

# First Steps @ Roko

Inspection report for early years provision

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**Inspection date** 15/04/2010  
**Inspector** Anne Gunston

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**Type of setting** Childcare on non-domestic premises

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## 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.

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## Description of the setting

First Steps @ Roko registered in 2007 and operates from the Roko Health and Fitness premises in the Copnor area of Portsmouth. It is registered on the Early Years Register and both compulsory and voluntary parts of the Childcare Register to care for a maximum of 62 children, of whom 33 may be in the early years age group and nine of these may be under two years at any one time. Currently there are 40 children in the early years age range on roll.

The nursery is open for sessional and full day care Monday to Friday 8.00am until 6.00pm all year, apart from bank holidays and a week at Christmas. It is in receipt of funding for provision of early education and currently supports children with special educational needs and/or disabilities.

The crèche is available on a sessional basis and provides two sessions each morning and afternoon; these children are cared for within the nursery.

The play scheme is open during all school holidays from 8.30am until 5.30 pm, providing care for children in the later years' age range; children use a variety of facilities within the centre and its grounds.

A team of eight staff work with the children, seven of whom hold relevant childcare qualifications; one member of staff is currently on training.

## The overall effectiveness of the early years provision

Overall the quality of the provision is outstanding.

The nursery have extremely positive and open relationships with parents of children who attend and are establishing systems to work in partnership with other providers of the Early Years Foundation Stage. This ensures that children receive high quality, consistent care and make exceptional progress in their learning and development. The nursery is a welcoming, inclusive environment where monitoring and evaluation is an ongoing process for the owners and staff. All show commitment to the children and recognise each child's unique characteristics. There is a true willingness to continually improve the standards of care and education on offer.

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

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

- developing the secure outdoor space to encourage children to use this spontaneously throughout the day
- reviewing the existing contingency arrangements to ensure staff emergencies or absences do not disrupt the consistency of care for children.

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

Children are protected at all times because the staff implement the policies of the nursery in full. Everyone who works with children has a very secure understanding of the safeguarding policy and are able to recognise signs, which may indicate that children are at risk. This policy includes how allegations against staff are dealt with. Staff recognise their responsibility to take action and monitor their own practice; if necessary, they would implement the 'whistle blowing' procedures. The staff team are consistent and deployed well to supervise and protect children throughout the day. The compact nature of the nursery enables staff to move to wherever they are needed, to assist colleagues and meet children's individual need for attention. There is good communication between staff members and ratios are maintained at all times, sometimes by staff foregoing their breaks. There is the potential for emergencies, such as more than one staff member taking unplanned absence, to impact on the consistency and quantity of staff available to work with children. This is particularly relevant when the holiday play scheme is operating and staff from the nursery organise activities and work with the older children. All staff maintain a very safe environment. They complete visual risk assessments each day and adapt to the children's developing independence, ensuring children are never at risk of harm. There are effective recruitment and induction systems that ensure everyone who works with the children is knowledgeable, appropriately vetted and able to keep children safe on a daily basis. For example, staff must agree not to use a mobile phone or personal camera while caring for children; they are expected to maintain confidentiality by agreeing not to share any information they have on children or parents on social networking sites.

The owners recognise the nursery manager's skills and expertise. She values the autonomy they allow her for the operation of the nursery and passes on her enthusiasm for its success to the staff team. All members of the team share her aspirations for the nursery and work hard to achieve these. The staff are always willing to attend training to enhance their knowledge for the benefit of the children. The manager is not complacent and maintains records of staff training needs. She identifies these at the annual appraisal and by monitoring staff performance, which she is able to do this as she works directly with staff and children each day. The manager's aim is to build on the good practice that exists in the nursery and enhance the skills of her staff team. She appreciates the input of staff into the evaluation process; by working together the self-monitoring systems are an accurate and insightful assessment of the strengths of the nursery and where improvements can be made. The manager and staff take swift action and have implemented many of their plans within a short period. For example, individual education plans are now in place for children who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. The staff team have introduced specific activities to involve and widen the experiences that boys enjoy through their play. They recognise that sometimes boys do not take advantage of all the learning opportunities that are on offer. Children are the real benefactors of the commitment the manager and staff show.

Children enjoy a really well equipped learning environment, which staff manage to good effect. At times, they divide the space with low level colourful gates and make flexible use of the available space. For example, they use low tables for meal times or messy play; they arrange designated areas as the art corner, writing space and a drinking station. All areas are full of resources that benefit the children and these are stored within easy reach, unless safety is an issue. Babies are able to rest comfortably on low beanbags or scramble into the comfortable armchair. If they prefer they can enjoy longer periods of rest in a quiet darkened room in cots or a pushchair. Older children see their work displayed around room so they can be proud of their achievements.

The nursery staff and parents communicate very well. There is friendly discussion as children arrive and leave and written communication, such as newsletters and sharing of policies. The parents receive daily sheets, which inform them of issues relating to children's welfare. They are invited to attend twice-yearly parents' evenings, to see a folder of their child's work and add their views to the record of achievement. Staff prepare a short report for parents at this time, giving an overview of children's progress towards each of the six early learning goals. Parents are asked to comment on and influence the practice at the nursery. Staff send out questionnaires regularly. These often focus on specific topics, such as communication, to encourage parents to offer detailed and relevant opinions. Parents state they value the information on the website, detailing the week's activities. They appreciate being asked to comment on the qualities of individual staff and often nominate those who they feel are the nursery's best feature. The nursery recognise the need to work together with anyone involved in a child's life; they are making attempts to establish this with other providers of early years care and education.

## **The quality and standards of the early years provision and outcomes for children**

Children make very good progress in the nursery and thoroughly enjoy learning as they play. They work in an independent and confident manner, frequently telling staff what they wish them to do. For example, children give staff specific instructions on how their name is spelt, listing the letters in correct order. Their communication skills are well established. They talk to staff about shopping expeditions with family and detail the things they bought. Children are not intimidated by visitors to the nursery and soon ask the purpose of the visit. They are curious and inquisitive individuals who question anything they are unsure of. Children really enjoy imaginative play and this forms a considerable part of their day. This time is a valuable learning experience and staff are always on hand, willing to become involved and extending children's understanding. For example, children show their knowledge of everyday life, such as combing and styling a member of staff's hair; they make decisions about using straightening tools and firmly instruct staff not to meddle with the finished style. Children are clearly familiar with the use of everyday equipment. If the correct tool, such as a telephone, is not available they think the problem through making innovative use of alternatives; they use construction toys as a telephone to ring the repairperson because the television is broken. They make good use of books in their role-play,

which are clearly a constant and enjoyable resource for the children. Children will 'read' stories to their friends and tell others to 'shush' because someone is trying to sleep. Children listen attentively to stories that staff read because this is done in a quiet but imaginative way. Staff take their time and give children a chance to think about and become engrossed in the story. The staff are always positive and actively encourage children to make decisions. If children are unsure staff will list the options available to them, they recognise that children often wish to just stand and observe. The staff support children's choices, intervening or providing resources as children need them. They manage the differing needs of children's various ages very well. They ably support toddlers who are clambering through a tunnel, whilst gaining the attention of a younger baby with a cuddly toy or rattle. Staff include and involve all children, by sitting at floor level and ensuring they are close to the children at all times.

Children are extremely secure and demonstrate a great deal of trust in the staff team. They have their 'favourites' who are often not those designated as the key person. The staff accommodate children's wishes, as they know that children need reassurance and attention from someone who is important to them. Babies turn to staff for a cuddle and older children often spontaneously run up to a member of staff to lean against her, affectionate relationships exist between the staff and children. The children are learning to think about safety as they move around the nursery. Staff remind them to sit correctly on chairs but do not inhibit children's wish to test out their abilities. For example, they allow toddlers to take safe chances in the ball pool. They confidently stand on the edge and fall into the balls, watched closely by staff to ensure no one else is in the way. The staff team take many precautions to maintain a safe and secure environment, such as fitting two bolts to internal gates when realising that children had discovered how to open just one. They maintain an extremely clean and safe environment, where no shoes are allowed; children know what is expected of them and leave their Wellington boots or shoes by the back door. Children are learning to think about hygiene and the importance of caring for their bodies. The staff team consistently promote this and ensure that children have easy access to the resources they need. Children hold out their hands for antibacterial gel after seeking out a tissue to wipe their own nose. Staff frequently refer to how exercise or too much clothing can make bodies hot, so children recognise when they need a cooling drink and help themselves to this. Children enjoy sociable mealtimes. They can choose the hot meal provided by nursery or have their own packed lunch and items sent in by parents. Staff are sensitive to children who wish to attempt feeding themselves. They reassure children that they will not take over unnecessarily, so children persist and try to be as independent as possible. The staff team meet the needs of all children and stick to the parents' routine wherever possible. The youngest babies are fed in a comfortable manner, held closely by staff. The environment is always warm and relaxing, where young children can toddle or crawl around in nappies and T-shirts. Children are cuddled or rocked to sleep if this is what they need, as staff have in-depth knowledge of each child's needs and adapt their practice to accommodate these.

Children have daily opportunities for exercise, such as climbing and tunnelling indoors. They often go to the field adjoining the centre for fresh air, or to look for natural materials for craft activities. The nursery garden is a secure environment

that children enjoy, although they rarely use this spontaneously in their play. Staff plan for its use, such as purchase of plants, but children need persuasion before taking up this opportunity. Children take part in community activities, such as the Toddle Waddle or a trip to the local shop to buying ingredients for their snack. They are developing many important skills for the future and show care and thought for their surroundings or people they meet. Children sometimes use an egg timer, as they know that everyone has to have equal time on the computer. They happily take part in packing toys away and receive praise and reward, such as sticker, from staff for doing so. Children play a full and active part in the nursery routine, such as hanging up their own painting apron and removing photographs from the attendance board when someone has not arrived. The staff team provide children with many opportunities to learn about cultures or traditions other than their own. The children take part in rice and lantern festivals, celebrate American thanksgiving and benefit from use of an excellent range of role-play resources. The nursery environment is truly representative of all children who attend, and provides children with insight into the wider world.



## 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*

### The overall effectiveness of the early years provision

<b>How well does the setting meet the needs of the children in the Early Years Foundation Stage?</b>	1
The capacity of the provision to maintain continuous improvement	1

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

<b>How effectively is the Early Years Foundation Stage led and managed?</b>	1
The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	1
The effectiveness with which the setting deploys resources	2
The effectiveness with which the setting promotes equality and diversity	1
The effectiveness of safeguarding	1
The effectiveness of the setting's self-evaluation, including the steps taken to promote improvement	1
The effectiveness of partnerships	2
The effectiveness of the setting's engagement with parents and carers	1

### The quality of the provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage

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### Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage

<b>Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage</b>	1
The extent to which children achieve and enjoy their learning	1
The extent to which children feel safe	1
The extent to which children adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which children make a positive contribution	1
The extent to which children develop skills for the future	2

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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