

Bridge House and First Steps

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	EY344143
Inspection date	20 September 2007
Inspector	Mary Van De Peer
Setting Address	Ashford School, East Hill, ASHFORD, Kent, TN24 8PB
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Registered person	United Church Schools Trust
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?

Bridge House and First Steps Nursery has been registered since 2006. It is managed by The United Church Schools Trust. It operates from two separate buildings of Ashford School. The nursery, Bridge House, runs from a self-contained two-storey building and caters for children aged from three months to over two years. The pre-school, First Steps, operates from two classrooms in the main school. Children transfer from the nursery to the pre-school at about two and a half years and remain here until they reach the age when they receive nursery education funding, shortly after they reach three years. A maximum of 88 children in total may attend at any one time. The nursery provides care for 56 children and the pre-school for 32 children. There are currently 110 children attending the nursery and 100 children receive funding for education. The facility is open Monday to Friday from 07:30 to 18:30 all year round. It is situated within walking distance of Ashford town centre, in Kent. Both facilities have their own outside play areas and additional access to the school playing fields and playgrounds. Children attend for a variety of sessions on a sessional, full time or flexible basis. The nursery serves the local area and surrounding area. They are able to support children with learning difficulties and children who speak English as an additional language. The nursery employs 34 members of staff. All staff hold appropriate early years childcare qualifications to level two and level three.

There are also several staff who have a degree in early childhood studies. The nursery supports students on training who are working towards a qualification. The nursery receives support from the local authority and has close links with teaching staff in the nursery and reception classes of the main school.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Children's play areas are clean and organised. A designated cleaner means childcare staff are able to concentrate on caring for the children's needs. Children are learning about self-care and are able to participate in effective personal hygiene procedures. They wash their hands before meals, after using the toilet or playing with creative play activities. This also means that the risk of cross-infection is kept to a minimum. Most members of staff have attended first aid training and both accident and medication administration records are in place. If children sustain any minor injuries, they are dealt with effectively. Staff have a good knowledge of Birth to three matters. They have a very sound knowledge and understanding of each child's stage of development. This means the youngest children are becoming confident and are starting to try out new skills. Physical development is good. Children's physical skills are developing well. They are able to play with a good choice of activities that contribute to a healthy lifestyle. There is a wide and interesting range of indoor and outdoor toys and equipment, for example climbing frames, sand and water play, balls, construction, puzzles and mark-making. They are beginning to develop self-confidence in their physical play. All children are able to rest or sleep when they need to, this helps them recognise their own body signs.

The nursery can provide children's meals if parents want this service. The preparation of food is dependent on the age range of the children, for example, babies' meals are liquidised. There is a selection of fruit and drinks, including milk and water, during snack time. Children are beginning to have an awareness about healthy eating. They each have their own cups and plates to help avoid cross-contamination. Children's individual dietary needs are catered for.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

Children are cared for in bright, clean and safe areas. Any hazards have been minimised, stair gates are used, sockets covered and dangerous items are kept out of children's reach. The nursery's play rooms are child-friendly. For example, the toilets and washbasins are low level. The toys and activities are stored at a safe and suitable height for children to reach easily. The equipment that the children use is appropriate to their ages, checked regularly for safety and cleaned when necessary. The outside play areas are available for children to use every day. Risk assessments carried out daily at the premises, mean that children can play safely. Staff make sure they achieve a balance between freedom and setting safe limits for the children they care for. An emergency evacuation procedure, involving the children, is carried out at regular intervals. This allows them to learn some sense of danger and knowledge about how to protect themselves from harm. Children are well protected by staff who have a clear understanding of child protection procedures and give good priority to their welfare.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

The children really enjoy their time at the nursery and the pre-school. All staff have a good knowledge of both Birth to three matters and the Foundation Stage. This enables them to create an environment which is fun, educational as well as homely and friendly. Older children build constructions with friends and learn numbers, shapes and colours on the computer together. They are learning to share and take turns, interacting happily with staff and with each other. The staff work hard to make them feel welcome. The walls are full of examples of children's work and colourful posters showing positive images from around the world. This helps to increase children's self-esteem. Most of the children settle easily when they arrive. The baby care areas have wonderful sensory play sections and treasure baskets, helping to provide visual stimulation as well as a calming atmosphere for very young children. There is a very good selection of age appropriate toys for the children to play with. These cover the main areas of development, for example role play to encourage imaginary play and the creative area where they can experiment with various different art and craft materials, such as paints, glue and ribbon pieces, dry pasta and foil. There are also quiet areas where the children can relax and look at books. Computers and child-friendly software allow all children to gain familiarity with information and technology. Children are able to choose their own activities. However, there are times when they have to stop what they are doing, for example at snack times. This reduces the opportunities for children to further develop their independence and make their own decisions.

Nursery Education

The quality of teaching and learning is good. Children are able to learn, experiment and have lots of fun using good quality toys, activities and resources. This supports them in all areas of learning. The children are keen to learn and confident enough to try new experiences. They listen well to stories and take part eagerly in any actions relevant to the story being told. Children are able to mark-make to represent their ideas, for example, by using paint, chalks and crayons. More able children attempt writing letters appearing in their name. Role play areas are used constantly by the children. Children are able to count and recognise numbers up to at least twenty. However, there are times when adults are not consistent enough in challenging children with different number activities, such as problem-solving which help develop their thinking skills. Children work well together, for example, constructing and joining in outdoor ball games. Right from the start, staff find out about children's skills, interests and needs. This information is then used to inform the plans. Ongoing observations and evaluations help identify children's next steps in their learning. Staff monitor and record children's achievements. They also assess different activities to see how successful they are. This enables children to benefit from appropriate challenges in their play.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

Children learn about people from other cultures and with disabilities through the wide range of activities made available. They have access to a range of books, dolls and figures showing positive images of equality. Children understand that all people are different. The individual needs of all children who attend are well met. The setting has effective arrangements to care for children with learning difficulties and disabilities. Children receive lots of praise for their achievements. Staff are enthusiastic about giving encouragement and not dwelling too much on negative behaviour. They use effective, positive behaviour management strategies, which

are shared with parents. Staff are good role models, they help children learn the importance of showing respect for each other. The children play freely within effective boundaries and develop good self esteem. Samples of children's work is on display in every play room. Children receive good care and support from the staff. Parents confirm that they feel able to approach staff for advice about their child. They receive a good insight into how their children develop through verbal exchanges about their children's wellbeing and achievements. A contact book is completed daily by staff and this helps ensure children receive continuity of care.

Partnership with parents is good. Parents receive clear and regular information about their children's progress and development, for example, through regular updates about their achievements. Curriculum plans are displayed, showing clear aims relating to the early learning goals. The nursery provides substantial information about the care and education children receive, in a welcome pack. Further details on the Foundation Stage are displayed in the pre-school area. Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

The nursery is well organised. Indoor and outdoor space is well-planned and laid out, to provide good play opportunities for children. All legally required documentation and record-keeping, which contributes to children's health, safety and wellbeing, are in place. The setting's registration certificate is displayed prominently. There is a robust and effective staff recruitment and appraisal system. Children benefit from well-qualified and experienced staff. In addition, most staff members hold a current paediatric first aid course certificate. This helps ensure that the nursery's policies and procedures are consistently applied. All staff are committed to continuous improvement and development. They regularly reflect, monitor and improve the quality of their care and education. The leadership and management of the nursery are good. The manager has lots of experience, enthusiasm and commitment, which in turn motivates staff. She is continually looking for effective ways to develop and improve the nursery and pre-school in all areas which subsequently improves the learning experiences for children. The setting meets the needs of the range of the children for whom it provides.

Improvements since the last inspection

Not applicable.

Complaints since the last inspection

Since registration 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):

- increase the opportunities for children to further develop their independence and make their own decisions

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):

- consider increasing use of numbers, for example, counting and simple problem-solving, in children's everyday play.

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