

# First Step Pre-School

Inspection report for early years provision

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	EY344359
<b>Inspection date</b>	30 November 2007
<b>Inspector</b>	Kay Roberts
<b>Setting Address</b>	Christ The King School, Easton Hill Road, Thornbury, South Glos, BS35 1AX
<b>Telephone number</b>	01454 858580
<b>E-mail</b>	
<b>Registered person</b>	First Step Pre School Ltd
<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 outstanding. The registered person meets the National Standards for under 8s day care and childminding.

The quality and standards of the nursery education are outstanding.

### WHAT SORT OF SETTING IS IT?

First Step Pre-School opened in 1970 and in 2007 re-registered as a limited company. It operates from a self-contained prefabricated building with an enclosed outside play area in the grounds of Christ the King School in Thornbury, and has use of the school hall for physical activities. The pre-school serves the local area. The pre-school opens for five days a week during school term time. Sessions are from 09.00 to 11.30 from Monday to Friday. Afternoon sessions are from 12.30 to 15.00 on a Tuesday and Thursday, and from 13.00 to 15.00 hours on a Monday and Wednesday. On a Friday there is a lunch club which operates from the end of the session until 12.45. Registration is for a maximum of 22 children between the age of two and five years. There are currently 49 children on roll and of these there are 23 funded three year olds. The pre-school caters for children with learning difficulties. There are six members of staff, five of whom work directly with children and of these, four hold a relevant child care qualification. The setting receives support on the education programme from a teacher advisor from South Gloucestershire Council.

## THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

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

The provision is outstanding.

Children's good health is actively promoted as they move freely between in and outdoors. They are protected from the elements. In summer, children play in the shade of the gazebo. They wear hats and children requiring a further application of sun screen are encouraged to do this themselves, with advice from staff. When the weather is cold and wet children wrap up warm and wear wellington boots. Children are enthusiastic about being outdoors as they become engaged in the excellent range of play opportunities, which duplicate the indoor learning environment. They enjoy mark making with the chinks and are keen to continue as staff praise their achievements. Some children observe the rate at which different size vehicles travel down a number of tubes. Children use large muscle skills as they run around and jump with two feet together from one hoop to another. Co-ordination is used as children throw, catch and kick balls. They move around on scooters and bikes, and particularly like travelling down the gentle slope. Children use their imagination as they pretend to fill up their vehicles with fuel from the petrol pump and go shopping. Indoors children continue to develop large muscle skills as they act out the story 'We're Going on a Bear Hunt' and participate in music and movement, when they move and stretch in different directions using all parts of their body.

When thirsty, children pour themselves a drink of water from the jug. Children do not go hungry as they have continual access to a range of fresh fruit which they prepare themselves. The more formal snack time is a social occasion when children chat about life at home. They eat a range of varied healthy snacks, such as, toast, or crackers and cheese. Children know what foods are healthy to eat and those which are less healthy. Healthy eating is reinforced by the attractive displays of posters, books and photographs in the snack area. In summer children grow produce, such as, strawberries, carrots and tomatoes, which they then eat. There is a very good system in place for ensuring that children's special dietary requirements are met.

Children play in a clean environment where the risk of infection is greatly minimised as staff follow highly effective hygienic procedures. Parents are fully aware of the policy for excluding children who are sick and are kept informed of infection within the setting. Children learn the importance of hygiene through the daily routine and know they must wash their hands because of germs. The importance of being thorough is highlighted as they place their hands under the ultra violet light of the hand washing machine, which illuminates areas which are not clean. A visit from the dental hygienist helps children to understand the importance of dental hygiene. There are very good procedures in place for managing both medicine and first aid, for which all staff are qualified, so that children are fully protected.

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

The provision is outstanding.

Children play in a very secure environment so they do not leave unnoticed. There are safe procedures in place so that children are only released to authorised adults and protected from people who have not been vetted. Staff have a very good knowledge of local child protection procedures. The risk of children having an accident is significantly reduced as there is a high adult to child ratio and staff are appropriately deployed. There is a risk assessment completed by professionals who have a background in this area of work and staff undertake daily checks of the premises so children do not have access to potential hazards. Hazards identified through the accident record review are addressed. In the event of fire children are very well protected

and know how to evacuate the premises safely. Staff have an excellent understanding of how to achieve a balance between setting safety limits and allowing children the freedom to fully explore their environment. Children understand how to handle tools, such as, the sticky tape dispenser and knives, safely. Discussion during circle time and visits from a police, fire and the crossing patrol officer help children to understand how to protect themselves from 'strangers', when crossing the road and how to contact emergency services.

Children relax and confidently enter the premises as they receive a warm, personalised welcome from staff. The premises are inviting with well presented, colourful displays of children's art work and educational posters. Children's independence is maximised as everything is placed within children's reach, for example, coat hooks and child sized bathroom fittings. Children make informed decisions about what they play with as they have free access to an extensive range of clean, safe resources which are stored in low level boxes, clearly marked with both pictures and words. The room is organised into the six areas of learning which are regularly reviewed to ensure that children are making full use of materials in each area. The area with books provides space for relaxation on the cushions and child sized sofa, and is inviting with baskets of cuddly toys. Imaginative play is stimulated, as based on a topic children determine what the area should represent, for example, a train station or underwater world. Activities are attractively displayed on tables and clearly defined areas, so those engaged in play are not disturbed by their peers. Freedom of movement is facilitated as there is space between each activity. Children also benefit from having access to a fully enclosed outside area and the school hall.

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

The provision is outstanding.

There are effective procedures in place so that children new to the provision quickly settle, for example, they initially attend sessions where there are few children and are provided with a very high adult to child ratio. They make excellent progress because all staff are highly skilled, have a good understanding of early years guidance, such as, Birth to three matters and the Curriculum Guidance for the Foundation Stage, and use this to effectively plan a range of stimulating and varied activities.

Children are keen to enter the premises and aware of the daily routine, they confidently select their name card and post it in the letter box. Sessions are organised according to children's age and the registration process is adapted accordingly. Younger children continue playing as they answer their name. Older children sit as a large group for registration and proudly discuss occasions when their parents and grandparents assist at sessions. They estimate how many children are present and more able children are fairly accurate in their guess. Children know which day it is and aware of the sequence of numbers. They say that the date is the 27, once they are aware that the previous day was the 26.

### **Nursery Education**

The quality of teaching and learning is outstanding. Staff are enthusiastic about their work and use children's interests and knowledge of each child's progress to effectively plan an extensive range of stimulating activities which cover all aspects of the curriculum. Activities are very well supported both in terms of staff presence and the wide range of resources. Staff take every opportunity to make learning a practical, fun experience. For example, the nativity play encompasses counting and snack time facilitates children's understanding of the wider world as two children pretend to be shop keepers and other children pay for their snack with

pretend coins. As each achievement is celebrated children make excellent progress because they are motivated to learn. When there is insufficient time in the session to read a story requested by one child, it is included in the planning for the next time the child will be present.

Children are very confident and make decisions about which role they wish to undertake in the nativity play and one child sings 'Twinkle, Twinkle Little Star' to the group. Children enjoy sharing their knowledge and are keen to demonstrate how magnets attract, explaining that it is because they are magnetic. They use pencil control to draw a very good interpretation of a rabbit and proud of their achievement show their friends. Children learn from each other and when another child comments that the rabbit needs teeth these are added. As children chat to each other they show good communication skills. They form close friendships and move as a group from one activity to another. After looking through a pair of binoculars one child says they are going on holiday and asks her friends to join her. Children have good access to information and communication technology. They pretend to operate a mobile phone and take photographs. Children show good mouse control and know how to operate simple computer programmes.

Two children are absorbed as they work together to cover a sheet of white paper with green paint. Children know what they will make for each craft activity as staff provide an example and on seeing the advent candle holder say it is 'cool'. When making the advent candle holders and snowmen staff give little direction so children develop their creativity. Children enjoy feeling the texture of shaving foam as they pat it with their hands and drag their fingers through it to make patterns. They compare the size of handprints and staff encourage children to write their name. More able children are able to write their names and recognise their friends' names in print. They mark make with a purpose in mind as they copy what adults do. Children are completely engaged as they actively participate in stories. Younger children have fun as they act out the story of 'We're Going on a Bear Hunt' and join in with some of the repeated refrains. More able children listen to the story of 'Maisy' and when staff replace the word 'Maisy' with 'sausages', they shout out 'Maisy' to correct the member of staff.

Children are able to count beyond 10, name two dimensional shapes, have an awareness of size and recognise patterns, such as, stripes. Problem solving skills are used to wrap boxes in Christmas paper, as children determine how the paper must be folded in order to cover each part of the box and that the sticky tape must cover two pieces of paper, if they are to achieve success.

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

The provision is outstanding.

Children's social, moral, spiritual and cultural development is fostered. All children are welcomed and play a full part in the pre-school because staff value and respect their individuality. Children are confident as each achievement is acknowledged and when singing 'The Wheels on the Bus' staff incorporate a verse about each child. Every child has an opportunity to be 'helper' for the week. Children are consulted about how the imaginative play area should be organised and asked to comment on their progress records. Named coat pegs and an array of well presented art work and models provide the children with a sense of belonging. Staff are excellent at sensitively meeting children's additional needs as they are fully conversant with the code of practice. Children receive one-to-one support for part of each session as they work towards the targets in their individual educational plan. As a result of the proactive approach staff have towards behaviour management and children's awareness of the rules, children are polite and very well behaved. They are able to take turns and are considerate to each other. Children show

a respect for their environment as they tidy away toys at the end of the session and help to wipe the tables clean. An appreciation of the importance of recycling is learnt as fruit which is not eaten during the session goes to make compost and, old boxes and paper are used to create models.

The transition from pre-school to school is less traumatic for children as they regularly visit the reception class and sometimes work on joint projects, such as, an art show which was presented to parents. Children learn about the local community as they go on a few local outings and have many visits from outside agencies, such as, the local librarian who reads them a story. They develop a respect for nature and learn to be gentle when touching a number of animals who visit the pre-school. As children plant a range of seeds and bulbs, some with water and some without, they learn about life cycles and what makes things grow. Children begin to understand the traditional British culture, as each child's birthday is acknowledged. They are aware that there are different cultures as they participate in planned activities for many non-British festivals. At Diwali children have an opportunity to see the diva pots and bangles as a visitor shares with children how her family celebrate the event.

The partnership with parents is outstanding. Parents are well informed about children's educational progress via the effective two way communication book where each stepping stone achieved by a child, is recorded. Parents are encouraged to make written comments three times a year when they view their children's assessment records and very well presented folder of observations and samples of children's art work. Parents are actively encouraged to be involved in children's learning by contributing resources and holiday photographs, helping at sessions, and accessing the library and maths games to use with children at home. Sometimes parents or grandparents enhance children's learning, for example, children were able to see what cars were like in the past as they sit in an old Austin. Parents are well informed about the education programme as weekly plans are clearly displayed on the notice board and they have sight of the photographs and written comments relating to each area of learning, which are then divided into the aspects. Parents are also well informed about practices within the setting and are consulted about how current practices can be improved. The very relaxed relationship between parents and staff provides emotional security to children. Parents comment that 'everything is excellent' within the pre-school and currently can think of no improvements they would like to see.

## **Organisation**

The organisation is outstanding.

The provider meets the needs of the range of children for whom they provide. There are rigorous recruitment procedures and a thorough induction. Highly effective management and communication systems ensure consistency of approach as staff are clear about their role and responsibilities. The stable staff team and effective key worker system gives children continuity of care. Keen to extend the provision staff have undertaken a considerable amount of training since the last inspection, for example, behaviour management, meeting children's additional needs, the Foundation Stage and forestry skills. Both children's and parents' views about the provision are sought and any suggestions acted upon. Staff are enthusiastic about their work and are well deployed so that children receive a high level of support and are actively occupied throughout the session. An effective planning cycle ensures that all children make excellent progress in all areas of learning. Good organisation of the premises and resources, both in and outdoors, maximises learning opportunities. Comprehensive documentation is continually reviewed so that children's health, safety and welfare are actively promoted. Paperwork meets regulations and the requirements of the National Standards.

Leadership and management is outstanding. The leader enjoys her work, is suitably qualified and very experienced. Children benefit from the leader's excellent understanding of the Foundation Stage, and her ability to motivate both staff and parents. She recognises that the key strengths to the education programme are the knowledgeable, caring staff team, planning to meet each child's individual needs and the learning environment. Keen to improve the quality of the provision for all children, the education programme is continually reviewed. When considering plans for the future both children and parents are consulted. In a bid for additional funding children were asked what improvements they would like to see to the outdoor area. They put forward many excellent suggestions, such as, 'somewhere hot for plants to grow' and 'a tower that princesses can go in'. If funding is not achieved children's dreams will be achieved through fund raising activities. Further plans for the future include teaching children forestry skills.

### **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.

## **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 outstanding. The registered person meets the National Standards for under 8s day care and childminding.

The quality and standards of the nursery education are outstanding.

### **WHAT MUST BE DONE TO SECURE FUTURE IMPROVEMENT?**

#### **The quality and standards of the care**

No recommendations for improvement are made because the quality and standards of care are outstanding.

#### **The quality and standards of the nursery education**

No recommendations for improvement are made because the quality and standards of nursery education are outstanding.

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)