



Office for Standards
in Education

COMBINED INSPECTION REPORT

URN 105976

DfES Number: 513423

INSPECTION DETAILS

Inspection Date 03/03/2004
Inspector Name Pauline Margaret Whiter

SETTING DETAILS

Day Care Type Sessional Day Care
Setting Name First Steps Community Playgroup
Setting Address Stoke Hill
Exeter
Devon
EX4 7DB

REGISTERED PROVIDER DETAILS

Name The Committee of First Steps Community Playgroup Committee

ORGANISATION DETAILS

Name First Steps Community Playgroup Committee
Address Stoke Hill Primary School
Stoke Hill
Exeter
Devon
EX4 7DB

ABOUT THE INSPECTION

The purpose of this inspection is to assure government, parents and the public of the quality and standard of day care in accordance with the National Standards for Under Eights Day Care and Childminding; and 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

First Steps Community Playgroup has been registered to operate in Stoke Hill First School since September 2000. It serves the residential Stoke Hill area and surrounding areas of Exeter. The playgroup is registered to provide sessional care for 22 children from 3 to 5 years and is open 9:05-11.35 and 12:35-15:05 on weekdays during term time. The premises is shared with an after-school club and comprises a playroom with a kitchen area and a hallway for messy play or large physical play equipment. The children use the school toilet facilities. They use a variety of outdoor play areas within the grounds. There are currently 46 children on the register and 38 are in receipt of funded education. The playgroup supports children who have special educational needs. There are currently 5 children attending who speak English as an additional language. The playgroup is managed by a voluntary committee. Five staff are employed to work with the children, one of whom is also employed as the administrator. Two playleaders work part-time, one of whom is qualified and the other working towards NVQ level 3 qualification in early years care and education. There is liaison with the reception class teacher.

How good is the Day Care?

First Steps Community Playgroup provides satisfactory care for children. There is a welcoming and friendly atmosphere and children are settled and happy.

Staff are caring in their approach and they have good relationships with the children. They manage children's behaviour very well and children are well-behaved. There are satisfactory arrangements in place for children who have special needs.

Children take part in a wide range of interesting activities and they benefit from a good range of toys and equipment. Staff make effective use of the space to create a secure and stimulating play area and they make good use of the outdoor areas. The premises are well-maintained and staff maintain good standards of hygiene. They are attentive to children's safety and provide well for children's dietary needs.

There are some weaknesses in the overall management and organisation of the

provision, and as a result some regulations are not met. There are policies and procedures in place, but they are limited in their effectiveness as some are lacking in detail and not specific to the setting. Staff and management do not have a confident understanding of child protection issues.

There is a high commitment to establishing and maintaining a good partnership with parents and staff offer parents a warm and friendly welcome.

What has improved since the last inspection?

At the last inspection the playgroup was asked to: address staff training and qualification issues; establish a fire log book and carry out risk assessments; improve the arrangements for drinks; establish an incident book to use in cases of physical restraint; and, to review all policies and procedures and make accessible to parents. Overall, the actions have been addressed satisfactorily although some areas still require further improvement. Training plans show how the playgroup will meet qualification requirements and the level of training in first aid is good, with three full-time members of staff qualified; a fire log book is maintained and staff risk assess activities, although these are not recorded; children have good access to drinking water; an incident book has been established but staff are not using it appropriately; the playgroup has adopted new policies and parents have good access to these, but some require further review to be fully effective and informative.

What is being done well?

- Children enjoy attending the playgroup and are confident and happy. They show high levels of interest and involvement in their play.
- Staff have a calm and consistent approach to managing children's behaviour. They use praise and encouragement regularly and effectively to promote and reward good behaviour.
- Staff actively promote healthy eating and provide children with nutritious snacks. These are attractively presented and snack time is a calm and social occasion. Children freely help themselves to drinking water during the session.
- Children have good access to a wide range of well- maintained toys and resources, both indoors and outdoors. They benefit from regular and varied outdoor play and visits to the school pond.
- Staff provide parents with good quality information on the children's activities.
- There are regular opportunities for the exchange of information and for parents to be involved in the life of playgroup. Parent helpers provide valuable support in sessions.

What needs to be improved?

- arrangements for child protection to ensure that all adults involved in the playgroup are aware of their responsibilities in this area and know what to do

in case of concerns or allegations.

- arrangements for dealing with lost children.
- arrangements for administering medication.
- accessibility of the certificate of registration.
- use of risk assessments to include recording of the findings and actions.
- the health and safety policy to ensure that it is specific to the setting.
- staff understanding of the purpose of the incident book so that they use it appropriately.

Outcome of the inspection

Satisfactory

CONDITIONS OF REGISTRATION

All registered persons must comply with all conditions of registration included on his/her certificate of registration.

As a result of this inspection conditions of registration have been imposed / varied / removed and a new certificate of registration will be issued.

WHAT NEEDS TO BE DONE NEXT?

The Registered Person must take the following actions by the date shown

Std	Action	Date
13	Increase knowledge and understanding in relation to signs and symptoms of abuse, and develop procedures to follow, in case of concerns or allegations against a member of staff or volunteer, that reflect local Area Child Protection Committee guidance and contact details.	19/04/2004
14	Establish procedures, and documentation as appropriate, for lost children and for the administration of medication.	19/04/2004
14	Ensure that the certificate of registration is displayed.	19/04/2004

The Registered Person should have regard to the following recommendations by the time of the next inspection

Std	Recommendation
6	Review the policies and procedures for health and safety, and in

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

How effective is the nursery education?

Nursery education provision at First Steps Community Playgroup is acceptable and children are making generally good progress towards the early learning goals, although there are significant weaknesses in the programmes for mathematics and knowledge and understanding of the world.

Staff have a generally good awareness of how activities support progress in the six areas of learning. They interact well with the children, question them effectively and generally support their progress appropriately in most areas of the curriculum. They are calm and consistent in their management of the children, whose behaviour is good. Plans demonstrate how activities link to the six areas of learning but lack sufficient detail to ensure that all early learning goals receive sufficient attention and do not identify clear learning objectives or how activities can be adapted for more or less able children. Assessment records have not been sufficiently developed to enable staff to track children's progress and use this information to plan their next steps for learning.

Leadership and management is generally good. The Playleader leads the staff team well, sharing information from training courses and developing planning procedures and she demonstrates a good commitment to improvement. However, there are no formal systems in place to identify strengths and weaknesses and take steps to improve practice.

Partnership with parents is generally good. Parents receive information about planned activities and how they link to children's learning. They have good opportunities to get involved in their children's learning through the shared book scheme and by participating as a helper in group sessions. They also receive good ideas from the staff about how to extend learning at home. However, a lack of detailed assessment records results in them not receiving regular information about their children's progress or contributing information to development records.

What is being done well?

- Children are developing good confidence, self-esteem, independence and participate enthusiastically in activities.
- Children enjoy sharing books and are developing a good awareness that print carries meaning.
- Children use their imagination well in role play, developing elaborate stories, co-operating with each other and using resources appropriately to extend their play.
- Parents are encouraged to get involved in their children's learning in a variety of ways.

What needs to be improved?

- Planning, to ensure that all areas of the curriculum receive sufficient attention and that clear learning objectives are identified.
- Assessment records, to identify how children are progressing along the stepping stones towards the early learning goals.
- The use of assessment records to include parental contributions, share information with parents and plan children's next steps for learning.

What has improved since the last inspection?

Overall, improvement since the last inspection is limited. The group were given two key issues to address. The first required them to offer children more opportunities to record some of their findings and observations. They have made good progress with this and planned activities regularly include opportunities for children to record information in a variety of ways, for example by making graphs, charts or pictorial records of their observations.

The second key issue required the group to develop a formal system for parents to contribute to their children's assessment records. Progress with this issue is limited as the assessment records are not sufficiently well developed to track children's progress, and therefore there is no system to include parents' contributions. This will feature in the key issues raised at this inspection.

SUMMARY OF JUDGEMENTS

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Judgement: Generally Good

Children are happy, relaxed and settle well at the beginning of sessions. They are confident and enthusiastic in their play and co-operate well in small and large group situations. They are developing good independence and self-esteem and their behaviour is good. They are developing a sense of their position in the home and wider community but have limited opportunities to develop their awareness of a range of cultures and beliefs.

COMMUNICATION, LANGUAGE AND LITERACY

Judgement: Generally Good

Children are confident speakers and use language well to describe what they are doing, organise their thoughts and plan their role play. They enjoy sharing books and are developing a good understanding that print carries meaning. They are beginning to write for different purposes and some can write their names. However, they have limited opportunities to make links between letters and the sounds they make and to regularly write for a variety of purposes.

MATHEMATICAL DEVELOPMENT

Judgement: Significant Weaknesses

Children are developing a good awareness of mathematical concepts and use this information to solve simple problems, such as completing three-dimensional puzzles. They can recognise and recreate simple patterns and enjoy joining in with familiar number songs and rhymes. However, they do not have sufficient, regular opportunities to practise counting and using numbers in practical activities, or to extend this by using simple addition and subtraction.

KNOWLEDGE AND UNDERSTANDING OF THE WORLD

Judgement: Significant Weaknesses

Through themed activities children are beginning to develop an awareness of the environment and some of its features. They enjoy designing and making complex models, sometimes incorporate technological equipment into their role play and are developing a sense of the passage of time. However, they have limited opportunities to fully explore and investigate natural and made objects, or to extend their knowledge and understanding of a range of cultures and beliefs.

PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT

Judgement: Generally Good

Children move confidently around the available space, negotiate obstacles safely and are able to control their movements well, for example, stopping and starting in response to traffic lights. Many children can use a range of tools, such as scissors and dough cutters safely and skilfully and also have some opportunities to use a variety of outdoor play equipment. However, this is not effectively monitored to ensure that they all receive appropriate support to make steady progress.

CREATIVE DEVELOPMENT

Judgement:	Generally Good
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Children participate in elaborate role-play, co-operating with others to develop stories, incorporate different resources and extend their play. They enjoy exploring different media, for example paint, chalk and dough and are enthusiastic singers, demonstrating a great enjoyment of music. Their creativity is sometimes limited by over-direction of craft activities and they have few opportunities to express themselves imaginatively through music and dance.

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

- Develop planning to ensure that all areas of the curriculum receive appropriate attention, particularly mathematics and knowledge and understanding of the world, and to identify clear learning objectives.
- Devise and implement a system to assess and record children's progress along the stepping stones towards the early learning goals in all six areas of learning.
- Use assessment records to identify individual children's needs and plan their next steps for learning. Incorporate parents' contributions to the assessment records and ensure that parents are kept informed about their children's achievements and progress.

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.

SUMMARY OF NATIONAL STANDARDS

STANDARD 1 - SUITABLE PERSON

Adults providing day care, looking after children or having unsupervised access to them are suitable to do so.

STANDARD 2 - ORGANISATION

The registered person meets required adult: child ratios, ensures that training and qualifications requirements are met and organises space and resources to meet the children's needs effectively.

STANDARD 3 - CARE, LEARNING AND PLAY

The registered person meets children's individual needs and promotes their welfare. They plan and provide activities and play opportunities to develop children's emotional, physical, social and intellectual capabilities.

STANDARD 4 - PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

The premises are safe, secure and suitable for their purpose. They provide adequate space in an appropriate location, are welcoming to children and offer access to the necessary facilities for a range of activities which promote their development.

STANDARD 5 - EQUIPMENT

Furniture, equipment and toys are provided which are appropriate for their purpose and help to create an accessible and stimulating environment. They are of suitable design and condition, well maintained and conform to safety standards.

STANDARD 6 - SAFETY

The registered person takes positive steps to promote safety within the setting and on outings and ensures proper precautions are taken to prevent accidents.

STANDARD 7 - HEALTH

The registered person promotes the good health of children and takes positive steps to prevent the spread of infection and appropriate measures when they are ill.

STANDARD 8 - FOOD AND DRINK

Children are provided with regular drinks and food in adequate quantities for their needs. Food and drink is properly prepared, nutritious and complies with dietary and religious requirements.

STANDARD 9 - EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES

The registered person and staff actively promote equality of opportunity and anti-discriminatory practice for all children.

STANDARD 10 - SPECIAL NEEDS (INCLUDING SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS AND DISABILITIES)

The registered person is aware that some children may have special needs and is

proactive in ensuring that appropriate action can be taken when such a child is identified or admitted to the provision. Steps are taken to promote the welfare and development of the child within the setting in partnership with the parents and other relevant parties.

STANDARD 11 - BEHAVIOUR

Adults caring for children in the provision are able to manage a wide range of children's behaviour in a way which promotes their welfare and development.

STANDARD 12 - WORKING IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS AND CARERS

The registered person and staff work in partnership with parents and to meet the needs of the children, both individually and as a group. Information is shared.

STANDARD 13 - CHILD PROTECTION

The registered person complies with local child protection procedures approved by the Area Child Protection Committee and ensures that all adults working and looking after children in the provision are able to put the procedures into practice.

STANDARD 14 - DOCUMENTATION

Records, policies and procedures which are required for the efficient and safe management of the provision, or to promote the welfare, care and learning of children are maintained. Records about individual children are shared with the child's parent.