the stories with animated facial expressions and character voices, holding the children's attention beautifully.

Nursery Education

The teaching and learning is good. Children are thriving in the stimulating environment, staff plan worthwhile activities that stimulate and interest the child. Staff have a good understanding of the Foundation Stage and how children learn. Children arrive eager to join in the activities and see their friends. They choose freely from a wide range of well resourced activities. Staff's interaction is positive and they are skilled at asking children open ended questions and promoting the children's thinking skills. Staff make plans linked to the Foundation Stage ensuring that all areas are effectively covered. Evaluations and observations are also made, however, they are not sufficiently or regularly linked to the children's individual abilities. Therefore they cannot be sure that the activities planned are suitable to ensure that all children are making sufficient progress or being adequately challenged throughout their time in the nursery.

Staff are fully involved with the children throughout the day, joining in with activities and encouraging children to help them with routine activities. For example, getting snack ready and tidying away resources. This ensures that the children are busy and occupied at all times.

Children are confident speakers; they have conversations with each other and the staff. Children preparing snack to take on a picnic talk about where they are going and what they are going to do. Children are proud to show and talk about what they have found on their walk. Staff link their finds to the topic of patterns encouraging the children to look carefully at the pattern that nature has made. Children are confident in linking sounds and letters. Staff encourage children in their understanding through routine and child-led activities. For example, two children have a large white board and staff encourage the children to write a letter showing them the correct formation with the use of other resources. They are encouraged to sound the letter out and name objects that started with that letter. Children confidently choose books to read to themselves from the comfortable book area. They handle the big books very well as they lay on the floor to read them turning the pages carefully. They learn that text has meaning as staff read stories to them and they encourage children to read each others name cards.

Children gain an excellent understanding of number. Many of the children can count to above the number ten. One four-year-old counted to thirty confidently. Counting is part of the routine of the day, for instance how many plates and cups are needed at lunch time. Staff encourage children to think as they work out how many more are needed. They enjoy games linked to shape and patterns. Children thought about, with good support from staff, what patterns they would make when painting on a long roll of paper. Children competently copied patterns and made their own. Children show pride in their achievements, for instance, children are very proud when they make pyramids, clapping with glee after they count them.

Children have many opportunities to experience the world around them. They go for walks in the area and at times visit local amenities such as the library. Staff plan worthwhile activities to give the children a clear understanding about sinking and floating. Children choose their materials by putting them in the water first and then good discussions take place encouraging children to discuss what weight of materials would be good to decorate their boats with, without sinking them. Children then draw what their boats will look like before they decorate them. Children are becoming competent in using the computers, using the mouse to move objects around the screen.

Children are confident to express and communicate their ideas. They play imaginary games which include mountains, fires and chocolate bars for sustenance. They use the role play areas in a variety of ways, for instance, the house in the garden became a school as children acted out their visits to school.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

Children benefit because staff have an exceptionally clear understanding of equal opportunities and spend a great deal of time getting to know the children and their families. For example, staff often talk about the children's parents, knowing which ones work or are at home with siblings. This helps the children to feel valued and they settle into the group well, building strong relationships. Staff ask about the children's individual likes and dislikes to help settle them into the nursery. Children have equal access to all the activities and staff time and attention. They are beginning to show consideration for others, passing resources to each other, helping each other to pick up a puzzle that fell on the floor and showing each other how to ride the tricycles outside. Children are beginning to learn about the world around them through topics, themes, resources and activities about other countries, cultures and beliefs. They have access to an extensive range of multi-cultural resources throughout the nursery and they see positive images around the walls. Children's social, moral, spiritual and cultural development is fostered.

The manager is the setting's Special Needs Co-ordinator and she has an exceptionally clear understanding of the Code of Practice and her responsibilities. The whole staff team implement strategies to support all the children who attend, making it a positive and stimulating environment for everyone. The staff liaise closely with the parents and if necessary other agencies to ensure the children's needs are being met in the best possible way. Children of all ages behave exceptionally well because the clear rules and boundaries are implemented consistently across the setting. Children know exactly what is expected of them and staff continually recognise and praise the children's efforts, focusing on the positive behaviour. Children are polite and well-mannered. Staff gently remind the youngest children to say 'please' and 'thank you' at appropriate times, and praise them when they remember on their own. Staff are positive role models and treat the children with respect and affection, earning their trust and building strong relationships. This ensures the children feel valued and helps to develop a real sense of belonging.

Parents receive written information about their children's time in the setting. The staff keep a portfolio for each child, which cover their entire time in the setting, from first starting until they leave to go to school. The records include samples of the children's work, accompanied by brief observations and photographs. The parents also have access to their children's records, covering the Birth to three matters framework and the Foundation Stage. The records are transferred as the children move up the age groups through the nursery, ensuring their individual

needs are being met. Parents of the youngest children receive a daily report covering their diet, sleep routines, nappies, activities and general wellbeing throughout the day. This helps to keep them fully informed. Parents are able to stay as long as they want on arrival and can come early to collect their children and spend time in the setting, strengthening relationships.

Partnership with parents of children who receive funding for early education is good. Parents are aware of the Foundation Stage and feel involved in their children's learning through newsletters and information about the planned topics. At times they are given home link books. This gives them ideas to support their child with the topics at home with information such as the song they are learning or ideas for messy play. However, this is sporadic. They have daily contact with their child's key worker and opportunities for more detailed discussion at the regular parent evenings. They are aware that they can look at their child's development records at any time.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

Children are protected because the organisation has stringent and robust recruitment and vetting procedures in place, which are implemented effectively. New staff are strongly supported and complete an in-depth induction programme as well as in-house training to ensure they are fully aware of their personal role and responsibilities. The organisation and the staff of the nursery have a very clear understanding of the regulations and the inspection process. Most of the required paperwork and documentation is maintained to a high standard and is readily available for inspection at any time.

Staff deployment is good throughout most of the day, providing high quality support and supervision for all the children across the whole nursery. However, staffing levels do not always meet the ratios required for short periods at the start and end of the day. Staff are able to cover in other rooms if necessary because systems and procedures are consistent across the age groups. This enables the children to get to know all of the staff, making transition into the next age groups easier, helping children to settle in. Children are fully occupied and stimulated throughout their time in the nursery. Daily routines are organised effectively and the sessions and activities run extremely smoothly because all staff plan ahead, ensuring the children are never left waiting around for the next activity. The setting meets the needs of the range of children for whom it provides.

The leadership and management of the setting are good. The college employs a fully qualified and experienced manager to oversee the day-to-day running of the setting. Strong links and sound lines of communication are in place between the college and the nursery, ensuring the setting manager and her staff team are supported at all times. The college also employs an overall co-ordinator to oversee all of the settings and she is on site regularly to ensure everything is going well and to monitor the effectiveness of the nursery. The setting and staff are extremely proactive at assessing their own strengths and weaknesses. Staff appraisals take place throughout the year and performance is monitored regularly. Areas of strength are praised and training needs are identified, enabling the setting to continually improve their practice.

Daily activities and routines are evaluated and the information gathered is used to improve the resources or the delivery of the activity, to benefit the children. There are sound systems in place to ensure all stepping stones are covered throughout the year, providing a stimulating and well-balanced curriculum for all the children who attend. The college and the management of the nursery are fully committed to continually reviewing and improving the quality of nursery

education and care. Funding is made available for staff to complete extensive training to meet the needs of the nursery and to further improve their own personal development. This raises the standards across the board for the children who attend the setting.

Improvements since the last inspection

At the last care inspection the setting was asked to ensure all hygiene routines are securely in place and to ensure the records clearly identify the children's accurate times of arrival and departure. They were also asked to ensure that physical play equipment is always safely positioned to minimise the risk of accidents. Clear and detailed cleaning procedures are now in place and are monitored effectively to provide a clean and well-maintained environment for the children. The systems used to record the children's attendance have been updated and meet the required standards. The outdoor play areas have been completely refurbished and have been designed with safety in mind. All of the equipment is located in safe positions minimising the risk of accidents, helping to protect the children.

At the last nursery education inspection the setting was asked to make better use of assessment to inform the way in which activities can be developed, to ensure sufficient challenge for individual children. The systems for assessing the children are continually being reviewed and improved, although the assessments are still not being used to inform the planned curriculum.

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):

- ensure hard copies of children's sleep monitoring charts are maintained
- improve the staffing levels at the beginning and end of each day to ensure the adult to child ratios are maintained at all times
- ensure the children's progress records are up-to-date and the information gathered is used by staff to identify the children's next steps.

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):

- further develop opportunities for parents to become involved in their children's learning
- ensure that the observations made on the children are used to inform planning to ensure that all children have sufficient challenges.

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