

First Steps Pre-School

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	116702
Inspection date	10 March 2008
Inspector	Susan Mary Deadman
Setting Address	Scout and Guide Centre, Longwick Road, Princes Risborough, Buckinghamshire, HP27 9HN
Telephone number	07762326772 or 01844 275467
E-mail	
Registered person	First Steps Playgroup (Princes Risborough)
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 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 Pre-School opened in this premises in 1995. It operates from a Scout and Guide hall in the town of Princes Risborough.

A maximum of 24 children may attend at any one time. There are currently 39 children from two to five years on roll. This includes 30 children who are in receipt of nursery education funding. Children attend a variety of sessions. The group supports children who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities and children who speak English as an additional language.

The group opens five days a week during school term times. Sessions are from 09.30 until 12.00 Monday to Friday and 12.15 until 14.45 on Monday and Thursday. A lunch club is held on Tuesday, Wednesday and Friday from 12.00 until 13.20.

There are six staff working with the children, of whom three have a level 3 qualification, two have level 2 and one is currently on the level 2 training programme.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is satisfactory.

Children learn about the benefits of healthy eating. They talk about the need to eat five portions of fruit and vegetables on a daily basis and state the more fruits they eat the more good things they put into their body. Children have independent access to drinking water, as jugs of water and cups are within their reach. Staff have recently reviewed systems to ensure they give regard, during cooking activities, to foods children are not allowed.

Children benefit from daily fresh air and exercise. They very much enjoy the large parachute and laugh as they jump underneath as it is held up by others. They have access to a good amount of outdoor play equipment, which develops the gross motor skills. They balance on low level beams and use the climbing frame and slide with precision. Staff organise indoor physical play activities in poor weather conditions, which supports children's physical development.

Staff promote children's welfare as they have a very good amount of written information relating to children's individual medical needs. They gain parents' written permission for staff to administer basic first aid. However, they do not request parents' prior written permission to seek emergency medical advice or treatment. Although there are two staff members who hold a current first aid certificate, the current staff rota does not ensure that there is at least one of them present during each session. This is a breach of the over-arching criteria for National Standard 7, health. The first aid certificates of four other staff members expired very recently.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

Staff care for children in a large well-organised hall. Children benefit from plenty of clear play space and play equipment is arranged to promote the different areas of learning. Bright posters are at low level and incorporate numbers and letters. Children have access to suitable toilet facilities and the nappy change area offers privacy.

Children benefit from having access to a good range of safe age appropriate equipment. The book corner contains comfy animal shaped cushions and there are plenty of tables and chairs for the children. Staff check equipment on a regular basis and complete a daily record of checks in all areas. The manager reinforces this practice as she asks staff to confirm that they have completed this before children enter the setting. All staff are clearly familiar with good procedures and are highly vigilant, which promotes children's safety. Climbing equipment has safety mats underneath and around the area. Staff maintain a record of visitors to the setting, which includes parent helpers, students and volunteers.

The fire evacuation procedure is on display and staff maintain a record of fire drills. The record includes the date and number of children and staff present. Staff initiate the practice over several days each term, which ensures all children are familiar with the procedures. Two working smoke alarms promote children's safety, however, staff do not have easy access to the fire blanket, which is on top of a high cupboard in the kitchen.

The staff promote children's welfare as they have a clear understanding of child protection issues. They regularly update their knowledge and understanding as they attend additional training. A good amount of relevant information is within easy access, which provides staff

with information to promote good practice. The child protection procedure includes allegations against staff members, although this needs to be reviewed.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

The children are happy and settle well, arriving eager to participate. Children benefit from independent access to wide range of interesting activities. They play happily with sand, water and dough, all of which, is in abundant quantity. Having two water and sand trays offers the opportunity for more children to participate and adds to their social attraction. The children are very friendly and listen to the reason and purpose of the inspector's visit. One child is very keen to inform the inspector that they very much like the lunch club and clearly directs the inspector to record this on her notepad.

The quality of teaching and learning is good. Staff have a clear understanding of the aims of each activity. They sit with the children, interacting to a good level, which promotes children's learning. The written learning objectives are by many of the activities and are a useful resource for staff, providing them with prompts, to extend children's learning. For example, a list of open-ended questions and keywords for staff to use to encourage children's language skills. Plans encompass all areas of children's development. For example, self correctional puzzles enable children to solve problems and working with staff at the computer enhances their keyboard skills. Working in partnership with parents provides staff with much information relating to the children's ability. Records show children's starting points and their current level of development. The staff know the children very well and have basic systems in place to record the next steps for individual development. Staff review activities to identify the learning outcomes for children.

Children are beginning to link sounds to letters as staff talk about the snake shape they make out of the sock filled with sand. Staff refer to other words that start with the same letter and encourage children to join in. Children understand that print carries meaning and enjoy looking at books and listening to stories. They find their names are word cards as they enter the setting and write their name on their work.

Staff support children's understanding of mathematical concepts and problem-solving. Children count the number of girls and boys present, add the two numbers together and write the total on the blackboard. Craft activities support children's learning of shape and size, as they make robots with various containers. They have access to a variety of interesting craft materials, which include shredded cardboard, netting and egg boxes.

Children sing nursery rhymes with gusto. The staff ask the children which rhyme they would like to sing and show them pictures relating to the rhyme as children sing each verse. Children very much enjoy this activity and are enthusiastic participants.

Children enjoy the role play area and this is changed on a regular basis. For example, the staff provide children with a hospital and the children enjoy administering care and attention to their patients. Children learn about nature through planned activities, for example, the wormary and planting hyacinth bulbs. They use twigs and conkers in their art activities, play outside in the snow and have small animals into the setting.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

Children learn about the world around them as staff organise visitors into the setting to promote their knowledge and understanding. For example, they have people into the preschool who have learning difficulties and others who show them how they use mobility aids. Other visitors include fire fighters and musicians. Parents confirm that children learn about other religions and acknowledge festivals such as Chinese New Year and Diwali.

Staff gain a clear understanding of children's individual needs through effective record-keeping. They support the development of children who have learning difficulties through the implementation of individual educational plans. They work in partnership with parents and other professionals to develop children's progression.

Children behave very well and staff are positive role models. Children are polite and demonstrate good manners as they say thank you when offered food at snack time. There are effective procedures in place to support and reinforce children's positive behaviour.

The partnership with parents is good. Children benefit from the strong partnership staff have with their parents, who enthuse about the setting and the care children receive. They are particularly pleased about the wide variety of activities and the written feedback. Very good use is made of daily home link diaries. These provide staff with a good amount of relevant information relating to children's starting points. Parents confirm the benefits of the parent rota, which provides them with the opportunity to see their children within the setting. They have access to relevant written information relating to the Early Learning Goals. The written hints for helpers enables children to receive continuity in their teaching. For example, it reminds parents to allow children to write their name on their work, sound out initial letters and read numbers and words from left to right.

There is a written complaints procedure, which shows the telephone contact for OFSTED, although not the address. Records show that staff have a very clear understanding of how to record complaints and share the outcome with parents. Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered.

Organisation

The organisation is satisfactory.

The leadership and management of the setting is good. The manager has a positive influence on practice and is a good role model for staff and children. She monitors and evaluates the effectiveness of the nursery education through observations in discussions with staff. There are good systems in place to ensure planning for nursery education evolves to meet the needs of the children. The staff work well as a team to develop children's learning interests.

There are suitable systems in place in relation to recruitment and vetting procedures. The staff team have remained consistent, however, not all references on existing staff were followed through at the time of recruitment. There are good systems in place to ensure the criminal records bureau checks are completed on all staff. Staff appraisals are completed annually by the chairperson and the manager has regular meetings with them to monitor their overall practice.

Children benefit from staff's commitment to update their knowledge on relevant childcare issues through attending additional training. For example, staff have completed child protection, behaviour management, and special educational needs training. With the exception of first aid training, the documentation is maintained to a high standard. The well-organised files contain clear and relevant information. The care of children is supported by a wide range of policies and procedures, which are shared with parents. Parents have access to well-organised notice boards, which contain a good amount of information. This includes the certificate of registration, activity plans and information on the various areas of the curriculum. The daily attendance registers clearly show the times of arrival and departure of staff and children. Children benefit from the high ratio of staff to children and this is supported by the active parents' rota. The setting meets the needs of the range of children for whom it provides.

Improvements since the last inspection

At the previous inspection, the provider was required to ensure that the full names of children were recorded in the accident book and to devise formal systems for sharing information with parents.

Staff clearly record accidents to children and these records include the full name of the child concerned. The introduction of home link diary books provides parents and staff with an effective means of communication. The record books show a good amount of relevant information, which provides staff with details such as children's home life including persons and pets who are important to them, details of their accomplishments and weekend activities. Children gain much benefit from the improvements.

Complaints since the last inspection

Since the previous 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 there is at least one member of staff who holds a current first aid training certificate on the premises or on outings at any one time

- request written permission to the seeking of any necessary emergency medical advice or treatment in the future
- review the child protection procedures in relation to allegations against staff members
- extend the complaints procedure to include the contact details of Ofsted as the regulators of childcare
- review the recruitment procedures to ensure that all references are received.

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):

- formalise existing methods to show the next steps for children's learning.

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