



First Steps

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	EY295765
Inspection date	13 September 2005
Inspector	Michael, David Charnley
Setting Address	Fulwood Lodge, Longsands Lane, Fulwood, Preston, Lancashire, PR2 9PS
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Registered person	Michael Robert Melville
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 satisfactory. The registered person meets 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 is privately owned and registered to provide full day care for a maximum of 40 children aged from birth to 8 years. The nursery has been in operation under its new owner since February 2005 and is situated in a semi-rural location of Fulwood, near Preston in Lancashire. The nursery is set within its own grounds in a large Victorian detached house. Children have access to individual rooms appropriate to their ages and stages of development. There is a separate

baby room, sleeping area, toddler room, separate play rooms for pre-school children and children aged over 8 years who attend after school. There is an enclosed outdoor play area located at the rear of the building.

The nursery is open for 51 weeks throughout the year from 08.00 to 17.30 hours, offering full and part time places for children living in the immediate and wider community. There are a total number of 37 children on roll, of whom 7 receive funding for nursery education. The setting supports children with special needs and children who speak English as an additional language.

The nursery employs seven members of staff, all of whom hold relevant early years child care qualifications including the nursery manager. The setting is registered with the National Day Care Association.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Children enjoy a wide range of activities which contribute to their good health. Staff ensure that children follow strong routine procedures which in turn minimises the risk of infection and cross contamination. Staff lead by example, as a result children learn the importance of hand washing at appropriate times throughout the day. Children are encouraged to take responsibility for their own hygiene and are motivated when seeing themselves to the bathroom. This means that children develop a growing ability to be independent and an awareness of personal hygiene. Older children learn about oral hygiene because staff talk to them about the importance of brushing their teeth at regular intervals. Staff exercise vigilant practices in keeping the premises, toys and equipment clean. Such practices allow children to play in a clean environment without risk to their health.

Children enjoy a healthy diet and look forward to home cooked meals which are freshly prepared on the premises. They take great delight in sitting together at meal times and comment on the 'delicious' food. They chat freely to their friends and staff who encourage them to talk about their eating habits and complete their meal as it makes them 'strong and healthy'. This good practice allows them to develop their social skills and their understanding of nutrition. At the beginning of the placement staff gather a good source of information from parents in relation to children's likes, dislikes and any other dietary requirements. This means that children's individual dietary needs are sensitively catered for and met well. The health of babies and toddlers is promoted well as staff follow their routines for sleep and rest. Younger children enjoy the close, warm supportive relationships they have with staff which results in them feeling self assured. Older children are beginning to recognise their own physical needs relating to keeping themselves warm and eating.

Staff plan a good range of physical activities to suit children of all ages. Much emphasis is placed on children having fun. Children laugh out loud as they follow simple instructions of the enthusiastic staff during musical based activities, banging

and beating hand made instruments to the different rhythms. Children develop good control over their bodies as they manoeuvre in a variety of ways during outdoor play. Children enjoy scooting around on push along toys, learning to adjust their speed in the process. They demonstrate their growing ability to climb and balance with good technique as they confidently rock to and fro on the seesaw and clamber up the slide. Children's fine motor skills are fostered well as they learn how to use tools and materials safely, for example use of templates during playdoh activity and scissors when collage making.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is satisfactory.

The premises are safe, secure and suitable for its purpose with the relevant safety features strategically positioned by staff, allowing for children's freedom of movement. Children move around and alternate between the different play rooms with confidence. They are sufficiently protected from hazards since staff implement risk assessments and take remedial action where necessary. Children learn to manage their own safety. Staff talk to them about potential hazards, such as what could happen if climbing on the furniture. They are encouraged to tidy away equipment so as to minimise the risk of accidents. Children are beginning to learn about what to do in the event of fire in line with the nursery's procedure, however this is not practised at the frequency recommended. Security measures that involves keeping the main exits locked and staff monitoring access contributes to keeping children secure on the premises.

Children are able to play, eat and rest in an environment that is welcoming and visually stimulating. This is as a result of staff's good attention to making the premises child centred. Children benefit from the use of safe, good quality, developmentally appropriate equipment and resources that are checked by staff periodically and set out according to age and ability. Equipment is stored safely on low level shelves enabling children to select resources independently.

The safety and welfare of the children is regarded as being paramount, however the setting's child protection procedures does not conform to requirements. It does not include a procedure to follow should an allegation be made against a member of staff. Staff have a good awareness of their responsibilities to pass on any concerns identified to senior members, however there is a lack of clarity as to the designated person's understanding of the procedures to follow. The protection of children is therefore not fully assured.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is satisfactory.

Children aged under 3 years develop a positive attitude in their play because staff plan an interesting programme of activities that covers various aspects of their learning. The plans in place, based on the Birth to three matters framework, coupled with staff's growing knowledge in this area of practice is having a steady impact on

improving younger children's achievements. Children express themselves well with increasing confidence and develop their ideas during creative activity that includes music and dance, collage work and sensory play. They enjoy outdoor play that features regularly as part of the daily routine. Children experience lots of fun during musical activity and are introduced to new vocabulary as they make comparisons between the different sounds. Children enjoy experimenting with different mark making materials that includes the use of glue sticks, pens and paintbrushes. They show good levels of sustained interest in the messy play room with staff on hand to support and guide them in their chosen activities. Exploration with textured and natural materials via 'treasure baskets' enables children to make greater use of their senses. Children are developing a love of books as they self select, holding them the right way up and turning the pages.

Staff listen, value what children say and talk about what they are doing in their play, for example during messy play. The good interaction of staff helps raise children's self-confidence and self-esteem as they are encouraged to communicate their ideas. Positive relationships with staff are therefore formed, with children being happy and settled in their company. The good attention to planning and observing children's achievements contributes to them making steady progress. Staff work hard to help children in this age group reach their full potential by enhancing existing skills and building on any areas where they need extra input, thus ensuring that children make strides in their development.

Nursery Education

The quality of teaching and children's learning is satisfactory. Practitioner's have an understanding of children's needs providing a curriculum based programme of activities that are linked to the early learning goals. Their growing knowledge and understanding of the foundation stage enables children to take part in free play and structured activities. Levels of challenge are generally sufficient to interest children who enjoy the ability to operate independently within the environment and make decisions about their play. Children choose confidently from the appropriately organised resources that cover various aspects of play to support their learning. Children particularly enjoy expressing themselves creatively. This involves painting in various forms and exploring what happens when colours mix. They sing enthusiastically, joining in rhymes and action songs familiar to them. Children use tools and implements competently during malleable play. They show their initiative to work alone or in small groups as they build, construct and explore the textures of different materials. Their ability to listen and speak is fostered appropriately during group situations, for example at snack time and registration time where they talk about family and encouraged to recount their holiday experiences using 'Travelling Ted' to assist them. They are beginning to use mathematical language in their play such as shape, size and position.

Whilst activities and experiences sufficiently cover areas of learning that meets the needs of individual children the teaching at times is not particularly innovating resulting in some minor deficits. The delivery of planned activities, for example does not consistently stretch children's imagination or capture their interests. Whilst children's behaviour is generally good and managed appropriately it can sometimes deteriorate if the subject matter of focused activities are not well planned.

Practitioner's occasionally miss the opportunity to maximise children's learning during routine or planned activity, for instance in terms of children's mathematical development whilst they demonstrate the ability to count to 10 and beyond they are not given sufficient opportunities to develop their problem solving skills. This, hence hinders their learning. There are established and sufficient systems for observing, assessing and monitoring children's progress with staff displaying a good commitment to this. The gathered information is not, however consistently used to plan the next steps in children's learning.

Children overall are making satisfactory progress towards the early learning goals.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

Children are able to make a positive contribution as they are warmly welcomed and valued by staff. Staff have a sound understanding of equal opportunities, reflected in the way they plan for children and their individual development. Children as part of their play access a sufficient range of resources that helps raise their awareness of the immediate and wider world. Such learning resources including books, jigsaws and small world equipment are displayed for easy access. They learn about festivals from around the world. Children, for example enjoyed the experience of sampling Chinese food and learning how to use chopsticks. They also learnt about the Chinese way of writing with captions displayed for them to look and talk about.

Staff act as positive role models who value and respect individual children. Children learn their boundaries and respond well to the praise and encouragement offered by the staff. They show their willingness to help, for example, tidying toys away and helping to set the table for lunch. Children are learning about the importance of good manners with staff reminding them to say please and thank you when handed their morning snack. Children's social, moral, cultural and spiritual development is fostered. They gain an appreciation of how people less fortunate than themselves live such as the blind. Staff gather and record a good source of information given to them by parents relating to their individual children. The information includes likes, dislikes and other personal characteristics of the child. This means that staff can meet individual needs in order to assist the child in feeling secure and settled within the setting. Babies form healthy attachments with staff and play independently, knowing they are nearby to comfort.

Partnership with parents is good because of the effective lines of communication in place. Positive relationships are fostered with parents from the onset that involves providing them with an information brochure and building reliable links with individual key workers. Parents are able to access their child's 'record of achievement' folder at any time and are provided with daily record sheets that documents the day's activities. This means that parents are kept up to date of their child's progress and development. All policies and procedures are available for parents to view. Parents are encouraged to take a part in children's learning, for example some parents bring in items and photographs to support the monthly theme. Staff create an environment in which parents feel welcome. Partnership is enhanced with opportunities for parents

to talk to staff either at the beginning or the end of the session. Parents speak highly of the setting and comment on the significant strides in their child's development since commencing the placement.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

Staff organise internal and external resources appropriately in order to meet the individual needs of children. They plan a variety of indoor and outdoor activities which children in the main find interesting and enjoyable. As a result children are happy and content in their play with positive relationships formed with staff. Staff ensure that children are suitably supervised in order that they can explore the activities safely. The staff team in this setting are established and are aware of their individual roles and responsibilities. This contributes to the smooth running of the setting and means that children are settled and secure in their environment.

Documentation is generally well organised with the operational plan in the process of being updated. This reflects the forward thinking of the management team in relation to updating policies and procedures. The child protection procedures however, lack the required detail in part and are not readily accessible to parents or staff.

The leadership and management of the setting is good. The manager leads with enthusiasm and commitment and staff speak well of the support offered by the management team. Training is made available to staff as part of the good induction and appraisal systems in place. Staff have attended training in relation to the Foundation Stage and Birth to three matters framework which assists in their planning and has a positive effect on the range of experiences offered to children to support their learning. There is a positive attitude towards improving and developing the educational provision with good links maintained with the early years teacher team. This involves reviewing existing planning and assessment systems as a means of ensuring children receive a varied education programme. The setting has to date not set up a rigorous system for monitoring the consistency and delivery of the planned curriculum, this results in some inconsistency with regards to children's opportunities that hinders learning.

Overall, the provision meets the needs of the children who attend.

Improvements since the last inspection

Not applicable.

Complaints since the last inspection

On 24 May 2005 a concern was raised regarding staffing ratios in conjunction with organisation under Standard 2 of the National Standards. Ofsted investigated this concern by carrying out a visit on 8 June 2005. Actions were raised as followed: ensure that any person who has not been vetted is never left alone with children,

staffing ratios are maintained at all times and relate to staff time available to work directly with children, staff are deployed effectively within the premises to ensure the safety, welfare and development of children and accessible individual records are kept on the premises including reference to staff qualifications. The actions were met following a letter received from the provider on 8 July 2005. The provider, therefore, remains qualified for registration.

THE QUALITY AND STANDARDS OF THE CARE AND NURSERY EDUCATION

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The quality and standards of the nursery education are satisfactory.

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):

- implement rigorous child protection procedures that are understood by all staff employed within the nursery and undertake fire drills at the frequency agreed with the fire safety officer
- make accessible to staff and parents the operational plan that reflects the up to date running of the setting, including all relevant policies and procedures

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):

- develop planning and assessment procedures to ensure that staff are clear about the learning objectives and how best to deliver the activities to maximise children's learning, use the information to effectively plan what children need to learn next.

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the leaflet *Building better childcare: Compliments and concerns about inspectors' judgements* which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk