

# First Steps Playgroup

Inspection report for early years provision

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<b>Unique reference number</b>	402222
<b>Inspection date</b>	02/07/2010
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<b>Type of setting</b>	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*.

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## Description of the setting

First Steps playgroup opened in 1999. It operates from a classroom within Potter Street Primary School, Harlow. The group also has the use of a small adjoining quiet area, toilets and kitchen. There is an enclosed outdoor area adjacent to the classroom, and the group also share usage of the main school playground, hall and library. The playgroup serves the local and wider area.

The playgroup is registered to provide care for no more than 25 children from two years to under five years at any one time. There are currently 70 children on roll. Children attend a variety of sessions. The setting supports a small number of children who have special educational needs. There are also a few children attending who have English as an additional language.

The playgroup opens five days a week during school term-times. Sessions run from 9.00am until 11.45am and 12.30pm to 3.00pm.

There are four full-time members of staff working with the children and two part-time members, plus two who support individual children. Over half the staff have early years qualifications to National Vocational Qualification Level 2 or 3. Two members of staff are currently working towards a recognised early years qualification.

The setting receives support from the local authority and the Pre-School Learning Alliance (PSLA). It has close links with the adjoining primary school.

## The overall effectiveness of the early years provision

Overall the quality of the provision is good.

First Steps Playgroup is a good setting where all children, including those who have special educational needs and those who are learning English as an additional language, make good progress. The manager and her team are very experienced and well qualified. They frequently evaluate how the playgroup runs and the opportunities they provide for the children so that they can identify and implement improvements. They develop their skills through regular and broadly based training which has a good impact on what is provided for the children. As a result the playgroup has a good capacity to improve.

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

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

- ensure that all staff have an up to date understanding of safeguarding issues and that staff understand the need to maintain privacy with regards to accident books
- ensure that the children are making consistently good progress in all areas of

- their learning by monitoring their progress more regularly
- involve parents in evaluating the provision and policies by seeking their views more regularly.

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

The manager and her staff have rigorous procedures in place to ensure that the children are safe at all times. All staff are vetted appropriately, visitors sign in and are introduced to the children. Gates are kept closed and when the children need to enter the school building adults always accompany them. The premises are checked before each session and more thorough risk assessments are carried out regularly so that any hazard which might cause an accident is identified. If children need to be given medicine or if they have an accident the playgroup has good procedures for obtaining parents' permission and providing them with details in writing so that they are fully aware of what has happened. The staff have first aid qualifications and understand hygienic food handling. They can refer easily to information about children who may have food allergies. The manager keeps very good records of the times when children have an accident, although, these are not confidential. One staff member has not updated her safeguarding training recently, although, other staff have done this training. The manager and her team evaluate the playgroup very thoroughly and systematically. They have an action plan for making improvements and they monitor the impact of these changes.

The playgroup has improved since the last inspection, for example, staff now work excellently with parents and in response to their suggestions the staff have planned regular meetings with them. The outdoor area has been developed considerably and now provides a very wide range of learning opportunities for the children in all weathers despite the fact that it is limited in size. When children start attending the playgroup the manager asks parents for very detailed information so that she starts to know each child well and can provide the activities they will enjoy most. This helps the children settle very easily. The playgroup staff have very good links with the primary school and they share playground areas well. The manager helps the children to adjust to moving on to primary school by taking them to special events in the school and visiting the reception class.

The playgroup works exceptionally closely with parents who are confident that their children are always safe and well cared for, and feel they make very good progress. They feel they are well prepared for moving to primary school because they learn to write their names and recognise sounds. Parents have access to plenty of useful information about what is going on and about the activities their children enjoy. They can see photos taken while children are learning new skills and enjoying different experiences, and also adults' observations. Parents often borrow resources so that they can be more involved in their children's learning at home, and the manager shows them what they can do to help their children further. Children take turns to take Fudge, the toy bear, home and their parents write about his adventures with their children. The children develop good speaking skills and greater confidence by telling their friends at playgroup what Fudge has

been doing with them. These strategies help parents to extend their children's learning at home and to understand the progress they are making. Parents also receive monthly newsletters and information about other services they may find useful. The manager values parents' views and suggestions, and she carries out regular surveys. Parents can easily talk to the staff informally, for example, at collection times they can raise a concern, ask for reassurance or tell the staff about what the children have achieved at home. Parents really value this contact, and also appreciate reminders, such as the need to put sun cream on their children in hot weather.

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

The children make good progress because the adults observe them closely while they are playing and know what opportunities they need next in order to make further progress. The setting's self-evaluation systems are good, but the setting should involve parents in evaluating the provision and policies by seeking their views more regularly. The staff know the children well and track their progress carefully, identifying areas where they are making less progress and areas where more support should be provided. The adults know what they hope individual children will learn from the activities they provide. They understand well the ways in which different groups of children learn in different ways. However, the staff do not have a system for tracking the ongoing progress of groups of children or for comparing what progress children make in each area of learning to show that they know they are providing equally good opportunities for the children in all areas of their learning.

The children are given a very wide choice of activities and can play indoors or outside. They choose what they would like to learn about, for example, they are interested in mini beasts, so they look for them outdoors using magnifying glasses and they identify them by matching them to pictures. They have watched caterpillars turn into butterflies. They learn about plants by growing a range of vegetables, and they take some home so that they can involve their parents in this activity. Adults question the children well, for example, when they were building a tower of bricks they had to decide how many more bricks they needed until the tower was as tall as themselves.

The resources available at the setting are excellent. Children learn to become very independent by finding the toys they want to play with, which are well labelled and easy to reach, and by putting them away afterwards. They find their coat pegs by recognising their name labels. They choose from a very wide range of resources, such as dressing up clothes, creative tasks, puzzles and construction kits, a garage and a farmyard. They learn about shapes, for example, by making a beehive of hexagons. They talk about opposites and learn about different patterns, for example, by looking at the soles of their shoes. The adults are very good role models and speak positively to the children, encouraging them to solve problems and to develop new skills. The adults give the children stickers for special efforts and the children have drawn up their own rules. Adults use every opportunity to extend learning, for example, by talking about numbers of children when they take

the register. The children enjoy looking at books and learn to listen to one another. During circle times they listen to the child who is holding 'Toffee' the toy dog. The children play very well together, sharing toys and persevering with puzzles and creative tasks. The children help one another and they behave very well. They are confident speakers and enjoy talking to visitors. They stop and listen as soon as they are asked. The staff are well trained in ways to support children with special educational needs so that they make good progress.

The children understand diversity by learning about different places, customs and celebrations. For example, at Diwali they made Rangoli patterns and they could paint Mendhi patterns on their hands, and at Chinese New Year they made dragons and learnt to use chopsticks. The children play with multicultural dolls, puzzles, toys and books. The staff plan exciting activities for the children which develop their understanding of new vocabulary and concepts. Visitors often come in to talk to the children and broaden their understanding, these include the school nurse. The children can talk about the importance of a healthy lifestyle because they eat healthy snacks and they know when and why they wash their hands. They understand why they need to wear sun hats and cream when they play outside and feel extremely safe within the setting. The excellent skills children learn at the playgroup stand them in very good stead for their future learning.

## 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>	2
The capacity of the provision to maintain continuous improvement	2

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

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

The quality of the provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
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### Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage

<b>Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage</b>	2
The extent to which children achieve and enjoy their learning	2
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	2
The extent to which children develop skills for the future	1

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