

First Steps Nursery

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	127184
Inspection date	01 November 2007
Inspector	Tracy Larnach
Setting Address	25-29 Thanet Road, Margate, Kent, CT9 1UA
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Registered person	Hazel Ann Warren
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 inadequate - notice of action to improve. The registered person does not meet 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?

First Steps Nursery opened in 1994. It operates from a converted church and an attached house in Margate, Kent. The nursery has access to six rooms, an office, toilets and a kitchen. A maximum of 100 children may attend the nursery at any one time. The nursery is open each weekday from 07.30 to 17.30 for 50 weeks of the year. Children share access to three secure enclosed outdoor play areas.

There are currently 176 children aged from six months to under eight years on roll. Of these 58 children receive funding for nursery education. The nursery supports children with learning difficulties and disabilities and children who speak English as an additional language.

The nursery employs 22 staff, of these, 16 of the staff, including the manager hold appropriate early years qualifications and three staff are working towards a qualification.

The nursery receives support from the Local Authority.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is inadequate.

Children's health is compromised; although there is a sick child policy, staff trained in first aid and parental permission for emergency medical advice and treatment to enable staff to act in the children's best interest should they have an accident or become ill. The procedure for the administration of medication is not robust; as a result, medication is sometimes given without prior parental permission and no record kept.

Children are cared for in a clean environment. They learn about health and hygiene through daily routines; for example, babies are assisted in washing their hands after changing and children know they wash their hands before eating and after going to the toilet. However, hand washing practice is inconsistent; for example, babies have to share a bowl of water for hand washing before they eat and liquid soap and individual towels have not been introduced to help to minimise cross infection, this means the children's health is not protected.

Lunch is provided by the parents so children have what they like to eat and do not become hungry. Staff talk to the children about making healthy choices as part of the daily routine and the nursery provides the snacks which generally consist of fruit or other healthy options. Information about the children's dietary requirements is posted and staff are aware of signs and symptoms so staff can act quickly should a child have a reaction. Water is freely available for the children so they remain hydrated.

Children enjoy physical activities such as dancing inside and have access to a variety of equipment in the outside areas. They also use the local park. Overall, children have sufficient opportunities to participate in physical play for their large muscle development. Staff find out about the babies' individual schedules by talking to the parents and they are able to eat and sleep when they need to, this promotes their physical well-being.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is inadequate.

Children are not safeguarded as the staff have an inconsistent knowledge of child protection. Some of the newer staff have not yet had an induction that includes safeguarding children so are unaware of when to be concerned to ensure children are protected from abuse. In addition, the policy is in the process of being developed and does not include all the required information for staff to refer to. The nursery is secure, the desk is always manned and closed circuit television contributes to the children's safety. There is an effective system in place for monitoring visitors and arrival and collection policy to keep children safe.

Risks are mostly identified and acted upon. One of the managers walks through the nursery in the morning to check for safety; however, large radiators are located on the bottom floor which is a potential risk to the babies and toddlers as they pull themselves up or toddle around the room. An emergency procedure is in place and a fire drill log kept. The register is used to ensure all children, new staff and students have been involved in an evacuation to ensure they become familiar with the procedure. The nursery, toys and equipment are well maintained enabling children to play safely; however, children's privacy and dignity is not considered when they use the toilets.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is satisfactory.

Children arrive happily and are welcomed by the staff. They self-select from a range of toys and equipment which are readily available to encourage their independence. Babies and toddlers become competent learners as they are supported in their play; for example, staff interact with them kindly talking to them, singing with them and allowing them to explore their environment. Babies develop their skills as they explore the contents of a treasure basket, build with soft bricks and pretend with telephones imitating what they have seen. Toddlers explore using their senses in sand, macaroni and rice. Staff use the Birth to three matters framework and each of the children's key worker uses their observations to plan for their assigned children. However, although staff are able to explain how, for example, they encourage babies in developing their physical skills, the records do not reflect this as most of the information is kept informally. The younger children on the top floor explore different mediums such as dirt, sand, and cooked pasta; learning about mathematical concepts they fill and empty containers. They enjoy developing their imagination as they pretend play. However, at times their creativity is stifled when they are given sheets to colour or work sheets to fill in. In addition, some of the large group activities are not developmentally appropriate and result in children waiting.

Nursery Education

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory.

Staff have a satisfactory knowledge and understanding of the Foundation Stage. They generally use good questioning techniques to make children think; however, not all activities capture the children's interest; for example, group time is often long resulting in some children becoming restless. Observations are completed on the children and next steps are informally identified, these are used 'loosely' to do a 'learning intention' plan; however, this plan is not differentiated for the differing stages of the children's development and it is hard to tell from the records where the learning intentions have come from. The planning is a list of activities for the six areas of learning but does not take into account the identified learning intentions. Each child has a book that shows their progress in learning numbers, shapes and writing their names and includes some photographs; however, these activities are mostly adult led which does not foster the children's creativity or give them an opportunity to show their unique perception of the world. There is a system for assessing what the children know when they begin in the funded programme but this is not documented to show children's starting points so staff can monitor their progress.

Children's communication skills develop as they talk to each other as they interact together. They enjoy rhymes and jingles and some children are beginning to link sounds to letters; however, this is not always done in a developmentally appropriate way; for example, in large groups. Children learn that print carries meaning as staff write their words on their pictures. They develop their writing skills as they attempt to write their names on their work and make lists during role play. Children develop a love of books and interest in reading as they enjoy books both with an adult and independently. There is a 'maths area' with various games and equipment which children freely access to develop their mathematical skills. They complete puzzles competently and some children can complete quite difficult puzzles. Children learn to recognise numbers through activities such as 'a number walk' where they looked for numbers in the environment. They also say and use numbers as they play. Children learn about simple calculation during activities such as bowling, calculating how many pins they have knocked over and how many are left; however, children are also encouraged in number recognition

through the use of work sheets rather than develop their understanding through practical activities.

Children find out about how things work; for example, as they put cars into a chute to see where they end up. A computer is available and children have access to phones and cash registers in the role play area which teaches them about technology. They watch seeds grow and explore natural objects; for example, they delighted in carving a pumpkin then taking the pulp and seeds out, describing it as slimy. Children find out about past and present as they look at photographs on the walls and revisit what they were doing. Children learn about the local environment as they go on walks to the library, beach and to the local park. They learn about community helpers as they have visits from a dentist and a fire-fighter. They begin to know about their own and others culture; for example, through harvest celebrations and topics such as food around the world. Children are creative as they explore media and materials and can help themselves to paint, markers and pens; however, they are also given pre-drawn outlines or worksheets which does not promote their creativity. Children have free access to musical instruments so they can be creative with sound. This is supported by planned music times when they talk about playing instruments loudly and softly. Children's imagination is promoted as they play with small world toys and role-play. Children move around the room safely and with control, they are able to negotiate the stairs inside and climb on the climbing frame outside developing their large muscles; however, the outside environment is not included in the plans. Children use equipment that develops their small muscles such as paint brushes, pens and they handle a range of tools and malleable materials.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is satisfactory.

Children are confident in the nursery. There is a settling in procedure that includes short visits and working closely with the parents. This ensures the children settle well. However, the babies and younger children's assigned key person does not tend to their routine tasks such as feeding and nappy changing to help them form a warm and secure relationship with a special person to promote their emotional well-being. Staff are kind and caring; for example, a baby looking at herself in the mirror was asked, 'who is that? Is that you?' Older children show care and concern for each other; for example, they work together to put the toys away learning to cooperate and share. Staff use positive methods of behaviour management and the children behave well. They are praised for their achievements which develops their self esteem. Children can concentrate on their chosen task and sit quietly when needed. They are encouraged to take care of their needs; for example, the snack bar encourages the children's independence as they pour their drink and help themselves to fruit. Lunch is a social occasion where staff and children sit together engaging in conversation. Positive images are reflected in the environment and a range of holidays and traditions are acknowledged from their own and other cultures. Children with English as an additional language attend the setting and are supported well; for example, staff speak to the parents about their family traditions and learn special words to help the children settle. A special educational needs coordinator works with outside agencies to develop individual educational plans as appropriate. Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered.

Partnership with parents and carers is satisfactory

Parents are greeted warmly by the staff. The parents spoken to were happy with the care and feel that they can readily approach the staff and managers in the nursery. Most know the policies and are given a pack they can refer to. The prospectus and wall displays contain

information about the Foundation Stage and parents of children receiving funded nursery education say that staff explain the Foundation Stage to them. There are informal systems for assessing the children's starting points which makes it difficult to monitor children's progress towards the early learning goals. Newsletters include what the children are learning so parents feel involved in their children's education. Parents have not been invited to contribute to or view their children's records although they feel they can discuss their children's learning with the staff. Parents' meetings have not yet been introduced. However, parents feel they can see their children progress at the nursery.

Organisation

The organisation is inadequate.

The registered person failed to notify Ofsted of recent building work at the nursery which is a breach of the regulation. Staff have the required checks; however, the managers have not developed rigorous and robust recruiting procedures to ensure only the most suitable staff are employed to care for the children. The induction is informal resulting in the gaps in the staff's knowledge; for example, child protection. The complaints procedure has been updated to meet legislation but has not yet been shared with parents. Most of the required documentation for the safe and effective management of the setting and for the welfare and care of children is kept efficiently; however, the medicine records are not kept appropriately and some of the policies are in the process of being updated to reflect the current practice. The routine is organised to include a variety of activities during the day. The children's experiences improve when they are organised into small groups. The provision does not meet the needs of the range of children for whom it provides.

Leadership and management is satisfactory.

Staff meetings are held regularly for the whole staff, group leaders and individual teams. Information is cascaded down from management to the individual teams during their meetings. Staff have opportunities to discuss and plan together. There are some systems in place to monitor and evaluate the nursery education programme but these are not rigorous; for example, practice is observed informally. In addition, the managers informally identify strengths and weaknesses and as a result, work is in progress to enhance the provision; for example, the book and cosy area in the preschool rooms on the top floor, the science area and the outside play areas.

Improvements since the last inspection

At the last inspection there were two actions and four recommendations made for care and three key issues identified for nursery education.

The actions were to ensure that staff ratios are maintained at all times and to obtain written permission from parents before administering medication to children. The recommendations were to continue to develop use of the Birth to three matters framework, particularly in the baby unit; ensure that the heaters are inaccessible to babies; request written permission from parents for seeking emergency medical advice or treatment and to develop staff's knowledge and understanding of child protection issues.

Since the last inspection the managers have ensured there are staff who operate as 'floats' to support the children when the regular staff are on their breaks thus ensuring minimum ratios are met. The managers are also supernumerary in case of emergency. Medicines procedures

and records do not adhere to regulation; therefore, this remains an action of this inspection. Use of the Birth to three matters framework continues to evolve to support the development of babies and children under three. Written permission from parents for seeking emergency medical advice or treatment is now in place so staff know parents' wishes and can act quickly should a children have a serious accident or become ill. However, staff's knowledge and understanding of child protection is inconsistent so children may not be safeguarded from abuse and babies are in a room where large radiators are located which present a safety issue. As a result, these recommendations become actions of this inspection.

Key issues for nursery education were to continue to develop effective use of observations in order to identify individual children's next steps in learning and use any information gained from observations to inform the planning of activities; to continue to develop planning to include a broad range of practical activities and details of what children are expected to learn, the intended area of learning and how staff will differentiate to develop individual children's progress and to ensure teaching supports children's mathematical learning through purposeful practical activities throughout the 'free-play' session.

These key issues have been considered and some changes made to the planning, organisation and activities since the last inspection. The planning has changed again in recent months and continues to evolve. As a result, of this inspection the first recommendation remains for staff to continue to develop the use of the observations to inform planning and therefore enable the staff to meet the children's individual needs appropriately.

Complaints since the last inspection

Since 1 April 2004 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.

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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, the registered person **must** take the following actions:

- assess the risks to children in relation to the radiators and take action to minimise these
- ensure that children's health is promoted with effective procedures for hand washing to protect them from the spread of infection

- obtain written permission from parents before administering medication to children and maintain a written record of any medication administered
- ensure that all staff are aware of child protection procedures and the child protection procedure complies with those of the Local Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB)
- ensure that there are rigorous and robust procedures in place for ensuring staff are suitable to work with children
- improve knowledge and understanding of the requirements set out in regulations and set in place a procedure to notify Ofsted of relevant matters.

These actions are set out in a *notice of action to improve* and must be completed by the date specified in the notice.

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):

- continue to develop effective use of observations in order to identify individual children's next steps in learning and use the information gained from observations to inform the planning of activities
- review the effectiveness of the planning and ensure activities promote children's creative development
- improve procedures for ensuring that parents have regular access to their children's developmental records
- improve the balance of child initiated and adult directed activities so that children do not spend too long in large group time situations and they have more time for free play
- develop effective systems in order to regularly monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of the setting and that of the educational programme.

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