

First Steps Nursery

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	EY101370
Inspection date	07 February 2008
Inspector	Teresa Evelina Lucas

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Type of inspection	Childcare
Type of care	Full day 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

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.

WHAT SORT OF SETTING IS IT?

First Steps Nursery has been registered since 1994. It is a privately owned and managed group. The nursery is located in Blackheath in the London borough of Greenwich and offers a service for children from the surrounding areas.

The nursery is based in a church community centre, in the grounds of a church and has sole use of two rooms with kitchen and toilet facilities. A fully enclosed area is available for outdoor play. The nursery is close local shops and facilities and there are good transport links.

The nursery opens five days, term time only. Opening hours are from 09:30 to 15:00. Morning sessions are from 09:30 until 12:00 and afternoon sessions are from 12:30 until 15:00. Children attend various sessions a week and some older children stay for both morning and afternoon sessions on some days. There are currently 47 children on roll. Children with special educational needs and those who have English as an additional language are fully supported.

The nursery implements a curriculum based on the Foundation Stage, but is currently not in receipt of funding. All staff have early years qualifications to Level 2 or 3 or beyond. There are five members of staff in total. Four members of staff work with the children during morning sessions and three during afternoon sessions.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is outstanding.

Children's health, hygiene and well-being are extremely well promoted because there are excellent health and hygiene routines in place which are understood and well implemented by all staff. These are underpinned by a clear written policy which forms part of the nursery's operational plan and are effectively shared with all staff. There is a sick children policy which requests that parents do not bring their children to the nursery if they are unwell. This helps to protect children from the spread of illness. Children's health is also promoted because there are effective systems in place to record the administration of medication, including prior written parental permission. All staff hold current paediatric first aid qualifications and written parental consent is sought for seeking emergency medical attention. These measures help to ensure that staff are able to take appropriate action if there is an accident or emergency.

Children consistently learn about the importance of good hygiene practices through everyday routines. This is because staff regularly reinforce these. For example, they remind children to wash their hands before eating their snack. In addition, they talk to the children about blowing their noses and then disposing of the tissues hygienically, in the bin. Children are learning how to keep themselves and others safe from the risk of the spread of infection because staff tell them to 'catch that cough'. This effectively reminds children to cover their mouths when they cough or sneeze. Very good arrangements are in place in the children's toilets and this ensures that children are able to become confident and independent when using these facilities. For example, they are able to reach the toilets and washbasins because step-ups are available and have good access to liquid soap and a hot air hand drier.

Children benefit from excellent opportunities for outdoor physical play and exercise on a daily basis. This is because the nursery operates a very effective free flow system and this means that children are able to make independent choices about when they want to play outside. Activities are exceptionally well organised and well resourced and, as a result, children are able to enjoy all areas of play outdoors as well as indoors. Careful planning also helps to ensure that children's physical development is progressing well.

Staff's extremely positive approach to the promotion of healthy eating helps children to learn about which foods are good for them and will help them to stay healthy, for example, fruit and vegetables. Children benefit from regular discussions about healthy eating, such as a discussion about the very hungry caterpillar during which children suggest various foods that will help him to grow into a beautiful butterfly, for example, broccoli and carrots. They also greatly enjoy playing in the home corner which has been turned into a café, as they prepare meals and invite staff to come and have a meal with them at the café. Other activities around the benefits of healthy eating also include posters and lots of books and games that help to extend children's understanding even further.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is outstanding.

Excellent systems are in place to ensure children's safety indoors and outdoors. These are underpinned by a clear safety policy that is shared and understood by all staff. Children's safety is effectively promoted because regular risk assessments are used to identify and minimise potential dangers. Staff carry out regular checks on all toys and equipment and this helps to

ensure children's ongoing safety. Appropriate safety precautions are in place and staff often talk to children about safety issues. For example, staff remind children to sit down when eating or drinking, to be careful around younger children and to sit properly on their chairs so that they don't tip up. As a result, children are learning to take responsibility for their own safety and the safety of others and are able to move around the premises safely, confidently and independently. Children's safety is further promoted by staff's excellent understanding of appropriate supervision levels.

Staff pay extremely good attention to security at the premises. For example, the outside doors are locked during the nursery's operation and visitors can only gain access by being admitted by a member of staff. A visitors' book is accurately maintained and the hours of attendance of all children and staff are carefully recorded. Written procedures to be followed if a child is lost or uncollected also help to ensure that children stay safe. Children's safety in the event of a fire is also very well promoted because clear written fire procedures are displayed and regular fire drills are carried out and appropriately recorded.

The nursery is warm, welcoming and exceptionally child friendly because staff work hard to ensure that they provide a safe, secure and stimulating environment for children and parents. The premises is enhanced through the highly imaginative and creative use of exceptionally attractive, eye-catching displays of children's work and the use of colourful charts and posters. The nursery environment is extremely well organised in clearly designated areas for all areas of play and learning, for example, creative area, home corner and maths area. Excellent use of the outside play area, on a free-flow basis, helps to ensure that children enjoy a very good balance of indoor and outdoor activities.

Children benefit from a very wide range of extremely good quality resources which are of excellent quality and plentiful so that children are able to play with them effectively. Most resources are accessibly stored and this enables children to make lots of independent choices and to explore and experiment for themselves. Children are learning to take care of equipment because staff actively encourage them to take part in looking after the nursery environment and take responsibility for tidying away after themselves.

Staff understand their responsibilities relating to child protection/safeguarding children and ensure that appropriate measures and procedures are in place to protect children from the risk of harm and neglect. They are fully aware of the action to take if they are worried that a child may be being abused. There is a clear written child protection/safeguarding policy which includes procedures to be followed if an allegation is made against a member of staff. The designated safeguarding officer takes steps to ensure that she and the rest of the staff team update their knowledge of safeguarding issues, for example, by attending regular training.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is outstanding.

Learning through play is a key objective at the nursery. Great emphasis is placed on children learning through their first hand experience, discovery and exploration. Staff work very hard to provide an extremely well organised and exceptionally rich and stimulating environment. Activities are extremely well organised in clearly designated areas, for example, a home corner, a maths area and a book area. This effectively promotes children's free choice and independence and they are flourishing, as a result. The highly effective key worker system helps to ensure that children settle well and are happy and secure and are thriving in a warm and supportive environment. They are extremely motivated, focused on their activities and are developing a

very strong sense of belonging through very clear nursery routines, such as welcome time and snack time. Children are sensitively and lovingly supported by caring and skilled staff who recognise and acknowledge children's individual needs and interests. Interactions between staff and children are excellent. Staff talk and listen to children, engage them in chatty conversations and ask lots of open-ended questions to make them think. Children benefit from very warm, affectionate and loving relationships with staff who are very enthusiastic and clearly enjoy playing with the children and getting involved in their activities. Frequent use of praise, encouragement and humour helps ensure that children's self esteem and confidence are exceptionally well promoted.

Although the nursery is not currently in receipt of funding for nursery education, the Foundation Stage guidance informs planning and positively influences outcomes for children. This helps to ensure that the children benefit from an extremely varied and balanced range of interesting and challenging activities and are making excellent progress in all areas of their development and learning. The quality of teaching and learning at the nursery is outstanding. Staff get to know the children well and ensure that they clearly establish each child's individual starting point. As a result, they are able to plan effectively and ensure that each child is making progress in their learning. Daily plans are based on evaluations of the previous day's activities, as well as children's interests. Staff use their observations to identify the next steps for individual children's learning and this also informs the next day's planning. Parents are very well informed about their children's progress. For example, individual play and learning plans are drawn up for each child. Excellent records are kept of children's progress and achievements through individual files that contain dated examples of children's work and detailed observations.

Children are learning that books are a source of pleasure because staff are very enthusiastic about books and story-telling. Consequently, children greatly enjoy story times and are developing positive attitudes towards books and reading. In addition the warm and exceptionally inviting book corner means that they enjoy sharing books with each other. Children also benefit from choosing books to take home and enjoy with their parents. They are learning to speak confidently, individually and to a group, for example, at welcome time and story time. Children's language development is progressing extremely well because staff regularly introduce new words. Exceptionally good access to a range of writing resources encourages children's early writing skills.

An extremely well organised maths area with a wealth of good quality equipment, displays, charts and activities helps to ensure that children are able to explore mathematical ideas and concepts, for example, shape, pattern and number. Staff are very skilled at bringing maths into everyday routines naturally and incidentally. For example, children routinely count each other at welcome, compare and calculate and use mathematical language confidently to describe quantity, size, shape and position.

Children enjoy excellent opportunities to explore their own creativity, for example, painting, collage, playdough, cutting and sticking, chalking and drawing. They can access many resources for themselves and, as a result, are able to design and make their own unique objects. Children also benefit from a very good balance between staff led activities and those they choose for themselves. Opportunities to express themselves imaginatively are extremely good, for example, through small world play, dressing up and home corner play. They are becoming competent at using the computer because daily access means they are becoming confident at using the mouse and keyboard. They also enjoy playing with cameras, mobile phones and various electronic toys, such as bee bot robots. There are also very good opportunities for children to learn about nature and the natural world. For example, they are able to observe and feed birds, foxes and

squirrels, as well as observing mini beasts including caterpillars and worms and growing spring bulbs.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is outstanding.

Children settle well at the nursery because excellent systems are in place to identify their individual needs. These include detailed discussions with parents and seeking and recording information about all aspects of children's needs. Highly effective settling in procedures that include welcome meetings and a written settling in report help to ensure that children's needs are appropriately and sensitively supported. Key workers work closely with parents to ensure that children's early experiences are positive. Consequently, children feel secure and happy and confidently participate in nursery routines and activities.

Diversity is positively acknowledged and valued, for example, through the availability of a very good range of resources including dolls, books, puzzles, play figures and home corner props. Children are also learning to respect and value others in the community because they take part in activities around festivals and celebrations, such as Chinese New Year. For example, they learn about Chinese customs, use chopsticks, try Chinese food and wish each other a happy new year in Chinese. There are excellent systems in place for identifying and supporting children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. These are supported by a written policy that takes account of the code of practice and by the drawing up of individual play plans for all children. The Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator demonstrates a very strong commitment to all aspects of inclusion and is pro-active in ensuring that all children are able to take part in the full range of activities while at nursery. Staff support for children with English as an additional language is exceptionally good. This includes displaying a welcome poster in a variety of languages.

Children are forming strong relationships with staff and each other. Their behaviour is exceptionally good because staff provide extremely positive role models for them and treat them with respect at all times. Staff have realistic expectations of children's behaviour and ensure that they use consistent strategies that take account of children's age and level of understanding. They use frequent explanations and this helps children to learn right from wrong, think about others' feelings and become self-disciplined. Staff promote positive behaviour through the frequent use of praise and this encourages children to feel good about themselves and grow in confidence. Nursery routines help children to learn to take turns, for example, they understand that there is only room for eight children around the snack table at any one time and they must wait until there is a free place. Consequently, children are beginning to share well, be co-operative with others and to show care, concern and consideration for each other. They are learning right from wrong because staff regularly promote and re-enforce positive behaviour through the use of praise and encouragement. A chart on the wall entitled 'our nursery is a happy place because.....' gives examples of children being kind, sharing and showing care towards others. This helps children to take responsibility and to be proud of their achievements. Children's independence is developing well because there are very good opportunities for them to learn to take responsibility for themselves. For example, putting on coats and painting aprons and hanging them up again, using the toilet facilities, taking a share in clearing up and helping themselves to drinks and snacks.

Partnership with parents is excellent. Staff are very approachable, friendly and welcoming towards parents. Parents are fully aware of who their child's key worker is and know that they can discuss any concerns with them, the manager or any other members of staff. Information

about the nursery is shared effectively via a notice board. Parents also receive a welcome pack which provides them with information about many aspects of the nursery's operation, including the Foundation Stage curriculum. Clearly written policies and procedures are accessible and parents are asked to sign a partnership contract when their child first starts. These measures help to ensure that parents are very well informed about the setting. Parents are invited to participate in a parents' rota and to contribute directly to nursery activities and events. For example, they are welcomed into the group to share an interest or activity with the children, participate in outings and take part in the nursery's Christmas performance and Summer fun day. Parents are very well informed about their child's progress through regular reviews and informal discussions with their child's key worker. A notice board that gives information about what their child is learning means that parents can take an active role. Children's individual folders which include their progress records and examples of children's work are also a very effective method of sharing information with parents. All parents approached gave very positive feedback to the inspector. For example, they commented on staff's friendliness and approachability, staff's excellent interaction with their child and commented on how happy, settled and confident their children are and how much they enjoy coming to the pre-school.

Organisation

The organisation is outstanding.

Overall, the provision meets the needs of the range of children for whom it provides.

Children benefit from an extremely welcoming, child-friendly environment where they have access to a balanced and stimulating range of activities across all areas of development, play and learning. Space is creatively and imaginatively used and organised in clearly designated areas. Children have good access to an excellent range of good quality resources. The nursery day provides an extremely good balance of activities and includes daily opportunities for outdoor play. Consequently, children benefit from lots of opportunities to make independent choices and decisions. Staff ratios are very good and effective staff deployment ensures that children are appropriately supervised at all times. Children are looked after by an exceptionally caring, competent and committed staff team who are extremely enthusiastic in their approach. Interaction between adults and children is excellent and this helps children gain in confidence and self esteem.

Appropriate documentation is in place, for example, attendance, accident and medication records and is consistently maintained and confidentially stored. The nursery's operational plan is very well organised and includes policies and procedures relating to all areas of the nursery's operation. These include all policies required by the National Standards, for example, a complaints policy and complaints log and a policy of the procedure to follow if a child is uncollected or becomes lost.

Sound recruitment procedures ensure that all necessary checks are carried out to establish that all staff are suitable to work with children. In addition, children are never left with unvetted persons. Good staff records are kept and include a record of training attended. A clear management structure is in place and staff have clearly defined roles and responsibilities. All members of staff hold appropriate childcare qualifications. Staff demonstrate a positive approach to attending training and this helps to ensure that their knowledge and understanding is up-to-date. The nursery manager effectively monitors and evaluates all aspects of the nursery's operation, including the nursery education programme. This helps to ensure that children are making good progress towards the early learning goals. As a result of observations made, the

manager draws up an action plan to address any issues that have been identified as areas for improvement.

Improvements since the last inspection

At the last inspection six recommendations were made to improve the standards of care provided. These recommendations have been fully addressed. As a result, children's health is now more effectively promoted because the kitchen has been refurbished and appropriate arrangements are in place for the storage of packed lunches. Children's safety in the event of a fire is promoted because effective procedures are in place for carrying out and recording fire drills. Resources depicting diversity have been extended and now include some positive images of disability, such as small world figures and story books. Recruitment procedures now include keeping confidential staff files and the use of contracts and handbooks for employees. Children's records are now kept in a locked filing cabinet and this helps to ensure confidentiality and accessibility. Clear systems have been introduced to inform parents of their child's development and progress, including regular reviews and the use of individual children's folders.

In addition, two points for consideration for improvement in nursery education were raised. As a result, the evaluation of activities is now clearly used to inform future planning and the next steps in individual children's learning. In addition, older children's opportunities to recognise their names without pictorial prompts have been extended.

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.

THE QUALITY AND STANDARDS OF THE CARE

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.

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.

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