

First Steps

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique reference number	122618
Inspection date	20/08/2009
Inspector	Felicity Gaff
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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).

Description of the setting

First Steps Nursery is privately owned and opened in 2000. It operates from four rooms in a detached house in Merstham, Surrey. All children share access to a fully enclosed outdoor play area. The nursery is open each weekday from 8.00am to 6.00pm all year round. A maximum of 37 children in the early years age group may attend the nursery at any one time. There are currently 45 children attending who are all within the early years age group. The nursery provides funded early education for three- and four-year olds. The children are drawn from the surrounding urban and rural areas. The nursery supports children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and also supports children who speak English as an additional language. There are 11 members of staff who work directly with the children. Of these, seven hold appropriate early years qualifications and four are in training.

Overall effectiveness of the early years provision

Overall the quality of the provision is satisfactory. Children are cared for in secure premises and staff follow appropriate procedures to keep them safe and healthy. There are satisfactory arrangements to ensure each child can take part in all activities. The quality and standards of care and education vary across the setting. Staff do not use the available resources consistently well throughout the nursery. Consequently, not all children enjoy sufficiently challenging experiences to ensure they make good progress in all areas of learning. Systems for self-evaluation have identified weaknesses in some areas but staff have not yet taken effective steps to address them.

What steps need to be taken to improve provision further?

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

- develop the use of observations of children's interests and achievements to lead planning for the next steps in their learning, and maintain records that can be regularly shared with parents and with practitioners in other settings
- provide opportunities for children to explore and share their thoughts, ideas and feelings, for example, through a variety of art, music, movement, dance, imaginative and role-play activities, mathematics, and design and technology
- support children's knowledge and understanding of the world by offering opportunities for them to use tools safely, encounter creatures, people and objects in their natural environments and in real-life situations, undertake practical experiments, and work with a range of materials
- organise space and resources in the toddler room to ensure all children can benefit from a wide range of attractively presented and challenging play opportunities at all times
- ensure all staff have appropriate knowledge and skills to provide a stimulating, child-centred learning environment for all children
- improve the key person system to help children develop a genuine bond with

their key persons to help them become confident and feel safe within the nursery

- lead and encourage a culture of reflective practice, self-evaluation and informed discussion to identify the setting's strengths and priorities for development in order to improve the quality of provision for all children
- clarify the record of risk assessments to cover anything with which a child may come into contact and to show how identified risks are to be minimised
- ensure written policies and procedures reflect the requirements of the EYFS and are readily available to all staff and parents.

To fully meet the specific requirements of the EYFS, the registered person must:

- ensure that all managers and supervisors hold a full and relevant level three qualification and half of all other staff hold a full and relevant level two qualification (Suitable people) 18/09/2009
- implement a clear policy on administering medicines, to include obtaining prior written permission from parents for each and every medicine before any medication is given, and maintain accurate written records of all medicines administered to children. (Safeguarding and promoting children's welfare) 18/09/2009

The leadership and management of the early years provision

Leadership and management are effective in developing the quality of some aspects of the nursery. For example, improvements to the outdoor play space and the organisation of the preschool room enhance the learning environment enjoyed by children. However, this is not consistent throughout the nursery, which leads to differences in the quality of care and education that children receive. Although the required policies and procedures are in place, they are not readily accessible to either staff or parents. As a result, the procedure for the administration of medication is not implemented consistently, which breaches a specific legal requirement. This limits the ability of staff to ensure children only receive the medicines their parents wish them to have. Children are cared for in secure premises. Staff carry out basic risk assessments and take appropriate steps to minimise identified hazards. However, the records of the risk assessments lack sufficient detail to identify clearly hazards associated with anything with which a child may come in contact.

Appropriate systems are in place to safeguard children by ensuring staff are suitable to care for them and know how to protect them from harm or abuse. The registered person supports staff in improving their qualification levels. However, she does not ensure that inexperienced staff have the appropriate knowledge and skills to provide a stimulating, child-centred environment. She does not ensure that all managers or supervisors hold a full and relevant level three qualification, which is a breach of a specific legal requirement. This affects the quality of the service

staff are able to offer. The nursery provides an exceptionally unhurried settling-in time for new children. Parents are encouraged to share information about their children's care needs. Information about children's learning and development is exchanged informally, which limits the ability of staff to identify children's individual starting points and the way they learn. Parents receive information about the nursery through newsletters and a developing website. They can contribute suggestions for improvement because their views are sought through questionnaires.

The quality and standards of the early years provision

There are appropriate systems in place for observing and planning for children's individual learning journeys but staff do not yet use them effectively. They do not use systematic observations of what children do and achieve to assess their understanding and to plan for the next steps in their learning. Records do not clearly track individual children's progress, and are not completed for all children. Plans are brief and do not identify how activities will be adapted to meet the needs of children at different ages and stages of development. Children undertake a reasonable range of activities that are likely to promote all areas of learning. Older children confidently explain their own ideas to staff who listen with interest. They behave well and learn to share resources and resolve minor disagreements. They become interested in numbers and letters and some four-year-olds can spell their own names independently. Children have suitable opportunities to find out about other people's lives and learn to respect difference. Staff working with younger children help them understand how to behave by explaining how other people feel. Babies settle securely because they are cared for by a small team of staff, although the key person system is not used to minimise the number of carers for each child. Some staff do not consistently support children's language by providing good speech models. They ask questions without allowing time for children to respond, which limits children's opportunities to express their own feelings.

Many craft activities are adult-directed, allowing children little opportunity to explore and share their thoughts and ideas. For example, three- and four-year-old children assembled pictures of the houses of the Three Little Pigs by sticking materials selected by staff onto outlines designed and drawn by staff. They did not set and solve their own problems by, for instance, selecting their own materials to design and build houses, and devising a fair test to blow them down. Children enjoy adequate opportunities to explore some aspects of the natural world by direct first-hand experience. They plant and tend seeds, and explore a variety of malleable materials such as jelly, soil and dough. They develop their understanding of technology by using simple computer programs independently. They have few opportunities to encounter creatures, people and objects in their natural environments and in real-life situations because staff rarely organise outings. Children learn how to keep themselves healthy as they follow suitable personal hygiene routines. They are protected from infection because they are cared for in a suitably clean environment. Most of the procedures for managing sick or injured children are satisfactory. Children are well-nourished because they receive well-balanced, home-cooked food in accordance with their parents' wishes.

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?	3
How well does the provision promote inclusive practice?	3
The capacity of the provision to maintain continuous improvement.	3

Leadership and management

How effectively is provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage led and managed?	3
How effective is the setting's self-evaluation, including the steps taken to promote improvement?	3
How well does the setting work in partnership with parents and others?	3
How well are children safeguarded?	3

Quality and standards

How effectively are children in the Early Years Foundation Stage helped to learn and develop?	3
How effectively is the welfare of children in the Early Years Foundation Stage promoted?	3
How well are children helped to stay safe?	3
How well are children helped to be healthy?	3
How well are children helped to enjoy and achieve?	3
How well are children helped to make a positive contribution?	3
How well are children helped develop skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being?	3

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