

First Steps

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique reference number	EY295765
Inspection date	28/07/2009
Inspector	Joan, Patricia Flowers
Setting address	Fulwood Lodge, Longsands Lane, Fulwood, Preston, Lancashire, PR2 9PS
Telephone number	01772 792 644
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Type of setting	Childcare on non-domestic premises

Introduction

This inspection was carried out by Ofsted under Sections 49 and 50 of the Childcare Act 2006 on the quality and standards of the registered early years provision. 'Early years provision' refers to provision regulated by Ofsted for children from birth to 31 August following their fifth birthday (the early years age group). The registered person must ensure that this provision complies with the statutory framework for children's learning, development and welfare, known as the *Early Years Foundation Stage*.

The provider must provide a copy of this report to all parents with children at the setting where reasonably practicable. The provider must provide a copy of the report to any other person who asks for one, but may charge a fee for this service (The Childcare (Inspection) Regulations 2008 regulations 9 and 10).

The setting also makes provision for children older than the early years age group which is registered on the voluntary and/or compulsory part(s) of the Childcare Register. This report does not include an evaluation of that provision, but a comment about compliance with the requirements of the Childcare Register is included in Annex B.

Description of the setting

First Steps Nursery is privately owned and registered on the Early Years Register and both parts of the Childcare Register to provide full day care for a maximum of 40 children aged from birth to under eight years. The nursery is situated in a semi-rural location of Fulwood, near Preston in Lancashire. The provision is set within its own grounds in a large Victorian detached house. Children have access to individual rooms appropriate to their ages and stages of development. There is a separate baby room, sleeping area, toddler room, and separate playrooms for pre-school children and children aged over eight years who may attend outside of school hours. There is an individually designed outdoor learning and play environment located at the rear of the building, including a soft surfaced area for the youngest children.

The nursery is open for 51 weeks throughout the year, on weekdays; from 8.00 until 18.00. Children living in the immediate and wider community may attend full-time or part-time. There are a total number of 62 children on roll, of whom 20 receive funding for nursery education. The setting supports children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and children who speak English as an additional language.

There are 11 childcare staff employed including the manager, eight of whom hold relevant early year's childcare qualifications. The setting is a member of the National Day Care Association. Training and advice is also gained from the local authority Sure Start consultancy and teacher team.

Overall effectiveness of the early years provision

Overall, the quality of the provision is good. The provider is working towards the strong recruitment and retention of staff to provide stability and consistency for the children who attend the setting. The dedicated staff team provide a stimulating and interesting programme of activities, keeping all children occupied and interested throughout their time at nursery and helping them make excellent progress towards the early learning goals. Staff develop wonderful relationships with the parents and are keen to ensure that information is regularly shared so that the individual needs of every child are fully met. The group demonstrates a strong commitment to continuous improvement to provide good quality care and education for the children in their care.

What steps need to be taken to improve provision further?

To further improve the early years provision the registered person should:

- ensure that Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) disclosures are handled in accordance with the CRB's Code of Practice and the Statutory Guidance of the Early Years Foundation Stage Framework.

The leadership and management of the early years provision

The provider and whole staff team work hard to continue to develop and improve the service provided to the children and their parents. All staff are involved in continuous training and development, ensuring they provide the best possible care for every child. Children's safety is paramount and the group have developed rigorous risk assessment, which is reviewed when any changes occur to the setting. Daily safety checks ensure this good level of attention to safety is maintained. The vast majority of staff are well qualified and employment procedures ensure they are suitable to work with children, however, records of clearance are not wholly in line with current guidance. Clear systems, none the less, are in place to ensure that children's welfare is fully promoted, for example, most staff have completed safeguarding training. Through self-evaluation and by embarking on the Quality Counts Registration with the local authority, the setting has been able to identify their strengths and areas for improvement. For example, the introduction of an electronic thumb print entry system ensures that only those persons known and registered with the setting may gain entry. Extensive re-design of the outdoor play area also points to the commitment for continual improvements that provides invaluable benefit for every child who attends.

Children experience very good levels of continuity of care because staff work closely with parents to keep them informed about their child's activities and routines. Parents complete an 'All About Me' profile when children first attend and again every time their child moves into the next age group room. Copious methods are used to ensure that parents are kept well informed and included in their child's time at nursery, so children's individual needs can continue to be met as they grow and develop. If they choose, children can take activities home and the toddler group take turns to look after 'Barney' the Dinosaur at weekend, then share what Barney has got up to on their return. The thoughtful systems in place for inclusion ensure all children with English as an additional language are fully included and feel valued.

The quality and standards of the early years provision

The staff are very effectively deployed throughout the setting and have developed a good balance between adult-led and child-initiated activities. The organisation of space ensures that children are able to participate in activities at their own level of understanding and stage of development with excellent ease of access. Activities in each group room are set out to promote self-selection and exploration. This enhances children's opportunities to develop independence, enjoyment and learning tremendously well. Children are able to move freely and safely between all areas indoors and when exploring the exciting outdoor garden, which is used as an extension to learning across the early year's curriculum. The setting is inclusive and welcoming to all sections of the community, with notices and labels displaying different languages prominent throughout the setting. Children with additional needs are fully included into the life of the nursery, with the trained Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator (SENCO) being totally committed to ensuring that

children's individual needs are fully recognised and met, aided by strong partnerships with parents and other professionals.

Children understand the importance of following simple hygiene routines, such as, washing their hands before eating, or after messy play. They help to wipe the tables before snack time and are well cared for if they become sick or have an accident, with stringent procedures in place to protect them from infection. They enjoy freshly prepared healthy meals and snacks with regular opportunities to have fruit and drinks throughout the day. Children are learning first hand, about where their food comes from when they plant, care for and harvest a variety of produce like potatoes, peas, courgettes and strawberries. They learn about the natural world around them when they discuss and paint pictures of the sun and describe what they like about the sun, for instance saying, 'mine is yellow' and 'the sun is hot'.

Children are extremely settled and very comfortable interacting with their key workers and with other staff in their group and wider nursery. They interact positively with their peers and actively seek them out to participate in shared activities like playing the matching pairs game on the computer. They show concern for one another, as one child helps another put on his socks and shoes, and another puts her arm around her friend. Children's behaviour is good in comparison to their ages and stages of development and is supported through clear and appropriate behaviour management strategies and age appropriate reward systems. Staff act as positive role models and they offer lots of praise and encouragement at all times as they sensitively remind children to share with their friends and to be polite and kind. Children's self-esteem is fostered using stickers and certificates, and in pre-school children put pebbles in the jar leading to a reward for all when the jar is full.

Children are making excellent progress in all areas of learning and development with the great support of the experienced and enthusiastic staff. Babies and toddlers have many opportunities to use their senses when exploring sand, water, cooked and uncooked pasta and compost to name but some. Natural materials abound in the nursery for children to interact with freely. For instance, in the construction area, with the wooden bricks, children use a log to add a different dimension to their building and problem solving projects. Treasure baskets delight babies as they explore different natural objects like shells and pebbles, metal and wooden spoons and different textured materials, such as, wool and silk. Toddlers and pre-school age children alike can access the outdoor learning garden where they can use their imaginations playing in the wooden boat and creating patterns as they squirt diluted paint onto their sheet of hanging paper in the art and creative area, watching as the paint merges to make different colours and patterns. They experiment making print patterns with the pine cones too.

Planning and assessment processes in line with the Early Years Foundation Stage framework are being implemented to good effect and identify children's next steps in learning. This ensures that children move forward at a pace suitable to their individual needs and learning styles. Children thoroughly enjoy activities together, such as, listening to the story of Ben and Gran and the Whole Wide Wonderful World as they sit engrossed, responding and asking questions about the story.

They benefit greatly from the 'Mini Maestro Dance', movement and music sessions where they learn to use body percussion and how to maintain the beat together leading to increased skills in communication, language and literacy. All children have opportunities to develop early mark making skills through a range of resources that are readily available with some three and most four-year-olds able to recognise letters and their own names in print as they self-register and write their names on their work. Letter and number recognition is promoted by staff with spontaneous opportunities for counting not lost, for example, when some children decided to draw around their hands they counted their fingers one to five and then five to 10 as they calculated out loud together.

Annex A: record of inspection judgements

The key inspection judgements and what they mean

Grade 1 is Outstanding: this aspect of the provision is of exceptionally high quality

Grade 2 is Good: this aspect of the provision is strong

Grade 3 is Satisfactory: this aspect of the provision is sound

Grade 4 is Inadequate: this aspect of the provision is not good enough

Overall effectiveness

How effective is the provision in meeting the needs of children in the Early Years Foundation Stage?	2
How well does the provision promote inclusive practice?	2
The capacity of the provision to maintain continuous improvement.	1

Leadership and management

How effectively is provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage led and managed?	2
How effective is the setting's self-evaluation, including the steps taken to promote improvement?	2
How well does the setting work in partnership with parents and others?	1
How well are children safeguarded?	2

Quality and standards

How effectively are children in the Early Years Foundation Stage helped to learn and develop?	1
How effectively is the welfare of children in the Early Years Foundation Stage promoted?	2
How well are children helped to stay safe?	2
How well are children helped to be healthy?	2
How well are children helped to enjoy and achieve?	1
How well are children helped to make a positive contribution?	1
How well are children helped develop skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being?	2

Any complaints about the inspection or report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk

Annex B: the Childcare Register

The provider confirms that the requirements of the compulsory part of the Childcare Register are:	Met
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The provider confirms that the requirements of the voluntary part of the Childcare Register are:	Met
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