

# First Steps Pre-School

Inspection report for early years provision

---

<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	129340
<b>Inspection date</b>	26 November 2007
<b>Inspector</b>	Sheila Harrison
<b>Setting Address</b>	Victory Hall, Long Marston, Tring, Hertfordshire, HP23 4QS
<b>Telephone number</b>	07925 185311
<b>E-mail</b>	
<b>Registered person</b>	The Trustees of First Steps Pre-School
<b>Type of inspection</b>	Integrated
<b>Type of care</b>	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](http://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 Pre-School opened in 1997 and is managed by a Voluntary Parent and Carer Committee. It operates from Long Marston village hall and parking is available close by. The pre-school serves the village of Long Marston and other surrounding villages. There are currently 24 children from two to five years on roll. This includes 11 funded three- and four-year-olds. Children attend for a variety of sessions and there is a key worker system in place. The group is willing to support children who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities and those children who speak English as an additional language.

The group is open between 09:15 - 11:45 on Mondays, Tuesdays, Thursdays and Fridays, term-time only. A lunch club is offered two days a week from 11.45 to 13.15. Five part-time staff work with the children. Over half the staff have an appropriate early years qualification. The setting receives support from the local authority, Pre-school Learning Alliance and the local primary school which is located across the road from the pre-school.

## **THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION**

### **Helping children to be healthy**

The provision is satisfactory.

Children are well nourished at snack time as there is an interesting range of fresh fruit, crackers, cheese and a choice of milk and water. They have the opportunity to discuss their likes and dislikes. During a cookery activity they have the opportunity to try new tastes, feel the fruit whole and, with support, they can cut into portions. Drinking water has recently been made available to promote children's healthy growth. There is a suitable system for parents to give information on allergies and this is easily accessible to the staff.

Children's health is protected as most staff have up to date first aid training. The setting has suitable procedures and records for accidents, medication and sickness. Children are beginning to understand simple hygiene practices through washing hands after using the toilet and before snack. They are encouraged to put their hands over their mouths when they cough. However, the current practice for staff to wipe the children's noses potentially aids the spread of infection and limits the opportunities for children to develop their independence skills. Young children are sensitively supported when beginning toilet training.

Children have some opportunities to develop physical skills within the daily routine. They move with control when using the sit and ride toys and peddle tricycles and scooters. They learn on a larger scale as they use the cones to make patterns on the mat. Staff are involved in encouraging children to improve their skills with a range of bats, balls and hoops.

### **Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe**

The provision is satisfactory.

Children and carers are welcomed into a bright and cheerful environment. The premises are secure and the toilets and hallway are newly refurbished. There is a secure system as children enter and leave the hall at the beginning and end of the session. Children's safety is protected as there are effective systems to report any defects to the premises, recording visitors and daily risk assessments. Young children are accompanied to the toilets and the staff are vigilant when the older children are visiting the toilets unaccompanied.

Children benefit from the organisation of the premises as they have the space they need for varied activities. Staff set up the equipment before the start of the session to ensure children are quickly interested and engaged. The resources are appealing to children, appropriate to their age and stage of development and are constructed of both man-made and natural materials. Staff predetermine the toys available from a wide range stored in the cupboards. Toys are regularly checked for safety.

Children are learning to keep themselves safe as staff gently remind the children of the consequences of their actions. Staff give clear instruction on aspects of using the physical play equipment safely. They are familiar with the fire evacuation procedures. Children are developing a sense of belonging as there are valuable opportunities within the environment for children to recognise their own names. Children's welfare is adequately safeguarded as staff are aware of the child protection policy and know who to contact if there are any concerns

## **Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do**

The provision is satisfactory.

Children are happy and content, leaving their main carer with confidence. Staff use a wealth of experience when working with the younger children. They are warm and caring towards the children and are interested in what they say and do. The children's sense of trust is increased and well supported through the key worker scheme. Staff are well deployed within the setting to support children's care and learning as they spend most of the time with the children. Young children enjoy a range of resources suitable for their stage of development and to help them succeed. For example, there is a suitable range of puzzles with inserts. Children are deep in concentration as they put the dolls to bed within the doll's house

### **Nursery education**

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. Children are making adequate progress as staff have a sound knowledge of the areas of learning within the Foundation Stage and use this knowledge to plan a balanced and purposeful routine. There are a wide range of interesting activities which are linked to the six areas of learning. There is informal assessment of the children's development linked to casual observations of the children at play and some staff discussions. Each day a focused activity is planned for the children. Staff plan some extension activities for the older or more able children to ensure that they have chances to acquire new skills. However, these are not used systematically to identify children's learning priorities and plan relevant experiences for each child.

Children are motivated and enjoy new challenges. They use their senses as they are fully involved in making play dough. They measure and stir the ingredients, seeing and feeling the changes as it is cooked and cools. Staff encourage children to incorporate the food colouring after it is cooked to see the changes as colour ripples through the dough before becoming fully incorporated. The children are encouraged to smell the sweet food flavouring. Children occasionally use the nearby park to observe the changes in the seasons. They collect leaves and sticks in the autumn and freely choose which of these materials to use in the sticking activity. Staff are readily on hand to encourage children to solve the problems as some of the sticks are rather large. Children play imaginatively with a large amount of construction materials available on the tables and on the floor. However staff do not plan extensions to this child-initiated play to help children move to the next steps in their learning. Staff have recently moved the home corner and new good quality resources help children extend their play based on their own experiences.

Children are well behaved and respond to requests for good behaviour, such as helping tidying up. They help each other as they are aware of the maximum numbers of children allowed at the sand tray. They are developing their dexterity as they manipulate malleable materials, making models with clay. They competently use the tools in the fine sand although staff are quickly on the scene with the dustpan and brush limiting the chance for children to independently sweep up the spilt sand.

Children's emerging literacy is supported as they have many valuable chances to recognise their names on their pegs and lunch box basket. They post their name labels in a box as they enter and at snack time. They are using these labels to link sounds to letters. Children can sit alone in the comfortable book area, handling books carefully; they hold the book the correct way up, turn the pages and tell a story through pictures.

Staff are well deployed to support children's learning. They are at the children's level encouraging children to match the numerals on the puzzle to the numerals displayed on the number strip. Children contribute fully in large and small groups. They are developing an interest in books as a staff member sits close to the children enjoying and sharing a story. During large group time they recall their favourite activities of the morning and they enjoy participating in action rhymes. Children sit in small groups with their key worker. They begin to count and take part in conversations during snack time.

### **Helping children make a positive contribution**

The provision is satisfactory.

Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered. They feel valued and are developing secure relationships as staff are readily available to welcome children and parents on an individual basis. Their developing self-esteem is supported by staff as they warmly acknowledge their achievements. Staff are good role models. Children are encouraged to take turns and to share toys. They learn to show respect for others by saying "sorry" to their peers. They help each other at snack time as they pass around the cups and plates. Good manners are encouraged. Children are confident to talk about their life at home.

Children learn about the wider world as they acknowledge traditional festivals and are beginning to learn more about the festivals of others. Resources reflecting diversity such as small world figures and dressing up clothes are available. During the session children discuss the calendar. They learn the names of the month and days of the week by rote. They are asked to recall the weather as they came to pre-school. There is a satisfactory system to identify children's needs and to ensure they receive appropriate support strategies. Staff can demonstrate that children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities will be adequately supported as staff attend suitable training and seek advice from outside agencies when necessary.

Staff encourage parents to stay and settle their children and use this time to get to know about the children and manage the transition carefully between home and the pre-school. Information on the setting including policies and procedures and some details on the educational programme are available to parents as they join. Parents are encouraged to take an active part as they are invited to take part in the committee. Parents commented during the inspection that they are very pleased with the recent changes made to the routine and the improved contact with the staff.

The partnership with parents and carers of children in receipt of funding for early education is satisfactory. Parents receive newsletters with basic details on the setting. They are adequately informed on their child's achievements through regular verbal feedback. There are some chances for parents to be involved in their child's learning as they are invited to stay as a parent helper.

### **Organisation**

The organisation is satisfactory.

Children benefit from a generally effective organisation. There are satisfactory recruitment procedures. However, the committee is unaware of the requirement to enquire whether staff are disqualified from caring for children and this potentially restricts the safe management of the children. The setting has a straightforward induction procedure. Children are cared for by staff with a secure knowledge and understanding of childcare. The high ratio of staff to children ensures children have sufficient individual attention.

Leadership and management is satisfactory. The setting is committed to improve the care and education of the children. Staff have each developed an evaluation of their training needs and have received a training log.

Outcomes for children are progressing as the staff team attend frequent team meetings to evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of the setting. They use these opportunities to use the individual skills and talents of the staff. For example, children will perform in an appropriate and interesting nativity play produced by a member of staff who is also an experienced Sunday club leader.

The management effectively uses the support of other professionals to monitor and develop the provision for nursery education. Advice on planning and assessment will ensure staff are well informed on the learning outcomes for children. Overall children's needs are met.

### **Improvements since the last inspection**

At the last care inspection the setting agreed to extend the policies and procedures of the setting and to obtain permission for emergency medical advice and/or treatment. Children's welfare is adequately maintained. The policy document including some details of the child protection procedure is available, accident records are signed by staff and are available for parents to sign. The prospectus is up to date and parents have given their permission for emergency medical treatment.

At the last nursery education inspection the setting agreed to improve staff's knowledge of the Foundation Stage and to adapt activities so that progression and challenges are offered. Children are making suitable progress as the staff are aware of the six areas of learning and are beginning to use the stepping stones to plan suitable activities. The setting is taking an active role in searching for more training opportunities for staff to ensure they are informed of the nursery curriculum.

### **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 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 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 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):

- review opportunities for children to develop their independence (also for nursery education)
- ensure the disqualification status of staff is checked.

### **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):

- improve the observation, assessment and planning systems to help children move to the next steps in their 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](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)