

First Steps Pre-School

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	134322
Inspection date	12 September 2007
Inspector	Margaret Davie
Setting Address	Guide Headquarters, Southern Road, Thame, Oxfordshire, OX9 2ED
Telephone number	01844 216774
E-mail	
Registered person	Tracey Louise Daubney
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 Pre-School registered in 1997. It operates from one room in a Girl Guide hut situated within a public park in Thame and it serves the local area.

A maximum of 24 children may attend the pre-school at any one time. The group opens on weekdays during school term time, from 09.15 to 12.00 and runs a lunch club on Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday from 12.00 to 13.00.

There are currently 22 children from two to under five on roll; of these, 15 receive funding for early education. The pre-school currently supports children who speak English as an additional language. There are currently no children on roll with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, however procedures are in place to welcome these children into the setting. The pre-school employs five members of staff; of these, three hold an early years qualification.

The pre-school receives support from the local authority.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is satisfactory.

Children are beginning to understand and follow appropriate hygiene routines as staff remind them to wash their hands before meals, after messy play and after using the toilet. Routines are well established, many children automatically wash their hands after using the toilet or messy sand play, obviously familiar with routines. However, there is no soap in the cloakrooms to help children understand the importance of washing their hands thoroughly to prevent the spread of germs. Children are well cared for in the case of a minor accident or illness as all required documentation and procedures are in place to protect them and information is shared with parents.

Children's dietary needs are appropriately met. They are offered a mid morning snack, such as apples, bananas and sandwiches which they enjoy preparing according to their own preferences. However, they are not regularly offered a choice of whole wheat bread when they have sandwiches, which detracts from their understanding of a healthy diet. Drinking water is not freely available to ensure children do not become thirsty. Lunch club provides a sociable environment where children develop sound eating habits.

Children explore and develop good physical control in regular indoor and outdoor activities. They develop their spatial awareness by jumping, balancing and running while following adult commands. They stretch their muscles while touching their toes and navigate an obstacle course with confidence. Children develop control and co-ordination using a range of resources, such as books, building blocks, paint brushes and pens, which they use with increasing dexterity.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

Children are cared for in a secure environment. Their play area is spacious and well organised so they can move around freely and safely. Children and parents are greeted warmly and made to feel welcome. This encourages children to enter the setting confidently and join their friends in play. Children who are not yet settled are given cuddles and individual attention from staff, which greatly increases their self confidence.

Children's development is promoted in all areas by a wide range of good quality equipment. They move around the room confidently, selecting toys and resources for play. They read books in a comfortable reading corner, which has been furnished with cushions and soft toys to make it more interesting for them. They enjoy painting and sand play, playing in the kitchen or building models with large and small blocks. They help staff to tidy up after play time and take their cups to be washed up after snack. Children attending the lunch club sit together in a suitable area, which encourages good social interaction and allows staff to give them any needed help.

Children benefit from good security measures to ensure there is no unauthorised entry to the building. This ensures that children can play safely. They play with resources and equipment that are safe for them to use because staff carry out thorough risk assessments and ensure any hazards are minimised. Children learn about keeping themselves safe when staff remind them to sit on their chairs properly. The outdoor area is checked thoroughly every day to ensure children's safety. Children's welfare is safeguarded because staff have a clear understanding

of child protection procedures, however the setting does not have up to date local authority contact details should they have any concerns about a child in their care.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

Children are happy and confident in the pre-school. They settle quickly when they arrive and go about routines with growing confidence. They play imaginatively in the home corner, preparing and serving meals, make pasta necklaces and enjoy painting. Children make their own choices when selecting activities at the beginning of each session and negotiate and take turns sensibly when sharing resources.

Children develop good relationships with staff and one another. Staff take time to help them settle when they first start, introducing new activities slowly so that children gain confidence. They listen to what children say and value their news from home. Children develop a good level of self esteem and confidence because staff are caring and encouraging, always taking time to praise their achievements. Staff clearly enjoy the children's company, talking and playing with them, and as a result children have good support in their play and make good progress in all areas of development.

Nursery Education

The quality of teaching and learning is good. Children make good progress in their learning because they are supported by staff with a clear understanding of the Foundation Stage. Staff provide varied and broad experiences to promote children's development in all areas. Children's learning is well supported by key workers who use both formal and informal observations to identify what children know, and to build on this in order to help them reach their potential. Children's progress is clearly tracked and records are thorough and well organised. This helps staff to identify the next steps for children's learning. Children's learning is enhanced because staff plan activities which meet their needs, extending their learning appropriately. For example, children making model vehicles with stickle bricks are encouraged to build a bridge under which their vehicles can be driven. A member of staff demonstrated how to do this, which encouraged children to try it for themselves.

Children develop good personal, social and emotional skills. They move around the setting confidently, selecting activities which interest them. They play cooperatively with other children, serving each other slices of pizza in the kitchen and helping to open the sticky kitchen door so their friends can join them in play. Monitors help with simple routines, passing the serving plate at snack time and handing out coats and bags at home time. This helps children learn to take responsibility and have consideration for others.

Children follow simple instructions while exercising, and develop early reading skills while finding their names on their coat pegs and name cards at snack time. However, few of the resources are labelled to help them recognise simple words. They develop good speaking and listening skills, happily chatting during circle time. However, there are few interesting resources to encourage them to develop early writing skills.

Children enjoy making big or small models and long or short necklaces learning about simple mathematical concepts. They eagerly sing simple number songs helping them to learn to count in sequence. They learn about the world around them on outings to a local farm and celebrate festivals to widen their knowledge of other cultures and beliefs. They enjoy action songs, such

as 'The farmer in his den'. Good adult support ensures that children progress well in their development.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

Children are well known and treated as individuals and with equal concern. Detailed information is gathered from parents when children are registered in order to promote children's well being. For example, staff ensure they know if children use special words to indicate their personal needs or how they like to be comforted if they are upset. As a result, children feel valued and special. Staff use the knowledge they have about each child in order to support their individual needs effectively. For example, setting up resources they know specific children really enjoy, on days they know they will be attending.

Children's behaviour is good. Consistent application of rules, regular praise and close links with parents ensure that children quickly understand what is expected of them and learn the difference between right and wrong. Staff remind them gently to remember their manners. Children who stay for lunch club behave well and feel special because staff sit with them and enjoy their own lunch. Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered.

Partnership with their parents and carers is good and impacts positively on children's learning. Staff meet with parents when children first register and quickly develop friendly, professional relationships which encourage an on going two-way flow of information. This, combined with formal meetings promote good outcomes for children. Children's welfare is promoted because parents are provided with detailed information about all policies and procedures, however the contact details for the regulator contained in the complaints procedure is out of date.

Organisation

The organisation is satisfactory.

The setting is well organised to care for children. Space is used well, allowing children to play safely and move around freely. Children are cared for by suitably qualified staff who are caring and show a clear understanding of their role in supporting children in their care and learning. Staff are committed to attending further childcare training and development courses. This will help them to improve the already good care they provide for children.

All required documentation is in place for the care of children and ratios are always observed. Attendance records are kept, but although they show when children arrive late or leave early, they do not accurately reflect the times of attendance for all children. Accident and medication records are kept and appropriately signed by parents, supporting children's continuity of care, however some emergency contact details for new children are incomplete, which could potentially cause a delay if contact needed to be made. Policies and procedures are well presented and shared with parents.

Leadership and management of nursery education is good. The managers have a clear vision and aims for the setting. Staff work well as a team to monitor and improve teaching and learning, ensuring each child makes good progress towards the early learning goals. The setting meets the needs of the range of children for whom it provides.

Improvements since the last inspection

At the time of the last inspection the provider was asked to ensure that parents have contact details for Ofsted in case they wish to make a complaint and to improve the registration procedure so that times of children's late arrival or early departure are recorded.

The setting's written complaints procedure now contains contact details for Ofsted, however these are not current. Registration procedures have not been improved to clearly show the time of arrival and departure of children. As a result, these recommendations remain outstanding from the previous inspection.

The provider was also asked to improve the presentation of some activities to provide more stimulation and challenge to the children's learning, to improve the selection of resources to provide children with positive images of other cultures, ethnic backgrounds and disabilities and to introduce other cultures and beliefs into the curriculum. They were also asked to give children more opportunities to express their own creative ideas and to self select activities and equipment.

Children engage in activities eagerly because staff have reassessed the way in which activities are presented. Children develop a good awareness of diversity because the setting has improved resources to reflect wider society and modified curriculum planning to develop children's understanding of other cultures and beliefs. Children express their creative ideas with daily access to a varied range of media and gain independence by self selecting activities and equipment according to their own preferences during each session.

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.

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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 fresh drinking water is available to children at all times
- obtain contact numbers in line with Local Safeguarding Children Board procedures

- ensure parents have up to date contact details for the regulator in the complaints procedure
- ensure registers show children's hours of attendance and records contain emergency contact details for all children

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):

- improve labelling and make writing resources more interesting to enhance children's access to early reading and writing

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