

First Steps

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	EY331318
Inspection date	01 May 2007
Inspector	Kathryn Mary Harding
Setting Address	Moreton Hall School, Weston Rhyn, OSWESTRY, Shropshire, SY11 3EW
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Registered person	Moreton Hall Educational Trust Ltd
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 opened in 2006 and operates from two rooms in the pre-preparatory department of Moreton Hall School, near Oswestry. A maximum of 20 children may attend the nursery at any one time. The nursery is open each weekday from 08.00 to 18.00 for 50 weeks of the year. All children share access to an enclosed outdoor play area.

There are currently 26 children aged from two to under five years on roll. Of these, seven children receive funding for early education. Children come from a wide catchment 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 seven members of staff. Of these, three hold appropriate early years qualifications.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is satisfactory.

Children's health and well-being is suitably promoted in the setting. Signs to encourage good hand washing techniques are displayed and routines for children to wash their hands before eating and after activities are in place. All children independently clean their hands and face with wipes before they eat snacks. Staff have good health and hygiene practices in place such as wearing disposable aprons and gloves when changing nappies and staff wear aprons when serving the children's food.

Children are provided with good quality snacks and meals, all of which are healthy and nutritious such as fresh fruit and freshly prepared cooked meals. A choice of water or milk is provided to accompany meals and snacks and children are able to independently access drinking water throughout the session, so dealing with their own care needs. Menus are varied to suit all tastes and a vegetarian option is always available. Children learn about living healthily as they talk about germs when washing hands. They learn about the importance of taking care of themselves and why it is important to eat the right kinds of foods.

Children take part in physical activities on a daily basis and are encouraged to play outside whenever possible. They enjoy kicking, throwing and catching the large balls and riding around in the cars. They have opportunities to balance on the beams. However, the outdoor equipment provides insufficient challenge for older, more agile children. They can access a wide range of toys and equipment to develop their fine scale skills.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

Children and parents are warmly greeted by staff on arrival, giving the children a sense of belonging. Children's artwork and posters are displayed creating a welcoming and stimulating environment. At child-led times children freely select activities from a wide range of good quality toys and resources that are easily accessible and regularly checked.

Access to the nursery is closely monitored and all visitors are required to report to the school prior to admission. Key pad systems are on all doors leading into the nursery to prevent direct access. In order to help keep children safe, staff visually check the rooms before the children arrive and regular written risk assessments are undertaken. Children learn how to keep themselves safe as they are gently reminded to sit properly on the chairs and to carry scissors safely. As staff check the outdoor area before the children go outside they take some older children with them to ensure that the gate is locked, further promoting their understanding of how to keep themselves safe. Fire procedures are displayed in each room and staff and children take part in regular fire drills.

Staff have the required procedures and documents in place to ensure children's welfare is safeguarded and promoted. For example, staff have a good understanding of child protection issues in line with the Local Safeguarding Children Board procedures and have attended child protection workshops.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

Children take part in a good range of varied activities and play opportunities which they find interesting and enjoyable such as exploring in the water. Staff know the children well and cater for their individual needs well through the key worker system. Children develop good relationships with staff and each other. They confidently approach staff and staff offer reassurance to settle them if they do not immediately settle. At child-led times they freely choose what they want to play with, so encouraging their independence. They enjoy their time in the setting and children and staff have fun as they all sing "Heads, shoulders, knees and toes", giving them a sense of belonging and making them feel valued. Snack times and meal times are sociable occasions with staff sitting and chatting with the children about the food they like and their families.

The 'Birth to three matters' framework is effectively implemented for younger children. Staff observe children as they play and records of their work, artwork and photographs are stored in their individual learning stories and folders. Plans are informed by children's observations and assessments so ensuring children's progression.

Nursery education.

The quality of teaching and learning is good.

Children are interested in what they are doing and staff support them where necessary in their play, making children feel valued. Staff use effective methods to help children learn and maintain their interest. They sit and engage in their activities and ask challenging questions to extend their play and learning. Staff now use observations and assessments to link into planning the next steps in the children's learning.

Children access a good range of well-chosen resources which support their development across all areas of learning. They behave well, with staff continually praising and encouraging them, so enhancing their self-esteem. They play happily together and concentrate for sustained periods of time when drawing a detailed picture. They take care of their environment as they pick up litter in the school grounds. They are encouraged to share the paint and take turns with the play dough cutters. They try and put their own coats on prior to going outside.

Children confidently talk in small groups and staff introduce new words such as castanets as they talk about the pictures in the book. They listen well to instructions as they talk about different objects beginning with particular letters, so encouraging children to recognise initial sounds. The environment is well labelled, so encouraging children's recognition of print, but children do not access an attractive book area, so children's interest in books is not fully promoted. They access different writing materials and equipment in the well-equipped writing area, so encouraging their mark making skills.

Children gain confidence in using and recognising numbers during the daily routines. They have opportunities to recognise numerals and match numerals to each other as they park their numbered cars into corresponding numbered parking lots. They are encouraged to solve problems in a practical way, for example, when counting the number of painted letters and talk about how many more are needed to make seven. They complete shape puzzles to consolidate their recognition of shapes and talk about the shapes of everyday objects.

Children gain knowledge of the world around them and of time and place through a variety of activities. They freely talk about their families and events important to them, such as their pets at home and their mummy going to work, so making them feel valued. They sing the days of the week song giving them a sense of time. They explore and investigate as they use magnifying glasses to look at the tadpoles. They learn how things work as they are reminded to press the button to turn the Hoover on.

Children's large scale movement skills develop through a range of experiences, but the large outdoor equipment lacks sufficient challenge for the older, more agile children. They learn to throw, catch and kick the large balls as staff support this game. They move confidently around the indoor area and access a wide range of activities to develop their fine control skills including construction sets, play dough and cutters.

Children explore using their senses and talk about how objects feel in the "feely" box. They talk about the different colours they can see in the book. They can access an art area so enabling them to make their own creations. They play imaginatively in the well-equipped home area which children use effectively to create familiar roles scenarios and characters.

Systems are in place to support children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities to effectively meet their needs. This includes liaising very closely with parents, external agencies and drawing up individual education plans.

Overall, children make good progress in all areas of learning.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

Staff know the children well and cater for their individual needs through the key worker system and talking with parents. They provide a good range of resources to promote a positive view of the wider world and increase children's awareness of diversity. This helps children develop a positive attitude to others. For example, they talk about different festivals such as Chinese New Year and Hanukkah and do activities linked to the festival. Although there are no children currently attending with learning difficulties and/or disabilities the staff demonstrate an appropriate understanding of ensuring inclusion for all.

Children behave well. Their understanding of right and wrong is increased as they are given explanations why their behaviour is not acceptable. As staff thank the children they model good behaviour, so encouraging the children to be considerate to each other. Good manners are encouraged at snack time and children and staff sing the "please and thank you" song, so promoting consideration and respect for each other. They are encouraged to behave well as the staff praise the children for their efforts. This positive approach fosters children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

Partnership with parents and carers is good. Staff and parents all work together to meet each child's needs. Parents' views about their child's needs and interests are sought before the child starts at the setting, so staff are aware of what children can do on entry. Prospective parents are invited to parents' open days. Individual parents' meetings are arranged to discuss children's achievements with their key worker. Parents can also talk with staff daily about their child. They are encouraged to be involved in various sponsored events and an informative notice board and newsletters detailing topics and projects the children will take part in is available, so ensuring parents are fully informed. Children's learning is enhanced for example, by them

taking home, work books to share with parents and a daily diary. A complaints procedure is in place and parents are made aware of the procedure to follow if they wish to raise any concerns.

Organisation

The organisation is satisfactory.

Leadership and management of the setting is good. The registered person uses effective recruitment procedures which ensure that staff are appropriately vetted and qualified. Staff have appraisals to ensure they are all working effectively to meet the children's needs. All of the required paperwork is in place. Staff are approachable, enthusiastic, caring and work very well together as a team to promote children's health, enjoyment and achievement. They attend regular training so demonstrating a commitment to developing their practice and know about their roles and responsibilities, so helping to ensure that the planned activities are interesting to the children. They regularly evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of the session and have an action plan of how to improve the care and education provided.

Policies and procedures are used effectively to promote the welfare, care and learning of children. They are shared regularly with parents to keep them well informed about the service and their child's activities. This contributes to continuity in the children's care. Overall, the children's needs are met.

Improvements since the last inspection

At the last inspection staff agreed to: ensure that staff are familiar with the Foundation Stage to effectively plan and challenge children's learning across all areas of the curriculum; ensure that staff are aware of learning intentions for children in order to stimulate and maintain their interest; make effective use of assessments in consultation with children's parents to plan for their learning; promote further the good health of children and take appropriate measures when they are ill, for example procedures to seek emergency medical treatment and notifiable and communicable diseases; improve steps to promote safety within the setting for example, systems to record children's arrival and departure and the procedures to practise emergency evacuation, and promote equality of opportunity and anti-discriminatory practice for all children by displaying a wide range of positive images to reflect cultural diversity and disability.

The officer-in-charge has attended courses and all staff are now familiar with the Foundation Stage curriculum. All staff plan the curriculum together and the officer-in-charge plans for the funded children, to ensure children's interest is maintained. The setting now have long, medium and short term plans which are linked to the early learning goals and on display for parents to view. Activity plans for each lesson are now differentiated, so taking into account different levels of ability, particularly for more able children.

A member of staff has attended a communicable diseases course and written parental consent is in place to seek emergency medical advice or treatment, so promoting children's good health. Times of arrival and departure of staff and children are now recorded and one member of staff has responsibility to ensure this information is correctly recorded. Children's awareness of the wider world is now promoted as there are more resources, toys and posters to positively reflect different cultures and abilities. Children also look at different festivals and do activities, such as food tasting linked in with the festival.

Complaints since the last inspection

Since registration there has been one complaint made to Ofsted that required the provider or Ofsted to take any action in order to meet the National Standards. Concerns were raised regarding the security of the setting, stating that the nursery door was left unlocked, and was found to be propped open on one occasion. These concerns relate to National Standard 6 – Safety.

As a result of these concerns, the Registered Person was asked to conduct an internal investigation and provide Ofsted with a copy of the report. As a result of the enquiries made and information provided, the report was reviewed by a Childcare Inspector Team Manager, who is satisfied that the setting has taken appropriate steps in this matter.

Ofsted can confirm that the Registered Person remains qualified for registration.

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):

- ensure that activities are available to promote the development of children's large scale skills.

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 children can access an attractive book area.

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