

First Steps Nursery

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique reference number	EY101522
Inspection date	04/08/2009
Inspector	Barbara Christine Wearing / Wendy Brooks
Setting address	Robson Way, Lowton, Nr. Warrington, Cheshire, WA3 2RD
Telephone number	01942 678 803
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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 Day Nursery Ltd is one of two nurseries owned by private providers. It opened in 2002 and operates from eight rooms within a purpose-built building. All children have access to a fully enclosed outdoor play area. The nursery is situated in a residential area in the Lowton area of Warrington, Cheshire. It is open each weekday from 07.15 until 18.30 with the exception of public holidays.

A maximum of 226 children may attend the nursery at any one time. There are currently 219 children aged from birth to under five years on roll, some in part-time places. The nursery currently support a small number of children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The setting also offers care to children aged over five to 11 years. The setting is registered on the Early Years Register and the compulsory and voluntary parts of the Childcare Register.

There are 58 members of staff, 49 of whom hold appropriate early years qualifications to at least National Vocational Qualification (NVQ) level 2. Eight staff are currently working towards a nationally recognised qualification. The staff are managed by a team of four managers who all hold appropriate early years qualifications to at least NVQ level 4.

Overall effectiveness of the early years provision

Overall, the quality of the provision is satisfactory. Children are stimulated, busy and have great fun. They enjoy good relationships with staff who engage with them in their play and take some opportunities to present further challenges to them. However, organisation of some daily routines prevents children's needs being fully met at all times. Children therefore make steady progress towards the early learning goals. Some links have been made with other professionals in order to ensure that, in most cases, appropriate support is given to children with learning and/or physical disabilities. However, not all children receive sufficient support to enable them to be fully included in all activities within the nursery. Since the last inspection the setting has made improvements such as developing the outdoor play areas and has made changes in response to recommendations made at the previous inspection.

What steps need to be taken to improve provision further?

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

- review the organisation of the group rooms in order to limit the number of transitions for children within the nursery; further developing their sense of belonging and independence within a familiar group and situation
- provide further opportunities for children to develop their creativity and imaginations using a wide range of art materials and flexible, natural resources and develop staffs' skills in providing challenges to further promote children's learning across all areas

- devise further systems to monitor the effectiveness of the provision; involving staff and children in identifying areas for development that will have the most positive impact on children
- build further links with other EYFS settings and professionals to ensure that all children receive the support they need to be fully included within the setting
- review the use of traditional songs and rhymes to ensure that they do not re-enforce stereotypes, thereby, further developing children's understanding of their own and others cultures.

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

- review the organisation of the day (particularly sleep time) and implement effective systems to ensure that the individual needs of babies and young children are met, creating a 'homely' environment where they are cared for by familiar adults who know them well (organisation).

11/09/2009

The leadership and management of the early years provision

Children are safeguarded well as they are cared for by staff who have undergone a rigorous recruitment and selection procedure. Staff have a good knowledge of the nursery's comprehensive safeguarding children procedures and understand that protecting children is paramount. Comprehensive risk assessments are in place for all areas of the building and staff carry out regular checks, such as, ensuring the outdoor play area is free of hazards before the children go out to play. Children develop a good understanding of keeping themselves safe through general discussion, topics and visitors to the nursery including police and fire officers.

Some systems are in place, particularly with parents to ensure that their views and opinions are taken into account when making changes or developments within the nursery. Staff views are sought within staff meetings and annual appraisals and identify resources they require to develop the provision for children. The manager has completed a detailed self-evaluation that gives a comprehensive account of the nursery's policies and procedures and ensures that most requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) are met. Changes have been made in response to recommendations made at the previous inspection. Some of these have had a positive impact on children, such as, the development of children's assessment records. However, the self-evaluation process is not effective in monitoring how policies are implemented or the impact that changes have on children. Changes made to sleeping arrangements have resulted in children moving between rooms where their individual toileting needs are not met and where some staff caring for them do not know their names. Therefore, effective systems are not in place to ensure that the individual needs of all children are met. This is a breach of requirements.

Children build close relationships with their 'key person' in their group room, developing confidence and independence and seeking them out for comfort and reassurance. Children usually move through eight group rooms from the age of nought to when they leave for school. Systems are in place to assist children's transition between rooms and some children appear to do this with ease. However, others find it difficult to adjust to changes in staff and settings.

The nursery has developed good partnership with parents. A wealth of information is available to parents regarding the nursery's routines, policies and procedures, activities for the children and wider childcare topics. Regular, two-way sharing of information regarding the children ensures continuity is maintained and parents views are regularly sought and acted upon. Parent's feedback is positive and praises the approachable and friendly staff. Some effective links are in place with other EYFS settings that children move to, aiding the process of transition to school.

The quality and standards of the early years provision

Regular and effective observation, assessment and planning ensures that staff have an in-depth knowledge of their key children's stage of development, interests and learning styles. This knowledge is used effectively to identify next steps in children's learning and inform individualised planning. Staff regularly monitor the progress children make towards the early learning goals in all areas of learning.

The nursery is beautifully presented and offers children a superb range of manufactured toys and resources in bright and attractive indoor and outdoor environments. However, flexible, natural resources that encourage children to develop creativity and explore using their sense are limited. Children benefit greatly from free access to outdoor and indoor play areas and from many opportunities to initiate their own play. The majority of children, particularly the older children are stimulated and busy. They become independent learners who are able to follow their own learning styles and become engrossed in their play. Staff interact closely during play sessions to extend children's play and at times provide further challenges. When children enthusiastically choose different dressing up outfits in the role play area, staff suggest that they can extend their roles in other areas of the room, for example, children in builders outfits may like to build something in the construction area. Children generally play well together and develop good inter-personal skills. Older children wait for adults to finish talking to a group of children before asking for assistance with an activity. Staff are consistent and positive in their approach to behaviour management and sensitively support younger children in developing an understanding of appropriate behaviour.

The majority of children are confident in their communications with each other and known adults. During play sessions staff chat to children as they play; encouraging further conversation with older children and using positive body language and tone of voice to develop babies' communication skills. When babies sit together on the floor to play with adults they watch each other and listen and watch staff intently as they sing familiar action songs. Children squeal with delight and copy staff as they clap and cheer at the end of each of song. Evidence of children's developing

writing skills is on display and some children can recognise initial and last letters from their name. Some basic mark making resources are set out for children and although more resources are available in accessible storage containers children do not regularly access these to further develop their skills in this area.

Younger children and babies have opportunities to explore different malleable materials such as sand, water, play dough and paints. A group of young children repeatedly splash their hands in a shallow tray of water and bubbles, laughing excitedly and learning about cause and effect. Art work is on display but this is largely adult designed. Creative art materials such as paint and opportunities to design and make using a range of materials such as cartons, boxes and glue are not readily available. Therefore, there is little evidence of children's individual creative art skills. Staff take many opportunities to develop children's skills in matching and identifying colours and some opportunities to develop their understanding of number. Children enjoy singing number songs and are confident in counting the number of children and calculating how many will be left if 'one goes away'. A selection of toys and resources present positive images of diversity and enable children to learn about differences and similarities. However, staff sing some traditional songs with children that re-enforce stereotypes. Children learn about their local community as they make visits to a local elderly persons home and learn about the wider world through their involvement in raising money for a charity in Africa.

Children develop very good large physical skills as they access a wide range of outdoor equipment that allow them to develop skills in jumping, running, climbing, balancing and large muscle co-ordination. Their health needs are catered for as they enjoy nourishing, freshly prepared meals and snacks and have fresh drinking water available throughout the day. High levels of hygiene are maintained throughout the nursery and children have a good understanding of healthy living and personal hygiene routines. All necessary information is gathered and retained to ensure that children's health and dietary needs are catered for. Clear procedures are in place for the administration of medication.

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?	2
How well are children safeguarded?	2

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?	2
How well are children helped to be healthy?	2
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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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