



First Steps Childcare Club

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number EY273510
Inspection date 02 February 2006
Inspector Jenny Kane

Setting Address Palmarsh Primary School, St. Georges Place, Hythe, Kent, CT21 6NE
Telephone number 01303 239118
E-mail firststepshythe@aol.com
Registered person Rebecca Sheepwash
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 satisfactory.

WHAT SORT OF SETTING IS IT?

First Steps Childcare Club registered in 2003. It operates from a purpose built, detached building in the grounds of Palmarsh School in Hythe. There is access to a secure enclosed garden area and shared use of the school playground and field.

A maximum of 30 children may attend at any one time. The nursery is open Monday to Friday from 09:00 to 15:00 term time only. Children attend for a variety of sessions. The group serves the local and surrounding area.

There are currently 24 children on role aged from 2 to 5 years. This includes 15 funded children. The group supports children with special needs and those who speak English as an additional language.

The three permanent members of staff hold appropriate early years childcare qualifications. In addition, two volunteer members of staff are working towards a qualification.

The group receives support from the Local Authority, The Pre-school Learning Alliance, and has close links with the nearby school.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is satisfactory.

Children are cared for in a clean environment where staff are aware of preventing cross-infection. Children are independent when using the bathroom, and wash their hands after using the toilet, messy activities and before eating.

Those children who stay for extended day bring a packed lunch with them and parents are encouraged to provide nutritious food. They enjoy healthy snacks and know that fruit and vegetables are good for them. Children recently took part in a healthy eating project, which helped to develop good eating habits. However, children sit too long at snack times, do not pour their own drinks or help to prepare their own food.

Children take part in physical activities on a daily basis. They use the nursery garden in good weather and go for walks around the school grounds. Children dress in warm clothing and enjoy riding bikes in the school playground. They move about confidently taking notice of where other children are.

There is a range of physical play equipment available but the limited space indoors currently means it is not fully used. Children respond enthusiastically during action songs and move about having fun making animal noises. Their fine motor skills are developing well by using a range of small tools, brushes, pencils and scissors during activities.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is satisfactory.

Children play in welcoming and child-friendly premises where there are displays of work and posters on the walls. There is a good amount of space for activities but staff do not use it to its full potential, consequently children do not move about freely. At times, the building is cold and the door to the kitchen area is not secure. These areas need attention.

Security is good, emergency procedures are in place and parents sign their children in and out in the register. The premises are user-friendly with good facilities suitable for children with special needs or a disability.

There are good procedures in place to keep children safe from harm. The manager ensures that procedures are up to date and that staff understand their responsibilities regarding child protection issues.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is satisfactory.

Children arrive happily and settle quickly. Staff are welcoming, friendly and sensitive to individual children's needs. Children have access to a good range of toys and resources, which are suitable for their age and stage of development. They use the equipment well, sharing and co-operating. However, due to the way the toys are stored there is little opportunity for children to self-select and make choices about what they play with.

Children enjoy using the sand tray where they talk and laugh during play. The book corner is comfortable and has books well displayed. Children make good use of this area for a variety of individual and group activities. Younger children like using the action song cards and singing songs; for example, 'the wheels on the bus.' Children use the role-play area, which during the inspection was a hospital.

An area that is particularly popular is the computer. Children are competent, choose from the programmes, show good mouse control and ask staff for help if needed.

The routine is inflexible and very busy. Consequently, at times, children do not have sufficient time to become fully involved in activities before they regroup.

Nursery Education

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. Children are making generally good progress across the six areas of learning. Staff have a sound knowledge of the Foundation Stage and are developing the planning to ensure children receive a range of activities. They observe children during activities and use their notes to assess their achievements. However, during some activities staff miss the opportunity to extend children's learning further.

Children are developing good relationships with adults and peers. They share and wait turns during play. Children show independence regarding personal self-care, but there are limited opportunities for selecting resources and being involved in deciding about activities.

Children speak confidently, talking about themselves and things that happen at home. They listen reasonably well during story time. Staff use questioning to encourage communication but often do not explain to children what they are planning to do next. Labelled areas, name cards and writing area helps children's language and literacy.

Children discuss number, shape and size through daily activities and routines such as; snack time and register. They enjoy using Information Technology (IT) programmes where they learn the concept of simple addition and subtraction.

Children enjoy experimenting with colour, feel and texture during sand, painting and play dough activities. They describe their experiences when making dough using words like "sticky" and "squigy". Displays of art and collage work are displayed which gives children a sense of achievement.

Information about the Foundation Stage curriculum and the six areas of learning is available but not always well received by parents. The manager is keen to share her knowledge and to involve parents further with their children's education and learning.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is satisfactory.

Staff are experienced, qualified and committed to a policy of inclusion. Children have individual play plans and their key workers use assessment records to ensure each child receives appropriate care. However, some younger, less able children frequently disrupt the group, which affects other children's play and learning. Staff greet children by name on arrival, which makes them feel valued. Children use basic maketon signing during register to say "good morning".

Children participate in activities, which help them to learn about their own and other cultures. They use resources reflecting diversity; for example, jigsaws, books and dolls. Children develop an interest in the world around them through walks in the school grounds where they look at birds and wildlife and during projects on 'where we live'. The nursery fosters children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

The behaviour management policy is shared with parents and staff give regular feedback regarding incidents of unwanted behaviour to ensure continuity of care. Children's behaviour is generally good. They know the nursery rules, which they repeat during register time. At times, the children do not understand the reason for activities stopping suddenly during play and do not receive explanation about what they are going to do next. Staff's noisy enthusiasm prevents children developing their own voice.

Partnership with parents and carers is satisfactory. Staff are friendly and approachable and welcome parents into the nursery at any time. Parents have the opportunity to talk to other parents and look at information on the notice boards in the lobby. There are daily discussions about the children's progress and achievements. Parents appreciate the contact books, which allow the sharing of useful information about the children's care.

Organisation

The organisation is satisfactory.

Children benefit from high staff ratios and staff who work together as a team.

Children enjoy activities in small groups and flourish when members of staff work with them individually. However, the organisation of the daily routine is too rigid and as a result children sometimes do not have enough time to finish activities.

The written policies and procedures are of a good standard, shared openly with parents and regularly reviewed and updated. All mandatory documentation is in place, maintained correctly and kept securely. Regular discussion and sharing of records with parents helps to promote the children's welfare.

Staff continue to improve their practice through attending training, staff meetings and discussion. Certificates of qualification displayed in the lobby along with other information about childcare keep parents well informed. However, staff need the opportunity to discuss areas for self-development during individual supervision sessions.

Leadership and management are satisfactory. The owner takes an active role in managing the nursery and has a good relationship with her staff. As a team, they are beginning to identify their strengths and areas for improvement. The manager recognises the importance of monitoring and evaluating the curriculum to promote the children's care and learning.

The setting meets the needs of the range of children for whom it provides.

Improvements since the last inspection

Since the last inspection, the nursery has begun to work on several recommendations, which they have made generally good progress in implementing.

All record keeping is now in order and stored securely in the office. Fire drills take place frequently with dates and times recorded. Children's assessment records are now ongoing and updated regularly by key workers. However, there is still some work needed on the organisation of the children's environment.

The deputy has recently completed her National Vocational Qualification (NVQ) level 3 childcare training; two staff hold current first aid qualifications, and other staff are in the process of renewing their certificates.

The front door is secure and kept locked during nursery hours, visitors gain entry by ringing the doorbell, which ensures children are safe.

Children use suitable crockery at meal times. However, there is an ongoing issue regarding the pouring of drinks.

Complaints since the last inspection

There have been no complaints made to Ofsted since the last inspection.

The provider is required to keep a record of complaints made by parents, which they can see on request. The complaints record may contain complaints other than those

made to Ofsted.

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 satisfactory.

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):

- consider ways to improve snack time by providing opportunities for children to pour their own drinks and to help with the preparation of food.
- improve the environment with regard to regulating the temperature, ensuring children have space to move about safely and freely, and access to the kitchen.
- develop more effective routines and make toys more easily accessible to further promote children's play
- ensure that less able children have the opportunity to fully engage in activities with regard to the deployment of staff and the creation of a quieter environment.
- review systems for effective supervision and appraisal of all staff

The quality and standards of the nursery education

To improve the quality and standards of nursery education further the registered person should take account of the following recommendation(s):

- provide opportunities to extend children's learning by improving the curriculum planning to ensure children make independent choices, self-select resources and receive explanation about activities and routine.
- consider ways to further share information with parents about their children's progress and how the six areas of learning are extended to nursery activities.

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:

