

First Steps Montessori Nursery

Inspection report for early years provision

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| Unique Reference Number | 109821 |
| Inspection date | 06 December 2007 |
| Inspector | Heidi Wilton |
| Setting Address | Hawkley Village Hall, Hawkley, Liss, Hampshire, GU33 6NE |
| Telephone number | 0777 5517185 |
| E-mail | jane.m.fisher@btinternet.com |
| Registered person | Jane Fisher |
| 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 good.

WHAT SORT OF SETTING IS IT?

First Steps Montessori Nursery has been registered since 1996. It is a private nursery owned and managed by Jane Fisher, and offers sessional care to children from two to under five years. It operates from the village hall in Hawkley, which is a small rural village between Selbourne and Liss. The nursery serves the local areas. Children have access to one large hall and room, adjacent toilet and kitchen facilities, an enclosed play area and the adjacent field.

There are currently 36 children from two to under five years on roll. This includes 16 children in receipt of funded nursery education. A maximum of 26 children may attend the nursery at any one time. The nursery supports children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities.

There are four or five staff who work with the children each session. There are four members of staff who are qualified to level 3 in childcare, one member of staff is working towards a level 3 and one member of staff is qualified to level 2 in childcare. The proprietor has an International Montessori Diploma. The nursery opens during term time from Monday to Friday. Sessions run from 09.00 to 13.00 daily and from 13.00 to 15.00 two afternoon sessions each week. The

setting receives support from the Early Years Development and Childcare Partnership. The nursery uses Montessori teaching methods for part of the sessions.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is satisfactory.

Children wash their hands before having meals, after messy play and after going to the toilet and dry their hands on separate hand towels. However, children wash their hands after going to the toilet in a small bowl in the main room and although the water is changed regularly the same bowl is also used for children washing hands before meals. This does not ensure children's hands are fully clean and cross infection is not fully prevented.

The nursery has a sickness policy which is shared with parents to ensure they are informed of incubation periods should their child contract a communicable infection. They have accident records in place and staff show a sound understanding of how to complete these appropriately. The nursery have gained written parental permission to seek emergency medical advice or treatment. This ensures children are treated without delay. The nursery have appropriate first aid supplies although there is not always at least one member of staff with a current paediatric first aid training certificate on the premises at any one time. This does not ensure the children are always cared for by staff who are fully knowledgeable about current first aid guidelines and how to administer first aid.

Children have a healthy snack of fruit and staff talk to the children about the healthy benefits of the foods. Staff talk to parents about foods to include in their children's lunchboxes. The nursery gain information about children's allergies and dietary requirements at the outset to ensure they are informed. Children have opportunities to engage with physical activity. They dance to familiar action songs, run around the adjacent field, move around in toy cars and participate with the parachute play.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

Children are cared for in a safe environment where all doors are secured when not in use. The nursery have good systems to ensure children are collected by their designated person. Children are kept safe as the staff conduct risk assessments of both the inside and outside environments to ensure hazards are identified and minimised. The nursery gain parental permission to take children on outings which ensures they are safe and parents well informed. However, they have not gained written parental permission to take photographs of all the children. This does not ensure parents are fully informed.

Children play with age and stage appropriate toys and child-sized furniture is in place to meet their needs. Children develop a good understanding of what to do in a fire because staff practise the fire drill with them regularly. The nursery have a detailed written fire evacuation drill in place to ensure staff, parents and visitors are aware of the procedures in the event of a fire.

The manager, deputy and staff team all demonstrate a good understanding of child protection procedures and where to make referrals should they suspect abuse or neglect of any of the children. The nursery has a child protection policy in place which is in line with the current

Local Safeguarding Children Board's legislation. Parents are well informed about the nursery's professional responsibility to safeguard the welfare of the children.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

Children arrive happily to the nursery and separate from the main carer well. Those who do become upset or distressed are given a cuddle and are nurtured by warm and caring staff. Staff use their skills and prior knowledge of the children to help settle them into the environment and distract them with favourite toys and activities. The nursery work effectively with parents and carers offering as many settling in visits to ensure both the parent and child feel happy within the environment.

Children access a wide range of toys, activities and Montessori materials from the low level storage and shelving. Their art work is displayed on the walls which ensure they feel valued for what they do and parents can also see the things they have been doing. Children rest and relax on the sofa next to the book rack and chat together, showing each other the different pictures in their books. They have opportunities to engage with physical exercise as they dance to familiar music, interact with the parachute and play ball games on the adjacent field. Staff use consistent behaviour strategies which enables children to know what is expected of them.

Nursery Education

The quality of teaching and learning for children in receipt of funded nursery education is good. The manager completes the planning alongside the staff team in accordance with the Foundation Stage and the six areas of learning. Each member of staff is responsible for completing observations for children within their key worker group and these observations are transferred into the children's individual records. However, observations are not consistently tracked and transferred into children's records and next steps in learning are not always identified.

Older children help younger children to piece together jigsaws and younger children have the support of their older peers when joining in with action songs and rhymes. Staff talk to children about the different pictures of people with varied expressions on their faces. This enables children to learn about different feelings and equips them with the tools to manage their feelings. Children are confident and they approach the visitor to inform her of their names and about their lives. They enjoy listening to stories and the member of staff enthusiastically reads, pausing frequently to ensure all children can interact and talk about the characters and storyline.

Children foster an understanding of number incidentally within their play. They are encouraged by staff to count how many girls and boys are in the group and older children are extended further as staff encourage them to identify which group has the most. Children have fun as they place different coloured bears onto each end of the weighing scales and some children successfully identify which end will be the heaviest and lightest. Children have a lovely time as they plant strawberry plants and vegetables in pots and staff talk to the children about what things help the plants to grow. They have fun as they use different objects to explore floating and sinking and love to go on nature walks around the adjacent field to look for birds and collect leaves.

Children engage with a balance of structured and free arts and crafts and independently access resources from the low level shelving. They become animated as they sing familiar festive songs

and excited as they play with the doctors set, using the stethoscope to listen to each others tummies.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

Staff act as good role models as they show respect to both their colleagues and the children. This in turn encourages children to show respect to their peers. The staff team encourage all children to access all activities and resources and treat them as individuals. The nursery celebrate the cultures of the children and staff attending the setting and children have fun exploring a range of cultural artefacts, clothing and multi-cultural foods. Children with additional needs are supported by the staff team. The nursery work effectively with both parents and outside agencies to gain consistency in care and learning for the children. Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered.

Staff use consistent behaviour strategies which ensures children know what is expected of them. Children receive lots of praise and encouragement for their good behaviour and achievements. Staff speak to children at their level for any unwanted behaviour and help them to resolve the issue. The nursery have a behavioural policy in place which is shared with both staff and the parents. This ensures consistent strategies are implemented for the children. Staff communicate verbally with parents both at the beginning and end of each day. They work effectively with parents to settle children into the environment and telephone parents whose children have been upset on arrival to the nursery. This reassures the parents that their children are happy and settled within the environment. Parents gain knowledge about the policies and procedures at the outset and these are displayed on the parents notice board to ensure they are well informed. In addition, parents receive regular newsletters about information, events and topics. Parents feel the staff team are all friendly and approachable and inform the child care inspector that their children develop emotionally as well as intellectually within the nursery.

The partnership with parents and carers for children in receipt of funded nursery education is good. Parents are invited to parents consultations where they communicate with their child's key worker and look at their child's developmental records. The nursery display planning for the week on the parents notice board which ensures parents are well informed of what their children are learning. This enables parents to continue and consolidate learning at home. The nursery have 'home books' which is a two way process between the home and the setting. Staff write about the things the children have been doing and this enables parents to continue the learning within the home environment. Parents are also welcomed to write in the books and this provides staff with the knowledge about the things the children have been doing and things that are happening within their lives.

The nursery have a 'nursery teddy bear' which children take home for weekends or on their annual holidays. This serves as a good link for parents to the nursery and children love drawing pictures and taking photographs of where the teddy has been. Parents are invited to come into the nursery at anytime and play alongside their child. This enables parents to see the things their children are doing and these activities can be consolidated at home. Parents are wholly involved with event days such as sports day, where they join in with their children and have lots of fun.

Organisation

The organisation is satisfactory.

The nursery staff have childcare qualifications which ensures children are cared for by trained and qualified staff. However, there is not always at least one member of staff with a current paediatric first aid training certificate on the premises at any one time. This is a breach of the requirements of the nursery and children are at risk at these times should they have an accident and need medical attention. However, the deputy and a staff member are booked onto a first aid course and will gain this qualification on completion of the course.

The nursery staff organise the environment and set up activities to interest the children before they arrive. The setting meets the needs of the range of children for whom they provide. They have displayed the registration certificate on the parents notice board to ensure parents are aware of the conditions of registration. The nursery staff complete attendance registers and ensure children's actual times of arrival and departure are logged.

The manager has sound systems in place for recruiting new staff and she ensures staff are vetted to work with the children. The nursery have gained information from parents about their children and this is stored securely.

The leadership and management for children in receipt of funded nursery education are good. The manager and deputy are good role models and motivate the team with their enthusiasm. The manager is responsible for the day to day running and communicates regularly with the deputy to ensure the provision runs smoothly. The team have regular staff meetings and communicate with each other at the beginning and end of each session. This ensures any concerns are discussed and achievements are celebrated.

The manager and deputy oversee the staff team and monitor them on a day to day basis. In addition, the manager conducts annual appraisals with all the staff where concerns, targets, training needs and achievements are discussed. The manager completes the planning alongside the staff team and gains input from all the staff at team meetings. The manager and deputy both oversee the education provision and ensure planning is directed to the needs of the children. The staff team are dedicated to the children and work hard to provide a stimulating environment.

Improvements since the last inspection

At the last care inspection the nursery were asked to address two recommendations for care. They were asked to review hand washing procedures for children. The nursery have put systems into place for hand washing but these systems do not ensure children's hands are fully clean. The children are not fully protected from the spread of infection.

The nursery were asked to improve the procedure for recording children's and staff's attendance. The nursery now record all children and staff into the attendance register which ensures they will be accounted for in an emergency or fire.

At the last education inspection the nursery were asked to address one recommendation for care. They were asked to consider ways to ensure the system for planning and assessment includes children's incidental learning and rotation of resources. The nursery now have checklists which monitor the resources within the environment to ensure they are rotated regularly. This ensures children are kept interested and stimulated.

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):

- further develop hand washing procedures to ensure children are fully protected from the spread of infection
- ensure written parental permission is gained to take photographs of the children
- ensure at least one member of staff has an up-to-date paediatric first aid qualification at all times.

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):

- ensure all staff are consistently monitoring children's learning and to use this information to identify next steps in learning.

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