



Office for Standards
in Education

NURSERY INSPECTION REPORT

URN EY244150

DfES Number: 515914

INSPECTION DETAILS

Inspection Date 08/07/2004
Inspector Name Nighat Ghani

SETTING DETAILS

Day Care Type Full Day Care, Out of School Day Care, Sessional Day Care
Setting Name Our Lady's First Steps Pre-School
Setting Address Clinton View
Widnes
Cheshire
WA8 8JW

REGISTERED PROVIDER DETAILS

Name The Committee of Our Lady's First Steps Pre-School 1018543

ORGANISATION DETAILS

Name Our Lady's First Steps Pre-School
Address Clinton View
Widnes
Cheshire
WA8 8JW

ABOUT THE INSPECTION

The purpose of this inspection is to assure government, parents and the public that the nursery education for funded three and four year old children is of an acceptable quality. Inspection of nursery education also identifies strengths and weaknesses so that providers can improve the quality of educational provision and help children to achieve the early learning goals (elgs) by the end of the Foundation Stage. This inspection report must be made available to all parents.

If the setting has been inspected previously, an action plan will have been drawn up to tackle issues identified. This inspection, therefore, must also assess what progress has been made in the implementation of this plan.

Information about the setting

Our Lady's First Steps pre-school sessional facility opened approximately 20 years ago with a full day care and out of school provision opening in January 2004. It operates from a single storey building, which is divided into sessional and full day care settings, in the grounds of Our Lady's Primary School, in Ditton, Widnes. The facility serves children from the local community.

There are currently 71 children on roll in the sessional care provision, 38 of whom are in receipt of funding. Sixty-one children are on roll in the full day care settings, five of whom have funded places. Children attend a variety of sessions. The setting currently supports a number of children with special needs. The out of school care provision has not yet commenced holding sessions.

Full and part-time staff work with the children, all of whom have early years qualifications to NNEB and NVQ levels 2 and 3. One member of staff is currently working towards NVQ level 3. The setting is a member of the Pre-School Learning Alliance and receives support from the Early Years Development and Childcare Partnership.

INSPECTION OF THE NURSERY EDUCATION PROVISION FOR FUNDED THREE AND FOUR YEAR OLDS.

How effective is the nursery education?

Our Lady's First Steps Pre-School provides good quality nursery education overall which enables children to make generally good progress towards the early learning goals. The programmes for communication, language and literacy and creative development are particularly well planned, and the children enjoy a wide range of stimulating activities which enables them to make very good progress in these areas.

The quality of teaching is generally good. Staff have secure knowledge and understanding of the Foundation Stage. Assessment and planning clearly indicate how children's individual learning is catered for, though the programmes for the two rooms are planned separately which leads to some inconsistency of approach. Staff engage in good quality dialogue with children, encouraging them to think things through and extending their language skills. Staff provide stimulating and interesting outdoor physical activities for children but do not make children aware of the changes that happen to their bodies when they are active. They organise the teaching area to create a welcoming environment, though opportunities for children to explore and investigate are inhibited as appropriate equipment is not always freely available. Children's behaviour is generally good, though the noise level is occasionally distracting.

The leadership and management of the provision is generally good. Staff are clear about their roles and responsibilities, and they work well as a team. Staff training needs are identified during appraisals, and they attend suitable courses. They are committed to developing their skills.

Partnership with parents is generally good. Systems are in place to make parents aware of their children's achievements and progress, but they are not encouraged to contribute towards their children's assessments.

What is being done well?

- Children are confident, enthusiastic, and highly motivated to learn. They are confident at managing their own personal independence. Children choose their own resources and are good at organising and putting them away.
- Parents are involved in their children's learning through ongoing discussions and the verbal feedback given on a daily basis. Regular meetings, excellent written information about topics and opportunities to support children's learning in the home environment is encouraged.
- Good communication system ensures that all staff are clear about their roles and responsibilities. Space is well used and organised. Children benefits from the well planned curriculum.

- Special needs is one of the nursery's strengths. Management has devised a comprehensive policy on special needs which reflects the requirements of the Department for Education and Employment for the identification and assessment of Special Educational needs and assessment of Special Educational needs code of practice. Staff strive to meet the individual and special needs of all children. They liaise with external agencies involved with the family to fully support the children in the nursery environment. Special support packages and one to one sessions are offered to children of varying needs and abilities at appropriate times throughout the day.

What needs to be improved?

- the organisation of the two pre-school groups so that they are integrated and do the planning together so that there is a consistent approach between the two rooms in the delivery of the curriculum
- the assessment of the noise level in the pre-school room
- the involvement of parents in their children's assessment
- the opportunities for children to explore, investigate and discover in their own time and to use mathematical ideas and methods to solve practical problems
- the children's awareness of the changes that happen to their bodies when they are active and importance of staying healthy.

What has improved since the last inspection?

The nursery have made very good progress since the last inspection. At the last inspection no weaknesses were identified but two points for consideration were raised. The provider was asked to improve the quality of the programme for knowledge and understanding of the world and provide more opportunities for children to explore the features of natural and made objects.

The children are provided with an interest table and are encouraged to contribute by bringing in shells, pebbles. Children are encouraged to look closely at the objects to explore how they work.

The second point for consideration was to extend resources by providing a clear number line and alphabet chart at children's height in order to further enhance opportunities for children to recognise numbers to ten and letters of the alphabet. A large number and letter chart with different textures is displayed at children's level so that they can touch, feel and trace around the numbers and letters.

SUMMARY OF JUDGEMENTS

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Judgement: Generally Good

Children are confident, happy and secure in their setting. Good relationships are evident throughout the pre-school and staff act as good role-models, fostering children's social skills. The noise level is high at times which makes it difficult for other children to concentrate on their activities. There is good range of resources which is used to introduce children to other cultures and traditions and a wide range of festivals is celebrated.

COMMUNICATION, LANGUAGE AND LITERACY

Judgement: Very Good

Children are confident speakers and display a wide vocabulary as they undertake different activities. They enthusiastically take part in role play and use mark making material effectively. Children express themselves freely through drawing and writing. Older children learn shapes and sounds of letters and staff maximise opportunity to help children identify initial sounds of their names. Older children recognise their names and practise writing them in upper and lower case.

MATHEMATICAL DEVELOPMENT

Judgement: Generally Good

There are plenty of activities which provide opportunities to help children sort, match, grade and count. Children use words such as 'full, empty, more, and less', they describe weight, capacity and position during practical activities such as water and sand. Children recognise, order and record numbers to ten though do not use these opportunities to explore mathematical ideas and solve practical problems. Children use beads to recognise and recreate simple patterns.

KNOWLEDGE AND UNDERSTANDING OF THE WORLD

Judgement: Generally Good

Children get the opportunity to explore the features of natural materials such as sand, water and they have planted seeds and carrot tops. This gives children the opportunities to look at similarities, differences and change. They look closely at their environment for example types of buildings, people and flags. All children use the computer effectively, however their opportunities to explore and investigate are inhibited by the inaccessibility of appropriate resources.

PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT

Judgement:	Generally Good
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Children have good control and co-ordination which is fostered through balancing activities and games. Children use range of equipment which promotes their skills such as throwing, catching, stamping and hopping, however children are not encouraged to recognise the changes that happen to their bodies when they are active or the importance of staying healthy. Children enjoy using play dough, construction toys, cutting and sticking activities which promotes their manipulative skills.

CREATIVE DEVELOPMENT

Judgement:	Very Good
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Children enjoy music and movement and action songs and are used effectively to stimulate the children's imaginative ideas and movement. The work on display shows that children have been introduced to a range of creative techniques in three and two dimension. Children have plenty of opportunities to experience interesting sensory activities such as water, sand, play dough and different textures of collage material.

Children's spiritual, moral, social, and cultural development is fostered appropriately.

OUTCOME OF THE INSPECTION

The provision is acceptable and is of good quality overall. Children are making generally good progress towards the early learning goals. The next inspection will take place in three to four years time.

WHAT THE SETTING NEEDS TO DO NEXT: THE KEY ISSUES

- Assess the noise levels in the pre-school room and re-organise activities which sustain children's interest.
- Encourage parents to contribute towards their children's assessments.
- Extend the opportunities for children to explore, investigate and discover in their own time and to use mathematical ideas and methods to solve practical problems
- Promote children's awareness of the changes that happen to their body when they are active and importance of staying healthy.

The provider must draw up an action plan within 40 working days of receipt of this report showing how the key issues detailed above will be addressed. The action plan must be made available to all parents and to the Local Authority if required. An evaluation of the action taken will form part of the next inspection of funded nursery education.