

First Steps Nursery

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	127184
Inspection date	08 May 2008
Inspector	Karen Scott
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Registered person	Hazel Ann Warren
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 satisfactory.

WHAT SORT OF SETTING IS IT?

First Steps Nursery opened in 1994. It operates from a converted church and an attached house in Margate. The nursery has access to six rooms, an office, toilets and a kitchen. A maximum of 100 children may attend the nursery at any one time. The nursery is open each weekday from 07.30 to 17.30 for 50 weeks of the year. Children share access to three secure enclosed outdoor play areas.

There are currently 167 children aged from six months to under eight years on roll. Of these 100 children receive funding for nursery education. The nursery supports children with learning difficulties and disabilities and children who speak English as an additional language.

The nursery employs 25 staff, of these, 20, including the manager hold appropriate early years qualifications and four members of staff are working towards a qualification.

The nursery receives support from the Local Authority.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

The setting follows good hygiene practices with children learning the importance of good personal hygiene. They know that they need to wash their hands before eating food, after messy play and after visiting the toilet. Children wash their hands at basins that they access with ease and need no prompting to do so. Children have daily physical exercise in the garden and on visits to the local park. If they are unable to go outside they participate in exercise indoors. This helps children to understand the need for exercise as part of a healthy lifestyle. Individual sleep routines are respected. Infectious children do not attend and parents are contacted when their children are taken ill, helping to prevent the spread of any contagious ailments.

Children are encouraged to develop healthy eating habits as the setting has a good understanding of healthy eating for young children, providing a range of different fruits at snack times. They share their understanding with parents and carers giving them information on what constitutes a healthy packed lunch. Packed lunches are stored in the refrigerator, keeping perishables fresh. Children are protected from food they should not eat as staff sit with the children when they are eating and are aware of any allergies children have. Lunch time is a social occasion as staff involve children in much discussion. Children help themselves to a drink whenever they want one but are also given gentle reminders by staff to drink in order that they do not become dehydrated.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is satisfactory.

Children benefit from playing in a spacious, bright, welcoming and well-organised environment which allows them to move around safely and in ease. They have easy access to toys and resources that are appropriate to their ages and stages of development. Broken toys are discarded and replaced in order to protect children from parts that could harm them. Children enjoy their play in a clean environment and regular assessments identify any risks and steps are taken to make the environment safe for children. The main door to the nursery and consequent doors to each room are not locked meaning that people are able to enter the setting. However, closed circuit television is focused on the entire nursery, including the entrance hall, and the front door makes a sound as it is opened alerting the permanently manned office to someone entering the nursery. Clearly defined procedures for evacuation of the building are displayed and practised regularly ensuring that children and staff are aware what to do in an emergency and easing alarm if the need should arise. Children are always closely supervised when playing outside and procedures are in place to keep them safe on outings to the park, for example. On occasions younger children play at the front of the building. Procedures ensure that there are ample staff to keep them safe while playing there but they are vulnerable as they are clearly overlooked by the street. Parents and carers are reminded of the importance of hats and sun lotion to protect children from the sun's rays and staff ensure that both are in place before children play outside. However, some older children enjoy picnics and although they wear hats and lotion they sit in direct sunlight at midday. This does not work towards protecting children from the sun.

The majority of the staff have a good understanding of the signs and symptoms of child abuse and a reasonable knowledge of the procedures to follow should they have any concerns about

a child in their care. Staff have received training on child protection and are working towards safeguarding children from harm. A written child protection statement ensures that parents and carers are aware of the process should the nursery have any concerns. The group has taken measures to respect children's privacy and individual toilet cubicles have doors on. As coats are hung in the cloakroom notices remind parents, carers and staff to respect children's privacy and not enter until children have finished toileting or having their nappy changed. This promotes children's dignity.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is satisfactory.

Children are happy, relaxed and very confident. Staff are warm and affectionate making children feel comfortable and valued. Children relate well to the staff and each other, forming strong relationships. They learn important social skills such as turn taking and sharing. Children enjoy and learn from a range of experiences that provide balance and various challenges. Toddlers enjoy positive interaction with staff and other children. They participate in a range of experiences that stimulate their senses such as playing musical instruments, hand painting and playing with sand, water and dough. Toddlers learn new words quickly because the staff talk to and respond well to them. However the majority of books are out of their reach meaning that they are unable to access them with ease. Toddlers move around the setting making choices about what they wish to play with. They show an interest in the activities that are provided for them and staff are skilled at promoting their interests. Children aged between two and a half and three and a half are cared for in another room. They make choices about the activities that they wish to play with although sometimes their free play is disrupted as they are asked to move to another area of the room in order to meet adult/child ratios or to play outside, interrupting the flow of play and the learning taking place. The children spend time in their key groups and some activities involve sitting in groups waiting which is not developmentally appropriate. A comfortable area for looking at books is cosy but only a few books are easily accessible and the lighting is inadequate for reading. There are many opportunities for children to use their imaginations when creating and playing and children's self help skills are promoted when they help themselves to snacks and drinks and brooms to sweep up spilt sand, for example. Children enjoy and benefit from visits to the local park, library and beach.

Nursery Education

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. The setting has implemented the Early Years Foundation Stage and staff show knowledge of the components, using it to plan and observe children. Staff make observations of their key children and use these to assess what their next steps in learning are. Daily activities are planned to reflect these next steps. For example, if a child needs support in counting plans show that the child's key person will play Bingo with her key children. Activity plans are clear to the person who does them and the child's key person but not necessarily to someone else trying to undertake the activity if the key person is unavailable. Overall children enjoy the planned activities and concentrate on tasks of their choosing but during some small group activities which are very long and when their interest wanes behaviour occasionally becomes disruptive. Children's portfolios are passed from the baby room onwards and parents are encouraged to share information about their children too, helping staff to assess children's achievements compared to their starting points.

Children share resources and work together to undertake tasks such as building a train track. They are very confident and feel comfortable in their surroundings, talking about things they like and dislike. They feel a sense of community, singing with pride a song saying where they

come from. Children know that they need to wash their hands before eating, for example, and wash up their cups after drinks. Adults involve children in much discussion and children enjoy talking about things that are important to them. Children enjoy one-to-one and small group stories. They have favourite books and join in with the words. However sometimes their enjoyment of stories is interrupted as other staff stop the adult reading to tell them something. Children enjoy visits to the library from which books are brought back to the setting. They see many examples of the written word and understand that print carries meaning. For example their art work has written explanations underneath. Children look for and identify letters in the environment. They recognise their names and find them to show that they have had a snack. There are many opportunities for children to practise writing. They are encouraged to write their names on pictures and on white board as they enter rooms.

Many displays show numbers. Children sing number songs and rhymes with great enthusiasm. Adults share stories with children that involve counting and number recognition. Children hunt for different shapes in the environment. They have access to resources that promote their mathematical development such as scales. They are competent at jigsaw puzzles. Children enjoy gardening, planting seeds and caring for them. They learn about the care of pets and some children bring their animals to the nursery, sharing their experiences and pet with others. Children have access to a large range of construction toys. The computer is available at all times and children competently use the mouse to move items around the screen. Clocks are clearly displayed for children to see and they understand the routine of the day. Children have been learning about the different seasons. The group celebrates some festivals.

There are opportunities in and outdoors for children to practise different forms of movement. They balance beanbags on their heads, crawl through tunnels and jump through hoops, for example. They skilfully manoeuvre around each other and other obstacles when driving cars in the garden and enjoy music and movement sessions. They play with equipment that develops their hand/eye co-ordination and use small tools such as scissors competently. Children have access to many different resources enabling them to use their imagination to create pictures of their choosing. They enjoy making castles with the sand. Children sing songs in small groups and play a range of musical instruments. Children play with small world toys, using their imaginations to create roles and story lines. Part of the setting is used for children to participate in role play and has been turned into a travel agents, builder's yard, post office and teddy bears picnic, for example. However at group times children stay in this room for quite a while and do not always wish to play at picnics, for example, and therefore become disruptive to others who do wish to. There are opportunities for children to explore using their senses. For example they taste different foods and listen to different sounds.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is satisfactory.

Children are treated with respect and made to feel good about themselves. Staff greet children warmly and children are pleased to see them. Children talk about things that are important to them such as their families and holidays. They bring in photographs of activities they have enjoyed at the weekend and these are displayed allowing them to share their experiences with their friends and to make a connection between home and the setting. Artwork is displayed prominently making children feel that their achievements are valued. Children see many photographs of themselves at play. There are some displays featuring positive images of diversity within society, but they are not regularly visited by the children, and a reasonable range of resources. The setting enjoys some activities that reflect the celebrations of various cultures. The nursery has experience and a fair understanding of caring for children with learning

difficulties and disabilities. The Special Needs co-ordinator works with the child's parents, key person and other agencies to meet children's individual needs. Children benefit from lots of praise and encouragement and from some basic ground rules which are consistently maintained by the staff. Appropriate strategies, according to the age and stage of development, help children understand right from wrong. Children are pre-warned when they need to tidy up allowing them time to finish any tasks they are undertaking. Consequently children are well-behaved. A written statement on behaviour management is shared with parents and carers. However it does not name a member of staff for parents to approach should they require support or guidance. Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered.

Partnership with parents and carers is good. Parents and carers receive copies of the group's policies and procedures and they are also displayed prominently, keeping them informed. Other helpful information is also displayed for parents and carers to read. Staff photographs, their names and their roles are clearly displayed. Parents are kept fully informed through care diaries, daily chats and feedbacks and regular newsletters. They are made aware of how to complain and the process should the need arise. A bright display with photographs of children at play shows the different areas of learning for older children. Parents and carers attend open evenings where they speak to their child's key person and learn more about the Early Years Foundation Stage from staff and an advisory teacher. Parents and carers know that they may discuss their children's developmental progress and look at their portfolios whenever they wish. They share their children's progress with staff too, filling in 'All about Me' forms. Parents and carers are happy with the care that their children receive and feel that they are progressing well.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

Children benefit from well-organised space and resources and receive sufficient adult support to help them feel secure and confident. Staff keep themselves well informed of current childcare practices by attending relevant courses, helping them to offer up to date care to children. Records are stored confidentially but are easily accessible should they be required. The nursery understands the importance of informing parents and the registering body of any changes to their circumstances that might affect the welfare for the child. Children's accidents are recorded in writing and shared with parents and carers who are also telephoned to inform them of any injuries. All children have a key person who works closely with the child and parents to meet their individual needs. Each key person works with a buddy meaning that children and their parents have another member of staff to liaise with when the usual key person is unavailable. Students from the local college are easily identifiable as they wear tabards with the college name on and badges. The certificate of registration is clearly displayed. Accurate records of attendance are kept and visitors sign themselves in and out. The nursery is forward thinking and regularly evaluates their practice in order to make improvements to the care that children receive. The setting meets the needs of the range of children for whom it provides.

Leadership and management is satisfactory. The setting continues to evaluate the education that children receive in order that they can make improvements. With support from an early years advisory teacher the group has started to plan activities using the new Early Years Foundation Stage and is positive about this. Staff have regular meetings to plan and evaluate the activities that they offer to children with a manager overseeing the planning. Staff work hard and involve themselves in children's play, extending their learning. Children spend long periods of time in their key groups at adult directed activities. Although they have choice about the activities that they wish to participate in sometimes their play is interrupted as they are

asked to move into other areas of the room in order to meet child/adult ratios. This applies to younger children too.

Improvements since the last inspection

At the last inspection the nursery was given six actions to undertake to improve the quality and standards of care. They were told to assess the risks to children in relation to the radiators and take action to minimise these, ensure that children's health is promoted with effective procedures for hand washing to protect them from the spread of infection, obtain written permission from parents before administering medication to children and maintain a written record of any medication administered, ensure that all staff are aware of child protection procedures and the child protection procedure complies with those of the Local Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB), ensure that there are rigorous and robust procedures in place for ensuring staff are suitable to work with children, improve knowledge and understanding of the requirements set out in regulations and set in place a procedure to notify Ofsted of relevant matters.

To improve the quality and standards of nursery education it was recommended that the setting continue to develop effective use of observations in order to identify individual children's next steps in learning and use the information gained from observations to inform the planning of activities, review the effectiveness of the planning and ensure activities promote children's creative development, improve procedures for ensuring that parents have regular access to their children's developmental records, improve the balance of child initiated and adult directed activities so that children do not spend too long in large group time situations and they have more time for free play, develop effective systems in order to regularly monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of the setting and that of the educational programme.

Radiators are covered by purpose built covers, minimising risks to children. Low sinks have been installed and liquid soap and paper towels are easily accessible. Older children independently wash their hands without reminders and understand the importance of good personal hygiene. Staff support younger children at this task. This helps to protect children from the spread of infection and cross-contamination. Medication is not given to children without prior written parental permission. Parents sign to acknowledge that they are aware of when the medication was given. This helps to safeguard children from harm. All staff have received packs that inform them about child protection and it has been discussed in staff meetings. Some staff have attended training in child protection and it is hoped that more will do so. Overall staff have a good knowledge of the signs and symptoms of child abuse and a reasonable understanding of the procedures to follow should they have any concerns about a child in their care, helping to protect children. Rigorous and robust procedures are in place when employing new staff. The setting takes up references and finds out staff qualifications. A new police check is undertaken and staff given clear guidelines about good working practice, including child protection. The setting has improved its knowledge and understanding of the requirements set out in regulations and procedures are in place to notify the regulator of any relevant matters.

Staff make regular observations of children and use them to identify their next steps in learning. These steps are used to inform the planning for the individual child at activities led by the child's key person, on the whole, and for group. Children participate in a range of activities that promote their creative development such as many different types of art and craft. A room is dedicated to role play. Parents and carers are informed that they may look at their children's developmental records whenever they wish and/or discuss their child's development with the

key person or buddy key person. A successful parent evening has led the way to another one being planned. Although the amount of time spent in their key person groups has lessened children are still spending a long time in group situations. Depending on the room that they are in depends on how much time is adult led and how much choice children have. Therefore this remains a recommendation. Procedures are in place to monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of the educational programme.

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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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):

- ensure that children are protected from the sun at all times in order to safeguard them from the sun's rays
- provide more opportunities for all children to access and enjoy books freely
- update behaviour policy to include the name of a designated member of staff so that staff, parents and carers are aware of who to approach when they need support
- continue to make improvements to the balance of child initiated and adult directed activities so that children do not spend too long in large group time situations and they have more time for free play, giving consideration to not disrupting their play (this applies to nursery education too).

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):

- make improvements as indicated in the care section above.

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