

First Steps Pre-School

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	EY367607
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Inspector	Susan Andrews
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Type of inspection	Integrated
Type of care	Full day care, Out of School 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 Pre-School opened in 2005 and was taken over by the current owner in 2007. It operates from the main hall, quiet room and associated facilities at Christ the King Church in the Beaumont Leys area of Leicester. A maximum of 38 children may attend the pre-school at any one time. The pre-school opens each weekday from 09.00 to 15.00 during term time each weekday throughout the year. All children share access to a secure outdoor play area.

There are currently 31 children aged from two to five years on roll. Of these 23 receive funding for nursery education. The setting has experience of providing care for children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and also supports children who speak English as an additional language. Children come from the local community.

The pre-school employs six staff of which four, including the registered provider, hold appropriate early years qualifications. The setting receives support from Leicestershire Local Authority Development Officers.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is satisfactory.

General standards of hygiene at the setting are appropriately maintained and staff minimise the risk of cross-infection as tables are cleansed using antibacterial spray after activities and before children have their snack or eat their lunch. Children's personal hygiene however, is not generally promoted, as staff are not vigilant in ensuring children wash their hands before eating or after messy play. Staff however, do offer explanations about why it is important to wear a hat to protect themselves in the hot summer sunshine and children are able to access tissues independently so that they can wipe their nose. Therefore, children's understanding of their own health needs are being raised.

Children experience a range of physical activities which contribute to their good health, for example, dance and movement to music. They engage in a range of play experiences and exercise out in the fresh air or indoors on a daily basis. Indoors, children use a range of toys and equipment that develop their physical skills. Children hop, jump, run and balance using balls and hoops. Outside, children climb on the climbing frame, ride bicycles and scooters with purpose and precision. Children have a good sense of movement as they negotiate space. They move freely between activities and equipment with ease, changing directions, starting and stopping as required. Good use of small equipment, such as sand tools, paintbrushes, puzzles and construction toys, promote the development of the children's hand and eye co-ordination and their fine muscle skills.

Children's medical welfare is safeguarded, as staff hold relevant first aid qualifications and follow clear procedures when dealing with accidents and the administration of medication. As a result, staff are able to positively respond should a child in their care have an accident or become unwell. Accident records are maintained, however, in some instances they lack detail regarding the injury sustained and any follow-up checks that are made.

Parents provide children with packed lunches. Breakfast and snacks are provided by the pre-school at set times during the session. These include a breakfast with toast, jam or lemon curd, cereals and water, squash or milk to drink. Healthy eating is not actively promoted as the breakfasts served do not contain healthy options from which children may choose. Consequently, they are not developing a healthy lifestyle or learning about what kind of foods are good for them. Children do not have free access to drinking water throughout the sessions and staff are not encouraging children to take on additional fluids after physical exercise or when playing outdoors in hot weather. Therefore they may become thirsty and dehydrated.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is satisfactory.

Children play in a spacious environment, with clearly defined activity areas. There is sufficient space indoors between each of the activities, so that the children are able to move around comfortably, engaging in quiet and physical activities. As a result, their decision-making skills, choice and independence are promoted. Children have easy access to a varied range of furniture and equipment which is in a satisfactory condition. However, seating arrangements of the appropriate height for smaller children are not yet in place. Toys and resources are plentiful, varied and reflect diversity. They are age-appropriate and provide suitable challenge, therefore, children develop their skills and are stimulated and interested in what is available.

Children are protected from the risks of accidental injury, as staff are safety conscious. They take steps to plan for emergencies and to prevent and manage accidents, through the use of a range of daily safety checks and regular fire drills. As a result, children are familiar of the evacuation procedures should a real emergency occur. A range of risk assessments have been completed. However, children's safety is compromised, as adult-sized chairs are stacked to an unsafe level, plug socket covers are not in place and the nappy changing mat has foam filling exposed. Staff are extremely vigilant in the supervision of children regarding the security arrangements. The procedures for the arrival and departure of children and their parents, are managed well with each child handed over directly between staff and the authorised parent or carer. Staff are deployed effectively and children are carefully supervised. Children are never left alone with people who have not been vetted, or released to unauthorised adults, consequently, they remain safe and secure within the setting.

A written child protection policy is in place, which is made available to parents which includes appropriate reporting procedures. However, the policy does not include reference to the, 'What to do if you're worried a child is being abused' government leaflet, or the Local Safeguarding Children Board guidance. Staff have attended training to increase their knowledge and they have a sound understanding of child protection issues. They are aware of the signs and symptoms of abuse and fully recognise their duty to protect the children in their care, therefore, children's welfare is safeguarded.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is satisfactory.

Children are generally happy and new children settle well into the pre-school. Older children are confident, independent and relaxed. Younger children receive lots of sensitive care, support and encouragement from staff which helps to reassure them. The setting displays Early Years Foundation Stage information for parents and carers to see.

Children are cared for by keen and motivated staff, who give them lots of individual attention. Therefore, they feel secure, welcomed and valued. Children are able to approach staff with ease and form close, trusting relationships. Staff are enthusiastic and interested in what children do and say. They listen to them attentively and are skilled in knowing when children's play would benefit from adult intervention and when to hold back and allow children to progress their own play activities.

Children's overall development is supported as staff have a sound understanding of how children learn. Staff provide the children with a range of stimulating activities and spontaneous experiences that children enjoy. They are curious and fascinated as they explore the world around them, for example, children find a snail in the garden and with staff's help, they place it on black card in a tray and watch closely to see how it moves and leaves the slimy trail.

Nursery Education.

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. Staff have a suitable knowledge of the Foundation Stage. They are aware of how children learn and progress through the stepping stones, what the areas of learning include and they provide a range of appropriate activities. However, strategies for the observation, evaluation, assessment and planning of the curriculum are not sufficiently frequent or robust and do not provide sufficient challenge, focus and purpose to encourage individual children's sustained independent learning. Therefore, some children are unable to fully extend their skills because activities are not built on staff's

observations of what they need to do next. Staff engage children, asking questions and inviting them to think and predict for themselves during activities and general conversations. Children can choose their play experiences and therefore, many activities are child-initiated with staff providing suitable support and encouragement.

Older children listen well when staff are speaking and answer questions. They are beginning to be confident speakers as they increase their skills and vocabulary during large group activities, such as register time. They happily sing songs and most children listen attentively to stories. Staff engage all children in lively conversation to extend their thinking, however, some of the younger children, due to their limited focus, attention span and lack of confidence, find it difficult to maintain an interest in the large group activities.

Children are interested in their chosen play activities and generally enjoy their time and have fun at the setting. They form good relationships with their peers and play well together. For example, making a construction with large building blocks and duplo. Through appropriate organisation of resources and time, children have independent access to all activities and can make choices and decisions about their play. Staff manage children's behaviour well, so that they understand what is acceptable and how their behaviour affects others. Children are kind to each other and work co-operatively, take turns, share and help to tidy away the toys which gives them a sense of responsibility.

Children's mark-making skills are fostered with a variety of materials available on a daily basis. For example, children handle paintbrushes and use chalks on a blackboard or outdoors on the paving stones. They draw and write with pencils and crayons as part of art activities and draw letters and numbers in the sand or the shaving foam with their fingers. Children enjoy looking at books and respond well to questions as they confidently predict what might happen next. For example, in the story about 'The Very Hungry Caterpillar', children predict that 'the caterpillar will get a sore tummy because eats too much'. Children are learning that the printed word has meaning and they have many opportunities to recognise their name, for example, children use their name cards on their lunch boxes and write their name on their artwork. They follow words on the page at story time this helps children to become familiar with letters and numbers, linking them effectively to objects and places.

Children's mathematical development is routinely encouraged. Older children are able to count confidently up to 10 and beyond. The younger children are beginning to use numbers in everyday conversations, for example, 'I've painted two pictures'. Children compare, sort and calculate as they use jigsaw puzzles, sing rhymes, count the days of the week and see numbers around them. Children enjoy exploring and investigating their environment, they make progress in using positional language such as, 'in front of', 'underneath' and 'above'. Through using the sand they make comparisons, for example, judging which container is heavier or which is smaller. They learn about geometrical shapes, such as triangles, squares and circles. Children watch how objects grow and change, for example, as they learn that seeds grow into plants and measure them. Children have some opportunities to develop their information, communication and technology skills as they have access to the computer, keyboard and mouse and when playing with programmable toys.

Children develop their physical skills and creativity through the use of a range of art materials and tools as they paint, crayon, create collage pictures and model with play-dough. Children use their imagination to express their ideas and feelings through stories and in play situations that reflect their home and the wider community. Children remember and sing familiar songs

with great enjoyment, they listen and dance to nursery songs and classical music, exploring melody and rhythm.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is satisfactory.

Children are happy and relaxed in the setting. Staff promote equality of opportunity and ensure toys, equipment and practices reflect diversity. For example, through the celebration of multicultural festivals and access to a selection of dolls, multilingual books, posters and puzzles. Play and learning opportunities acknowledge and value individual differences and help children broaden their understanding of the wider world. Children across the age range and of all abilities feel a sense of belonging as they are sensitively supported. Therefore, children are fully involved, settle well, become more confident, learn and progress.

Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered. Children generally behave well in the setting, they happily share their toys, for example, taking turns willingly as they play in the sand and with the bicycles. Staff manage children's behaviour effectively and positively by listening to them, diverting their attention and praising their achievements. They are skilled in knowing when to become involved in children's negotiations and when to hold back so the children can resolve issues for themselves. They are calm, consistent and sensitive in their approach and give clear explanations to children which helps them feel secure and know what is expected of them. Staff are polite to each other and to the children, always saying, 'please' and 'thank you' and encouraging children to do the same. Consequently, children behave well and harmony and co-operation is promoted. Children's self-esteem is promoted by the praise and encouragement from staff. Children's artwork is valued and displayed creatively around the hall to further enhance children's sense of belonging.

The partnership with parents and carers is satisfactory. They speak favourably of the welcoming environment which helps them to feel confident in the care offered to their children. They feel they receive appropriate information at the time they place a child at the setting. Further information is shared informally through ongoing dialogue and information is displayed on the notice boards or on a table in the lobby for parents see. The setting has taken some steps to keep parents informed, however, they are less successful in involving parents to contribute more effectively in planning for their children's development. Staff are beginning to liaise more with parents and carers, however, the setting does not currently implement strategies to obtain the views of parents, such as a suggestion box or use questionnaires. Parent consultation sessions or open days are not yet established.

A full range of the setting's policy and procedural documentation is readily available for parents and carers. Staff are aware that they are required to keep a record of any complaints. The setting is beginning to collate examples of children's work and create a profile of children's progress and development regarding the learning outcomes. Appropriate information is gathered at the time a child is placed in the setting and information is reviewed periodically to ensure continuity of care, so that children's care needs are met appropriately.

Organisation

The organisation is satisfactory.

Children receive a satisfactory level of care from staff who are selected as part of an appropriate vetting procedure. This ensures that they are looked after safely by qualified, experienced,

committed staff who have been vetted, receive appropriate induction and are subject to ongoing appraisal evaluation.

The operation plan has been devised and works in practice and documentation which contributes to the children's health, safety and well-being is in place. Staff are generally familiar with the policies and procedures and systems that review, revise and update the documentation to ensure compliance with National Standards criteria are part of ongoing development.

The leadership and management regarding nursery education is satisfactory. The provider and staff communicate appropriately with each other through informal discussion, regular planning and team meetings. The provider is a suitable and effective leader with a clear vision about how to provide an appropriate service to children and parents that meet their individual needs and comply with National Standards. Induction and appraisal systems, where the competency of staff is evaluated and their training needs identified, have been initially established. However, the systems to assess children's development, monitor and evaluate the provision of the nursery education are not sufficiently robust and consequently some children may not progress as effectively as they could. Good staffing ratios are in place and staff deployment is effective. This has a positive impact on the supervision and the general well-being of the children is enhanced.

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

The quality and standards of the nursery education are satisfactory.

WHAT MUST BE DONE TO SECURE FUTURE IMPROVEMENT?

The quality and standards of the care

To improve the quality and standards of care further the registered person should take account of the following recommendation(s):

- implement good hygiene practices in order to prevent the spread of infection and ensure children are encouraged to learn about personal hygiene through daily routines such as washing their hands after messy play and before eating
- provide children with nutritious food and ensure fresh drinking water is available to children at all times
- take positive steps to promote safety within the setting and ensure proper precautions are taken to prevent accidents, with particular regard to the storage of adult stackable chairs, the protection of electrical plug sockets and the damaged nappy changing surface
- ensure the setting's written child protection statement is based on procedures laid out in the 'What to do If you're worried a child is being abused' government leaflet and the Local Safeguarding Children Board guidance.

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):

- develop effective use of observations, assessments, records and planning for what children need to do next, so that activities and experiences are better matched to children's individual stage of development. Provide appropriate challenge and progression to encourage their sustained and independent learning
- further develop the partnership with parents, by implementing strategies to obtain their views. For example, through use of a suggestion box, questionnaires and parent evenings so that they can contribute more effectively in planning for their children's learning and development.

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