

# First Step

Inspection report for early years provision

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**Unique reference number** EY341003  
**Inspection date** 11/11/2008  
**Inspector** Martyn Richards

**Setting address** Tangmere Crescent, Hornchurch, Essex, RM12 5PP

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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 report includes information on any complaints about the childcare provision which Ofsted has received since the last inspection or registration whichever is the later, which require Ofsted or the provider to take action in Annex C.

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 Step is run by First Step Opportunity Group, a company limited by guarantee and a registered charity run by a board of trustees. It operates from its own single storey premises. These are on the site of RJ Mitchell Primary School in a residential area of South Hornchurch in the London Borough of Havering, but are separate from it, having their own entrance. The pre-school has use of two playrooms as well as a sensory room, a music therapy room and a quiet room. There are good facilities for staff. All the children attending have special needs. Playgroup sessions take place in term times only. Special sessions to support children with attention, communication and co-operation difficulties, or on the autistic spectrum, are held in the afternoons. Fifteen staff work directly with the children. Most have childcare and education qualifications to a minimum of NVQ (National Vocational Qualification) level 2, and many have substantially higher qualifications. The setting has specialist input from a wide range of support services including portage, physiotherapy, occupational therapy, speech and learning therapy, music therapy, visual and hearing impairment, and educational psychology. Staff work closely with the area Special Educational Needs Co-ordinators and learning support services. First Step is registered on the Early Years, compulsory and voluntary parts of the Childcare register. At any one time it can provide for a maximum of 24 children in the early years age group, of whom no more than ten may be under two years of age. At the time of the inspection there were 48 children on roll, four of whom received funding for nursery education.

## Overall effectiveness of the early years provision

First Step Opportunity Group continues to make outstanding provision for the young children attending. It is a welcoming, intimate and reassuring setting for the children, and greatly appreciated by the parents. It is excellently led by its service manager, who has built a loyal and dedicated team of helpers and volunteers. Children settle very happily, forming warm and confident relationships with staff who know them all as individuals and make highly effective provision for each child. Their developmental and learning needs are identified well, and activities chosen to make sure they all progress as well as they can from their starting points.

## What steps need to be taken to improve provision further?

To further improve the high quality early years provision the registered person should consider:

- highlight especially significant observations in individual learning records to help establish the children's progress over time

## **The leadership and management of the early years provision**

The leadership and management of the setting is outstanding. It is marked by its determination that the children deserve the very best of opportunities, and that the setting should improve continually to make this happen. Staff regularly review the effectiveness of First Step, and produce action plans to make it even better. Recently for example, they made major improvements to the outside play area to make it safer for the more fragile children, and have a staff member specially trained in baby massage to help children with impaired movement.

The setting is exceptionally well staffed, and this means that children usually have one-to-one attention in the playgroup. Staff are highly qualified and make excellent use of the advice and practical help they receive from support services and outside specialists such as the music therapist. As a result, they know exactly what needs to be done to help each child move forward.

Safety and hygiene are of paramount importance in First Step. The building itself prevents any unauthorised entry, and formal risk assessments are conducted regularly. Staff have all been checked for their suitability for this work, and plans to cope with emergencies are clear. Great care is taken with activities such as hand washing and bottle feeding to make sure infection is avoided.

Very close relationships have been established with parents, who greatly value the provision. One commented 'It's made a huge difference. It's really great for her here.'

A real strength is the quality and ease of communications between home, school and outside agencies. Parents find it easy to share concerns with staff, who, as one stated, 'are always ready to listen.' Children's development benefits hugely from consistent, high quality care.

The continued exceptional quality of the setting and the rigour of its self-evaluation mean its capacity to continue to improve is outstanding.

## **The quality and standards of the early years provision**

This is a setting of outstanding quality. It is characterised by the gentle, supportive relationships adults share with the small groups of children who come to the setting at any one time. Staff strike an excellent balance between encouraging children both to try engaging activities such as painting or modelling, and where possible, to choose for themselves what to do next. Typically, one child may be in a helper's arms relaxing with a morning feed, while another makes pretend tea for his helper, while a third is transfixed by the pictures in a book the helper shows her. Yet another child experiments with fitting variously shaped wooden blocks into slots, by touch. The accuracy of adults' identification of individual children's needs, and the sensitive imagination they show in selecting appropriate activities, result in happy, secure children who enjoy their time in the setting and achieve well.

Meticulous records and assessments are kept, and these document each child's activities during each session. These present an excellent picture of the varied programme the children receive, and their likes and dislikes. Sometimes they record particularly significant observations which mark a clear progression in some aspect of a child's development, such as the first spontaneous use of a new manual skill. Staff should consider extending this process by highlighting such developmental milestones more clearly in their records of observations.

The playroom is bright with appealing toys at child level and their art work displayed on the walls. Informal furniture and carpets make for a comfortable, domestic tone. A huge range of equipment is on hand to meet individual children's care needs as well as to promote learning. It is in good condition and easy for the children to access for themselves. The outside play area has a new soft surface. It is small and secure, admirably suited to the small number of children in each group, and is invaluable in extending learning outwards from the indoor spaces.

## 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

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

### Leadership and management

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

### Quality and standards

<b>How effectively are children in the Early Years Foundation Stage helped to learn and develop?</b>	1
<b>How effectively is the welfare of children in the Early Years Foundation Stage promoted?</b>	1
How well are children helped to stay safe?	1
How well are children helped to be healthy?	1
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?	1

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](http://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

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

## **Annex C: complaint/s made to Ofsted**

This section of the report includes details of any complaint/s made to Ofsted when:

- we took action for the provider to meet the requirements of the Early Years Register; or
- we asked the provider to take action in order to meet the requirements of the Early Years Register; or
- the provider had already taken any necessary action to meet the requirements of the Early Years Register.

We will not report on any complaint where the provider met the requirements of the Early Years Register or did not require any action by Ofsted or the registered provider.

### **Detail of the complaint/s**

There have been no complaints made to Ofsted since registration

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.