

First Steps Nursery

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	EY349607
Inspection date	29 May 2008
Inspector	Carol Johnson
Setting Address	First Steps Nursery, Stonehouse Farm, Stonehouse Lane, Quinton, Birmingham, West Midlands, B32 3DX
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Registered person	First Steps Children's Nursery
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 good. 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 Nursery was registered in 1992 and has been operating under the current partnership since 2007. It is one of two nurseries owned by the partnership of First Steps Children's Nursery. It operates from seven rooms within a large three storey, grade two listed building in Harborne, Birmingham. The nursery serves the local and surrounding areas. A maximum of 60 children may attend the nursery at any one time. The nursery opens five days a week all year round. Sessions are from 07.30 until 18.00. Children have access to a secure enclosed outdoor play area.

There are currently 87 children from three months to five years on roll. Of these, 33 children receive funding for early education. Children attend for a variety of sessions. The setting has systems in place to support children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and those who speak English as an additional language.

The nursery employs 20 staff, including the manager and one of the directors, that work directly with the children. Of these, 12 hold appropriate early years qualifications and five are working

towards a qualification. The nursery also employs a cook and a cleaner. The setting receives support from the local authority.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Children are effectively protected from the spread of infection because they are cared for in a clean and healthy environment. Staff members are good role models and ensure that children follow thorough hygiene procedures. Older children are developing independence with regards to personal care as they are encouraged to be responsible for washing and drying their own hands with minimal help. They understand why they need to wash their hands, for example, after visiting the toilet or before touching food. All staff hold current food hygiene certificates and this is reflected in their good everyday practice with regards to cleaning routines and food preparation.

Children benefit, in the event of illness or a medical emergency, from the well-stocked and easily accessible first aid supplies and the high number of staff who have attended first aid training. A clearly written sickness policy makes sure that parents are aware of the setting's health procedures and know not to send children who are clearly unwell and could pose a potential health risk to others.

Children's dietary needs are well met because they are offered a wide range of healthy and nutritious meals and snacks. Menus are thoughtfully devised and special dietary needs are catered for. Portion sizes are generous and food is attractively presented. All staff members are aware of any special dietary requirements and meal times are well organised. Staff sit with children and actively encourage social skills, table manners and discussion around healthy eating. Children are not at risk from dehydration as drinks are offered at meal times and water is easily accessible in all rooms.

Children are learning about the benefits of a healthy lifestyle through both planned and spontaneous play. They enjoy regular fresh air and exercise and children have participated in activities that encourage them to explore the health and nutritional benefits of a range of foods. Staff have discussed dental hygiene with children and children have brought their toothbrushes into the nursery and have been shown how to brush their teeth properly.

All children in the setting benefit from regular physical play that helps them to develop their muscles, co-ordination and confidence. They play out in all weather conditions and there is plenty of space for children to run about and let off steam. Children are able to explore and play in the exciting and stimulating outdoor environment and resources to support children's physical play are plentiful and easily accessible. The well-planned garden enables children to enjoy a variety of play. For example, there are areas for children to dig and tend plants and they can roll down grassy slopes, climb trees, sit on a 'real' tractor and can rest and listen to stories, seated on small wooden toadstools. Indoors, children dance and join in with action rhymes and use tools and equipment that encourage the development of their large and small muscles. For example, they participate in threading activities, play musical instruments and regularly use scissors and writing implements.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

Children benefit from the provision's spacious and welcoming premises. Displays are bright and attractive and include examples of children's work, photographs of staff and children, and general information about the setting. Consequently, children are helped to develop a sense of belonging and parents are given lots of visual information about what their children are doing and how the setting operates. Space, both inside and outside, is thoughtfully arranged to provide different areas for rest and play. Resources throughout the nursery are plentiful and staff ensure that they are safe and developmentally-appropriate for the children in their care. Children's independence is actively promoted as a wide selection of toys is stored where it is easily accessible.

A wide variety of security and safety precautions are in place and children are only released into the care of known individuals. Entry to the premises is closely monitored through the use of an intercom system and safety gates prevent children's access to unsafe areas. Sound systems are in place to ensure that all staff have a clear understanding of health and safety requirements and this subject forms part of new staff and student induction procedures. There is a designated member of staff responsible for health and safety issues and a range of written risk assessments are available. However, children's safety is potentially compromised because these assessments do not ensure that all risks or hazards are suitably identified and evaluated. Also, systems to confirm that appropriate action has been taken to reduce identified risks are not always effective.

Children's safety in the event of a fire is satisfactorily protected as appropriate fire safety equipment is in place and is well maintained. Children and all adults in the setting are given regular opportunities to practise procedures for the emergency evacuation of the building. Visits from the ambulance and fire service help to alert children to people in the community who help us. Representatives from these services have talked to children about health and safety aspects and staff reinforce and raise safety issues through the use of books, role play and general discussion during everyday activities. Children attending the 'Forest School' are taught to respect the environment and they are learning how to protect their own safety. For example, adults show them how to use a range of tools safely and sensibly.

Children are effectively protected by a staff team who demonstrate a good awareness of child protection issues. They know that their first priority is children's safety and confidently describe a range of possible signs and symptoms of abuse and appropriate recording and reporting procedures. Management ensure that all staff have received training in this respect and information regarding child protection policies and procedures are easily accessible to both staff and parents.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

Children are happy and having fun. They are confident and happily interact with adults and each other. They are treated with kindness and concern by caring staff and are at ease to go to them for comfort, support and reassurance. Staff thoughtfully plan and resource a challenging environment where children's play can be effectively supported and extended. Resources to support children's experiences are accessible, plentiful and of good quality and this actively encourages children's learning, independence and freedom of choice.

Children enjoy a good balance of spontaneous and carefully planned activities that help to improve their all-round development. Activities meet the needs of children at their different stages of development and staff demonstrate a good knowledge of individual children. They regularly observe children to assess their needs and they plan an exciting range of activities that suit their various abilities and interests. Topics are used throughout the nursery as a focus for children's play and learning and written plans are displayed for parents to see. Experiences available to children include craft activities, sharing books and stories, and plenty of physical play. Children go on outings and walks in the local environment and a music teacher comes into the nursery on a weekly basis.

Children of all ages are able to experiment and investigate because a variety of materials and sensory experiences are provided. Babies and toddlers have access to treasure baskets filled with everyday items of varying tactile qualities for them to scrutinise, squeeze, bang, and explore at their leisure. All children have lots of fun experimenting with a variety of mediums including, paint, dough and cornflour and the nursery sensory garden encourages children to notice nature and use all of their senses. For example, children are able to experience the various textures beneath their feet, they can smell the herbs and flowers and they can watch the birds that use the various feeders hanging from the trees.

Nursery education

The quality of teaching and learning is good. Children are progressing well through the stepping stones towards the early learning goals. They are developing and learning because staff plan and implement an exciting range of activities and experiences. Staff demonstrate a good understanding of the Foundation Stage and clearly understand why they have planned certain activities and what they hope children will learn from them. Information gained from observation, assessments and discussions with parents is effectively used to plan children's future learning. Children are motivated to learn and achieve because staff offer them lots of praise and encouragement. Satisfactory support is given to those children that have English as an additional language and staff demonstrate a good knowledge of individual children.

Children are confident and have formed secure relationships with staff and their peers. They show curiosity and are keen to participate in activities, confidently selecting resources and activities for themselves. Children show good levels of independence and staff offer children plenty of time and opportunities to practise and learn everyday skills, for example, writing their own name, putting on shoes or using scissors. They do not interfere unnecessarily but are close at hand to offer guidance and support if required.

Children are provided with a rich menu of songs, stories and rhymes on a daily basis. Staff read to children in small groups and encourage them to talk about the stories and predict what might happen next. Children listen well and eagerly respond to questions. However, the book area lacks imagination and does not actively inspire children to either look at books independently or with an adult. Children are not learning how to treat books appropriately as many of the books, which are stored in boxes at child height, are ripped or have pages missing. Management are aware of this issue and have recently purchased an exciting range of new books that are stored on wall racks in the rooms. However, these racks are just out of reach of most children and restricts their ability to choose books independently.

Children's daily experiences in the setting are full of problem solving opportunities and numbers. They count the number of children in the group, calculate how many knives and forks are needed at lunchtime and they are able to identify a range of numerals. More able children can

count objects up to fifteen and children use lots of mathematical language in their play. For example, they use words such as more and less and can accurately identify a range of two-dimensional shapes. Children are starting to show an interest in information communication technology. They regularly use the computer and are developing good control of the mouse. Also, children enjoy access to programmable toys, calculators, cassette players and cameras.

Regular opportunities are provided for the children to be creative through activities such as music, painting and exploring malleable materials that include dough, sand and water. Children are given time and space to express themselves and staff show children that they value their work by offering them encouragement and displaying their pictures. However, opportunities for children to engage in role play based on first-hand experiences are restricted because space and resources are not always organised effectively.

Children's physical skills are developing well. They move with control and co-ordination and show good spatial awareness. They understand the need to be careful when riding bikes in areas where other children are playing and show confidence when using large climbing equipment. Older children have the opportunity to go on outings to the 'Forest School' where all areas of learning are promoted and developed in a safe outdoor environment. Activities offered at the 'Forest School' include climbing trees, going on 'bug' hunts and building shelters and campfires. These fun experiences help children to gain a range of skills and encourage confidence and a sense of safety and responsibility.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

Self-esteem is flourishing in an environment where children are warmly welcomed and individuality is recognised and celebrated. Staff take time and make the effort to get to know children and their families and they encourage children to talk about home and share their experiences. They show children that they are valued by inviting their comments and listening to what they have to say. Consequently, children demonstrate good levels of self-esteem and confidence. Children are learning to show concern for others and the environment, for example, through bringing plastic items into nursery for recycling and by taking part in charity fund raising efforts.

Children have access to a variety of toys and resources that reflect their home experiences and offer positive images of diversity, for example, a range of books, dolls, dressing-up clothes, puzzles and small world figures. Craft activities and stories are used to help children learn about a variety of religious and cultural festivals and displays around the nursery reflect children's home and community experiences. Children's awareness of the wider world has been increased as they have participated in activities based around various festivals, for example, Chinese New Year, Diwali and Hanamatsuri, the Buddhist festival of flowers.

The nursery has good systems in place to support children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The commitment to inclusion and the promotion of children's positive attitudes towards equality is evident in all policies and practice. The registered person is proactive in monitoring inclusion and is well aware of the need to work collaboratively with parents and where necessary, other agencies to support individual children. The nursery Special Educational Needs Coordinator (SENCO) is new to the role but management have organised relevant training to ensure that this member of staff is able to effectively support children and their families.

Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered. Children behave exceptionally well and demonstrate good manners and developing social skills. Staff members are positive role models and ensure that children know what is expected of them and why rules, to protect their welfare and safety, are in place. Staff effectively use a range of positive and developmentally appropriate methods for managing behaviour and these are shared with parents to ensure that a consistent approach is adopted. Children are caring and considerate towards each other and older children clearly understand the need to share and take turns in their play. Staff allow older children time and space to sort out minor conflicts for themselves and this encourages a sense of fairness and responsibility. Good behaviour and effort is promptly acknowledged and rewarded and this motivates children to co-operate and achieve.

The partnership with parents and carers is good. Relationships are effectively enhanced and supported because staff and parents work together to help children learn and develop. Staff, parents and carers regularly exchange information about children's care, learning and behaviour and written policies are clearly written and easily accessible. Several positive comments were received, from parents, throughout the inspection and these included comments related to the friendly and caring staff, family atmosphere, regular communication and the wide range of activities enjoyed by the children.

Parents and carers are welcomed into the setting and they are able to view examples of children's work and the wealth of information displayed around the setting. Information is available that explains how and why 'Birth to three matters' and the 'Foundation Stage' curriculum are implemented. Newsletters are sent out on a regular basis and the nursery has its own website. Activity plans and daily routines are displayed on notice boards and examples of children's work and photographs provide parents with additional information about what their children have been doing. Individual progress records are maintained for all children and these are available for parents to see or discuss at any time. Parents are formally invited to discuss children's progress at sessions arranged throughout the year. Written records are kept and shared regarding younger children's care needs and routines.

A variety of strategies are in place to involve parents and carers, particularly of those children receiving funding for early education, in their child's education. They are able to borrow resources to extend and enhance their children's experiences and staff provide ideas to how individual children's learning can be supported at home. Also, parents are asked to send in items for interest tables and to come into the nursery to share any knowledge or expertise that they may have with the children. For example, a parent who is a paramedic recently came into the setting and children were able to experiment with bandages and find out how various pieces of medical equipment is used.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

Children are happy and settled in a warm and welcoming environment where space is creatively organised to enable them to enjoy a wide range of experiences. Staff are clear with regards to their roles and responsibilities and daily routines and activities are flexibly organised to reflect children's needs and interests. Group sizes are managed effectively to ensure that children have sufficient support and space to play in comfort and safety. The registered person visits the nursery on a regular basis and plays an active and hands-on role within the setting. The manager is supernumerary but helps out in the rooms as and when required, for example, to help cover staff breaks. Recruitment and vetting procedures are robust and staff meetings are effectively used to cascade information and discuss practice issues. Documentation to ensure

the safe and effective management of the setting is generally well maintained and all required paperwork is in place and available for inspection. However, children's departure times are not always recorded and this puts their welfare and safety at potential risk.

Leadership and management is good. Management have high expectations of staff and the children and demonstrate a strong commitment to providing quality care and education. They inspire and support a committed and enthusiastic staff team and both the manager and the registered person effectively lead by example. The nursery holds a 'Gold' quality assurance award and management is constantly looking at ways to improve the service offered. Staff induction procedures are thorough and staff have attended a wealth of courses to enhance their personal and professional development. For example, the manager has achieved a level four management qualification and most staff have received child protection training. Other courses attended include, 'Baby Massage', 'Allergy Awareness' and 'Asthma'. Staff ongoing training needs are continually assessed and children and their parents positively benefit from the dedication and commitment shown by the nursery team. Overall children's needs are met.

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 good. 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 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 risk assessment systems to ensure that all risks or hazards are suitably identified and evaluated and appropriate action is taken to reduce identified risks
- ensure records show children's hours of attendance.

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):

- extend opportunities for children to engage in role play based on first-hand experiences
- review the organisation of the book area to create an environment where children learn how to handle books carefully and are able to enjoy a variety of books both on their own and with adults.

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