



First Footsteps Ltd

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	EY227324
Inspection date	26 September 2005
Inspector	Barbara Redmond
Setting Address	17 Oakfield, Anfield, Liverpool, Merseyside, L4 2QH
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Registered person	First Footsteps Ltd
Type of inspection	Integrated
Type of care	Full day 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 inadequate - notice of action to improve.

WHAT SORT OF SETTING IS IT?

First Footsteps Nursery is one of five nurseries run by the First Footsteps Ltd company. It opened in 2002 and operates from four playrooms and associated facilities in a converted house. It is situated in the Anfield district of Liverpool. There is a walled hard surface outside play area. A maximum of 43 children may attend the nursery at any one time. The nursery is open each weekday from 07.30 to 18.00 all

year round.

There are currently 51 children on roll. Of these, five receive funding for nursery education. The nursery supports children with special educational needs.

The nursery employs twelve staff. Ten staff, including the manager, hold appropriate early years qualifications and one person is working towards a Level II child care qualification.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is satisfactory.

Appropriate hygiene routines are implemented to minimise the risk of infection for children. For example, staff clean all areas using appropriate procedures such as using anti-bacterial spray. They encourage hygiene routines for children encouraging hand washing so limiting the risk of infection. Cleaning rotas are in place ensuring that a suitably clean environment is maintained for children.

Children on medication are safeguarded because appropriate documentation is maintained. These documents are signed by staff and parents to ensure suitable care is provided for children.

Children have access to water some of the time as water bottles are in use to prevent them becoming dehydrated. However, water bottles are not consistently provided every day and repeated use of the same bottles poses some risk of infection for children.

Menus consist of a mixture of fresh and processed foods, which meet the nutritional needs of the children. Staff increase children's awareness health issues for children when they comment on the effects of fizzy drinks on children's teeth and engage children in an activity that increases their awareness of the value of fruit in a healthy diet.

Opportunities for children to develop physical skills are limited. The hard surface outdoor play area is small and there the absence of climbing equipment means that children cannot practice their climbing and balancing skills. Children are not allowed to run or use wheeled toys if the ground is wet, which restricts their enjoyment of outdoor play.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is satisfactory.

The large brightly decorated rooms provide a suitable space for children's care and play needs. However, some areas are in need of repair including painted windows in the baby room and an area of plaster at child height in the room for one to two year

olds. The outdoor play area is dark and uninspiring for children, although an attempt has been made to improve the area by painting two of the walls.

Most areas have sufficient furniture in good repair to meet children's care and play needs. However, in the room for one to two year olds only one play table was available for a session using jigsaws. The restricted space detracts from the experience for children who struggle to get their puzzles on the table.

The baby room is well resourced with manufactured toys and equipment that meet the needs of the children. However, resources in the pre-school room are more limited. The role play area has limited resources. Dressing up items are old, faded and few in number so do not enhance children's learning and play experiences. Although resources are stored at child height children do not attempt to access resources independently as adults are responsible for this selection. Therefore, children's independence and personal preferences are not always facilitated.

All children sleep at the same time in the nursery. Suitable equipment is provided for sleeping children, who are supervised at all times to ensure their safety. Many features such as safety gates and fire equipment are in place to protect children. Regular practices of the evacuation procedure ensure that staff and children know what to do in case of fire. Risk assessments ensure the ongoing safety of the premises for children.

Children are protected at the setting as staff are aware of the correct procedure to follow if they have concerns about a child and the named person for child protection has had appropriate training.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is satisfactory.

Babies make some progress as they access a range of toys that encourage their development in all areas. However, staff do not plan activities to ensure a balanced range of activities that meet the children's individual needs. Staff record milestones in the development of the babies but this does not influence the planning of activities. Younger children benefit from positive interactions with staff who speak to them in warm comforting tones and give children cuddles and praise. A stimulating environment is provided for babies with bright displays and background music for further sensory development. Planning in all rooms is limited to a basic routine. Activities are linked to a topic but are not structured to ensure children are making progress in all areas of their development.

Children throughout the nursery have limited opportunities to express themselves creatively. All images are drawn by staff and children apply paint or collage materials. Therefore, children do not benefit from seeing their own creations displayed so that they can develop a sense of pride and achievement. Independence skills are not always fostered as most activities are selected by staff. For example, in the toddler room staff put out one activity such as jigsaws or musical toys and all children play with them providing very limited experiences for children.

Nursery education

The quality of teaching and learning is inadequate. Children make limited progress as staff have an insecure knowledge of the Foundation Stage curriculum. Planning is not developed to ensure that children make progress according to their individual needs. Although children know their colours and shapes they continue to carry out unchallenging and repetitive activities because that is the topic. Children conform with little interest. Although some learning objectives are identified such as cutting out with scissors these are not fulfilled because children do not use scissors during the activity.

Children's experiences are limited by adults taking too much control during activities. When cooking children are invited to stir a mixture, attempt to roll dough and sieve flour but the adult holds the equipment as well as the child, doing most of the work herself.

Children do not have their language and literacy skills enhanced sufficiently. Books are stored out of reach of children limiting opportunities for them to develop an interest in literacy. A writing area is available but writing materials are limited to plain paper and many of the mark making tools are broken. There are no writing materials anywhere else such as in the role play area to encourage emergent writers during play. Story telling experiences provide insufficient challenges for children. Staff do not encourage children to recall events or contribute ideas. Only closed questions are asked, which do not encourage thinking skills and language development for children.

Children have some understanding of colour, number and shape. However, children do not have the opportunity to extend their learning according to their ability as concepts they have already grasped are repeated over and over again. Children have some understanding of solid shapes but as these are only presented in picture form their understanding of three dimensional shapes is limited. Children do not have many opportunities to develop their problem solving skills. Although they chant numbers and number rhymes they do not develop an understanding of numbers, adding and subtracting in practical play situations.

Staff miss opportunities to help children develop an understanding of the world around them. For example, children begin to pick up leaves outside. They walk around with them but no adult asks them why leaves might be falling from the trees. Nor do they discuss the variety of colours and textures that the leaves present. Large motor skill development is not fostered for children as there is no climbing equipment available to practise their climbing and balancing and if the ground is wet outside they are not allowed to run, or use wheeled toys.

Children have access to paint and collage materials although the paper used for painting is small and limits children's ability to express themselves. All creative work in displays and in the children's records consists of images drawn by staff to which children then apply either paint or collage materials. This severely limits children's development of their own creative ideas. The role play provision is uninspiring and not an environment where children would be encouraged to express themselves imaginatively.

There are significant differences in the quality of experience of those under three and that of other children.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is satisfactory.

Most of the needs of individual children are met. Information is gathered on admission forms so that children receive appropriate care. Children are provided with cups with and without lids, appropriate for their age. There are some resources relating to diversity of culture and religion including books, dolls and jigsaws. However, resources showing positive images of disability are limited. Children have few experiences that help them develop a positive attitude to diversity. Occasional isolated events such as activities based on Chinese New Year are insufficient to increase children's knowledge and understanding of the wider community. Overall the social, moral, spiritual and cultural development of children is not fostered.

Children with additional needs receive appropriate support at the nursery. Routines such as nappy changing are adapted to ensure that individual needs are met. Staff demonstrate a good understanding of care needs for children.

There is a behaviour management policy in place. Staff employ some strategies to help children behave well. Some children are praised for sitting nicely and a child is encouraged to say sorry to a child that is hurt. However, some negative strategies are used such as threats, for example, saying children will stay in if they don't sit still. This reflects the behaviour management policy, where the focus is on controlling behaviour rather than using positive behaviour management strategies.

There are effective systems in place for the exchange of information. Parents fill in admission forms that contain appropriate information including health and dietary information, so consistency of care is provided. Appropriate permissions are sought from parents such as permission to seek emergency treatment so children are cared for according to parents wishes. A parent pack is given to parents when the child starts to ensure they know about the nursery. They also receive newsletters to provide them with current information. Parents are also invited to open weeks twice a year when they can discuss their child's progress. However, as staff have poor knowledge of the Foundation Stage curriculum this limits their ability to discuss children's progress and involve parents in their individual child's development. Staff take time to speak to parents about the child's day when they arrive at the nursery so children see them in positive relationships, fostering a feeling of security. Overall the partnership with parents is satisfactory.

Organisation

The organisation is satisfactory.

Detailed staff records are maintained and the necessary checks are made to ensure that children do not come into contact with unsuitable adults. Adult to child ratios are maintained at the required level and staff are suitably qualified so that children

receive appropriate supervision. Staff receive some training such as first aid. However, some staff who have been in post for several years have not accessed any training other than first aid so do not increase their awareness of good practice in caring for children.

Staff maintain appropriate children's records including medical information so that care is suitable for children. A registration system is in place showing times when children and staff are present. An operational plan is also in place containing relevant documentation. Management ensure children's interests are protected after they leave the setting as documents are retained for an appropriate length of time after the child has left the nursery. Documents are stored in a locked cabinet in the office to maintain confidentiality for children and their families.

Overall the care provided meets the needs of the children who attend.

Overall quality of leadership and management is inadequate. Training for staff is not sufficient to ensure they have a sound knowledge of good child care practice. Appropriate policies and procedures work in practice to keep children healthy and safeguard their welfare. However, the lack of clear direction and systematic monitoring of teaching and learning means gaps in children's learning continue unnoticed. Steps have not been taken to ensure that staff have the necessary knowledge and understanding of the Foundation Stage curriculum to plan effectively and enable individual children to make progress along the Stepping Stones towards the Early Learning Goals.

Improvements since the last inspection

At the last inspection the provider was asked to improve documentation including the system for appointing new staff and seeking parental permission for emergency treatment. The system has now been updated to ensure that checks, such as references, are undertaken so children only have contact with suitable adults. Written parental permission is obtained to seek treatment for children in emergency situations.

The provider was also asked to improve the sleeping arrangements for children under two years of age and make the lunch times for children over three years of age more sociable. These requirements have now been met as children are provided with suitable sleeping equipment. Staff now sit with children at lunchtime, talking to them and providing assistance when necessary.

Complaints since the last inspection

There are no complaints to report.

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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):

- ensure that all areas are maintained in a suitable state of repair and decoration
- make drinking water consistently available to children at all times in a way that does not pose a risk to their health
- ensure that the behaviour management policy includes positive strategies for managing behaviour so that staff implement techniques that promote the welfare and development of children.

The quality and standards of the nursery education

To improve the quality and standards of nursery education, the registered person **must** take the following actions:

- develop a sound knowledge of the Foundation Stage Curriculum to ensure that children are encouraged to make progress according to their individual needs through planned, practical and stimulating play experiences
- provide stimulating outdoor play experiences that help children develop their climbing and balancing skills and increase their knowledge and understanding of the world around them through investigation and exploring
- ensure that creative play experiences provide children with opportunities to express their own creative ideas freely using a range of resources and materials
- make an interesting range of books available to children at all times to promote their interest in illustrations and the written word.

These actions are set out in a **notice of action to improve** and must be completed by the date specified in the notice.

The Department for Education and Skills and the local authority have been informed.

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the leaflet *Building better childcare: Compliments and concerns about inspectors' judgements* which is available from Ofsted's website:

