

First Steps Nursery

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	EY217413
Inspection date	21 August 2007
Inspector	Anne Barnsley
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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

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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 outstanding.

WHAT SORT OF SETTING IS IT?

First Steps Nursery has been open since 1990, although it has only been in its current premises since 2001. It is purpose built and has a large car park providing off-road parking. The nursery is situated within a residential area in the village of Ruskington. First Steps Nursery is part of a small chain of nurseries within Lincolnshire. The nursery has separate rooms for each age group of children and a large enclosed outside play area. The nursery is open from 07.30 until 18.00 daily, with the exception of bank holidays and Christmas week. The nursery is registered for 70 children and operates an out of school and holiday club within these numbers. There are currently 116 children on roll of whom 22 are in receipt of nursery education funding. The nursery has a total of 17 staff of whom 14 hold Level 3 qualifications in childcare and education and two hold Level 2 qualifications in childcare and education.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Children learn the importance of good personal hygiene through very well-planned daily routines and excellent role modelling by staff. Staff provide children with solid support and guidance in their learning. Children have a good awareness of how and why we wash our hands and when it is important to do so. They are independent and carry out personal hygiene tasks with confidence. They wash their hands before snacks and after messy activities and know where to hang their coat and painting overalls. The children are protected from infection through the well-managed hygiene routines which are practised by the staff. Policies and procedures are thorough and comprehensive. All staff are fully conversant with the nursery's procedures and implement these robustly. Overall the high standard of cleanliness throughout the nursery contributes to the children's good health. Staff are well informed about children's health issues and all relevant records and documents are in place. An appropriate number of staff hold first aid certificates to ensure that children receive prompt and appropriate treatment.

Children benefit from a healthy diet. Staff gather strong information from parents about their child's individual needs, allergies and any dietary requirements they may have. This information is shared with the relevant staff to ensure that it is complied with at all times. Children are provided with nutritious snacks twice daily and they have free access to drinking water at all times. Snacks are mainly a good variety of fruit and occasionally include additional food linked to cooking activities and topics. Staff encourage the children to set out tables, pour their own drinks and choose where they wish to sit. This develops children's independence and promotes positive social interaction. Children may bring a packed lunch from home or receive a hot meal. Meals are provided by an external caterer who works with a four-week rolling menu that promotes healthy eating choices in line with the nursery policy. Parents are able to see in advance what choices are available. If they send lunch boxes they are asked to include ice packs to ensure that the perishable contents remain fresh until eaten.

Children enjoy a stimulating range of equipment to promote a healthy life and their physical development. The playrooms are well planned to ensure children have ample space to spread out and play. They take part in activities to encourage them to use their bodies to keep fit. They discuss the weather and if it is suitable to play outside today. They are learning about their bodies and how to dress appropriately for the weather conditions. Older children have regular and varied outside experiences that develop all their large and small muscles, and they benefit from the fresh air and outside environment. Opportunities for babies to benefit from regular fresh air however, are less, although they are active at all times whilst inside and engage in well-planned physical activities. Babies individual sleep routines are highly respected and catered for by vigilant staff who monitor them constantly through the use of a baby monitor and regular personal checks.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

Children and parents are welcomed into a stimulating environment with attractive displays of children's work and an abundance of play materials and equipment that is set out ready for them to use in well organised learning zones. The nursery is extremely well maintained, spacious, well ventilated and hazard-free. The children's safety is further ensured through the thorough risk assessments that have been undertaken and the effective safety procedures that staff

implement. Staff are exceptional role models and children see them greeting parents, asking visitors to sign the visitors book and show their identification. Children's safety is paramount to the organisation of the nursery. Staff recognise hazards and take positive steps to minimise these. Routine procedures are in place to ensure the high standard of safety is maintained and staff work well as a team and support each other. Children are encouraged to help with tidying up and learn to keep themselves safe with simple rules such as the correct way to carry equipment. Effective security measures are in place to protect the children from harm and promote safety around the nursery and high staffing ratios ensure that children are well supervised. Registers of children and staff are maintained so that it is clear who is on site at all times, although staff cover at break times is not recorded. This would make it difficult to know who had been on duty in a particular room if this information was required retrospectively. Accident records are maintained and shared with parents. The setting is well planned with lots of space for children to move freely and safely around activities and areas. Staff help children gain an awareness of keeping themselves safe in the group as they explain and practise simple procedures such as emergency evacuation, learn about road safety and the care of their resources. They have access to a wide range of safe, good quality, age-appropriate toys, furniture and equipment. These are well organised throughout the nursery in child height-drawers and shelves that successfully promote children's independent choices. Resources are well presented to encourage children to participate. Space is well planned and separates the different types of play into safe zones where children can express themselves freely.

The welfare of children is safeguarded and promoted through comprehensive policies and procedures that all staff are fully conversant with. Staff are knowledgeable about child protection and all receive in-house training in this area. All procedures are up-to-date and supporting literature and comprehensive records are in place and available for all staff. Their good practice ensures any concerns are dealt with in a sensitive manner and a designated person is responsible to share information with outside agencies to ensure children are protected at all times.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is outstanding.

Children in this setting are exceptionally well cared for by a highly motivated and dedicated team of staff who provide children with wonderful play and learning experiences. Staff interact warmly with all children and are attentive and kind. As a result children are very secure and have high self-esteem. They are confident to initiate their own learning and are excited by the interesting and stimulating activities. Children are extremely polite and considerate to each other and mirror the positive example of the staff. Their behaviour is exceptional and they respond positively when they are being guided and encouraged by staff. Children and staff have established strong and meaningful relationships throughout the nursery. Babies squeal and become excited when staff walk into the room and older children laugh a great deal when staff make jokes or tell them funny stories.

Children enjoy being independent as they help themselves to a drink and a fruit snack. Staff have a strong knowledge of the 'Birth to three matters' framework and this has a positive effect on the younger children's achievements. Staff plan activities in line with this framework and have gained a secure knowledge about what children can learn. Staff maintain comprehensive diaries of each child's day so that parents can be included and can also contribute from home by adding comments for staff. Developmental records are also maintained and these clearly show the progress each child is making and account for each child's individual interests. Children enjoy the various activities such as the domestic play area, creative activities and exploring natural objects. For example, the investigation table provides children with many opportunities

to explore natural objects or to bring things of interest from home to share with the other children.

Strong emphasis is placed on developing children's self-assurance, confidence and sense of belonging. This is achieved to an exceptionally high standard as the staff spend their time talking with children constantly, listening to what they have to say and showing children great respect. Staff sit on the floor to engage with babies and toddlers and they sing to them, chat to them, cuddle them and provide them with affection and security. Children who have moved through the nursery are very much at home in this environment. By the time they reach the pre-school room they are confident children with a healthy and eager disposition towards learning. They independently choose what they wish to do, who they wish to play with and where they wish to play. Children are extremely happy in this vibrant, stimulating nursery.

Nursery Education

The quality of teaching and learning is outstanding. Children thrive in the nursery pre-school because the staff share a common belief in their teaching methods and work extremely well together to deliver learning opportunities through a consistent approach. Staff's knowledge of the Foundation Stage is exceptional and their interactive skills enable them to progress children and challenge them appropriately through all play experiences so that they are constantly learning through fun.

The nursery is a continuous provision and as such ensures that children have purposeful and positive learning opportunities all year, both inside and outside. The environment is set out into designated learning zones that each have a clear purpose and function and cover all areas of learning. Children are making rapid progress in all areas of the curriculum. They use computers and technology well, count way beyond twenty with ease, can calculate, sort, measure and discuss shape, size and three dimensional objects with fluency. Children are very capable communicators who have an extensive range of vocabulary. They confidently initiate and extend conversations and enjoy communicating with each other through the use of books, story tapes and role play.

Children independently decide what they wish to do and what area they wish to play in. They are learning through free play that always has a structure to it so that staff can progress children at all times and introduce new ideas and concepts through the careful planning they have completed. Children are fully engaged and extremely happy in both their structured learning sessions and their free play time. They have a strong sense of belonging as they greet each other and seek out friends to share play with. Behaviour is excellent as the children know the routines and what is expected of them. Children share well and this is demonstrated as they negotiate sharing toys and equipment. Children show a good level of independence as they select resources and instigate play with others. For example, children group together to play with the dried rice and Chinese cooking utensils. They pretend to make rice cakes and sing nursery rhymes together and dance as they cook. Children enjoy using language during group discussions and they extend conversations as they contribute their own ideas such as discussing rainbows that might appear if it stops raining and the sun comes out.

This is a print-rich environment where children have excellent exposure to writing, books, posters, labelling and displays. The room is attractively decorated with displays that the children have made. The effort that individual children make when they decide to draw or paint a picture is instantly recognised by staff who show children their pleasure and make them feel proud. Children are asked if they would like to put their picture on the wall. If they wish to do so they

are encouraged to write their name on it and choose a place where they would like to put it. Staff show children immense levels of respect and place a high value on developing their personal, social and emotional wellbeing. Children are receptive to the constant praise and encouragement that is provided by staff, and relationships that have developed between the children and staff are trusting and warm. This has a clear impact on their self-esteem and encourages them to try new tasks and participate in activities. Staff fully recognise that each child is an individual and that they have different preferences and abilities. They make observational notes on all children and use these to inform their planning. They evaluate each focus activity to assess the outcome, and by using all this information they focus on supporting and extending each child at their individual pace to ensure that every child has the best possible start in their early learning.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

Staff gather comprehensive information from parents to ensure that the individual needs of every child are met to a high standard. Staff work in key groups so that children have a strong sense of belonging and staff can continue to meet their changing or developing needs. Children learn to respect each other's differences through the positive learning that staff provide. They learn about other cultures, religions, festivals, family structures, gender, roles and disabilities. Positive images of diversity adorn the walls and a wide range of planned activities extend children's learning about the wider world. All children are valued and respected as individuals and all their needs are well documented and met to a high standard. All staff have completed 'Special Needs Awareness' training and can identify and care for children who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities.

Children learn to be kind to each other, to take turns and to share. Staff are exceptional role models who provide clear guidance and support to children and offer explanations if children's behaviour is undesirable. They have high expectations for all children and ensure the children have a secure understanding of the boundaries within the nursery. Children respond to direction from adults in a positive fashion. A consistent approach is followed by all adults. This impacts clearly on the children's security and confidence, as they know what is expected of them. Children develop high levels of self-esteem and are able to resolve differences and gain an understanding between right and wrong. Highly effective behaviour management defuses situations and distracts and engages children in worthwhile activities. Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered.

Parents are provided with comprehensive information about the nursery and are welcome to visit at any time. Space is made for their child during their visit so that they can wander around at will without being distracted. This also helps them to feel confident with the care and education that is being provided for their child. Parents are provided with information about the 'Birth to three matters' framework and the Foundation Stage of learning and their comments are welcomed by the staff through the home link books. This ensures that parents are involved and can contribute to their child's care and learning. A high level of information is available to parents including all policies and procedures to help them feel secure and comfortable with the care and education provided for their children. Evaluation forms ensure that parents are able to comment on every aspect of the nursery practice.

The partnership with parents and carers is outstanding. This contributes significantly to the children's sense of belonging, security and well-being. Staff fully recognise and respect parents as their child's first educator, and involving them in their child's learning is a driving force in

nursery. Parents play an active role in their children's education. They have ready access to all planning and are fully informed about topics and themes. This enables parents to send items from home that, either relate to themes, or will be of interest to the children and generate discussions. Staff exchange information regularly with parents about their child's progress and learning. They are extremely approachable and friendly, making parents feel secure and at ease. Great importance is placed on welcoming new parents when showing them around the facility and obtaining relevant information about their child's learning. This enables staff and parents to work closely when planning around each child's individual needs. Staff are warm and take their time to make parents feel confident to ask further questions. They discuss their programme of learning and how this is delivered to children through continuous practice all year round. Parents are shown the different learning zones and are provided with extensive information about each zone and what area of learning it promotes. Literature about the nursery education adorns the walls and is presented to an exceptional standard that is inviting to parents. Staff hold parents' evenings for the nursery education, which are very well attended by parents. These, coupled with special event days, provide parents with strong opportunities to feel very much involved with their child's learning. This close partnership impacts positively on the children's sense of security and confidence.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

Children's care is greatly enhanced by the overall quality of organisation throughout the nursery and the high regard staff have for children's well-being. Policies and procedures are comprehensive, well presented and fully reflect the solid focus and practices within the provision. Records are accurately maintained and are shared regularly with parents to ensure continuity of care. A well-organised training and development programme ensures that children are well protected and cared for. All staff undertake regular training and are committed to enhancing their skills. Staff are enthusiastic and committed to delivering a high quality provision. They are a dedicated and motivated staff team who share a common philosophy of teaching children through the child's own interest. They work exceptionally well together and promote their aims and objectives to a very high standard.

The leadership and management of funded children is outstanding. The staff share a common aim and all work together to deliver the Foundation Stage by providing children with a continuous provision all year round. The manager ensures that all staff have appropriate training in their specific area, and have opportunities through regular staff meetings and one-to-one sessions to share their skills, ideas and training experiences. The manager and deputy manager continually enhance their knowledge through effective training which is cascaded to all staff through in-house training sessions. The manager works closely with the nursery owners and excellent relationships exist. Managers and owners share responsibility for employment of new staff and the manager oversees the organisation of staff supervision, staff ratios and deployment, operational plan, staff training and qualifications. A robust system is in place for the recruitment, supervision and induction of all staff.

Staff have a secure knowledge of the National Standards which they are committed to applying throughout the setting. This is enhanced with their knowledge of the 'Birth to three matters' framework and the Foundation Stage of learning. High regard for the well-being of the children, their group sizes, adult support and well-planned activities contribute to children's well-being, enjoyment and achievements. The manager, deputy manager and staff work extremely well together and have built a positive, motivated, and dedicated staff team. Staff each bring their

own strengths and experiences into the care they provide and this enriches the opportunities and activities provided for the children.

Highly effective organisation of all records and documents ensures children's welfare and enables parents to play an active role in their children's care. Staff are committed to the continuous evaluation and improvement of their practice. Excellent use is made of external advisers and other professionals and this fully promotes cross-organisational working for the best interests of children and their parents. Staff have access to professional publications which enhances their knowledge of current trends in early years childcare and education and helps generate ideas for activities and the evaluation of their own practice. Overall, children's needs are met.

Improvements since the last inspection

At the last inspection the setting agreed to complete five recommendations. The first was to provide some domestic style furniture in the baby room. The setting immediately purchased a sofa so that staff can sit comfortably when feeding very young babies and snuggle with them to make them feel secure. The second and third recommendations were to identify clear learning objectives in the Foundation Stage planning and to complete assessment records. Both of these recommendations have been met. Planning now clearly shows the aims and objectives of learning and assessment records are used to inform future planning so that each child's individual needs are fully met and appropriate levels of challenge are set. The setting agreed to provide increased opportunities for mark making so that children could express themselves and experiment spontaneously and independently. Children now have an extremely well resourced writing area that is permanently available to them. The final recommendation was to provide a range of programmable toys that children can operate. Children now have a wide range of programmable toys, including computers and tape recorders. All five recommendations have been satisfactorily met and improve the quality of care and education for the children who attend.

Complaints since the last inspection

Since the 1st 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.

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 outstanding.

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):

- promote the good health of babies by ensuring that they have regular fresh air and outside experiences
- ensure that a daily record of the names of the children looked after on the premises also includes the names and times of the staff who provide cover during staff breaks.

The quality and standards of the nursery education

No recommendations for improvement are made because the quality and standards of nursery education are outstanding.

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