



Office for Standards
in Education

COMBINED INSPECTION REPORT

URN 117187

DfES Number: 515425

INSPECTION DETAILS

Inspection Date	16/06/2004
Inspector Name	Zenna Kingdon

SETTING DETAILS

Day Care Type	Sessional Day Care
Setting Name	First Steps Pre-School
Setting Address	Methodist Central Hall Eastlake Street Plymouth Devon PL1 1BA

REGISTERED PROVIDER DETAILS

Name	The Committee of The Church Council
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ORGANISATION DETAILS

Name	The Church Council
Address	Methodist Central Hall Eastlake Street Plymouth Devon PL1 1BA

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 pre-school was opened in 1992. The setting uses two rooms on the first floor of Plymouth Central Methodist Hall. They also have access to a hall on the ground floor. There is no outside area. Children attend from all areas of the city and some surrounding villages.

The pre-school is run by a committee made up of church members. It is open on weekday mornings during term time from 09:45 until 12.30. On Tuesdays there is a lunch club from 12:30 until 13.30.

The setting is registered for 26 children from two to five years. The setting allows two-year-olds to attend three out of the five sessions. These are Monday, Tuesday and Thursday mornings. The Wednesday morning session is intended as a preparation for school session. There are currently 30 children on roll, of these 17 are funded three-year-olds and five are funded four-year-olds. There are five children who have special needs and no children for whom English is an additional language.

There are five members of staff. The person in charge has a diploma in pre-school practice. The two deputies are currently completing their NVQ Level 3's in Early Years Education and Childcare. They both currently have NVQ Level 2. One member of staff has Foundation 1 and 2 in pre-school practice. The fifth member of staff will be starting an NVQ later this year. All members of staff have a current First Aid certificate.

The pre-school is a member of the Pre-school Learning Alliance. They are also supported by; the Early Years Development and Childcare Partnership, an Early Years Advisory Teacher and a pre-school advisory teacher.

How good is the Day Care?

The quality of day care at First Steps pre-school is good. The pre-school uses two rooms and has access to a large hall within the Methodist Central Hall. The person

in charge has diploma in pre-school practice. The two deputies are currently completing their NVQ Level 3's in Early Education and Childcare. The operational plan works in practice although registers lack some details. Each child has an allocated key worker. The setting is well organised. There are high quality displays. There is a broad range of resources that help children's development in all areas.

The staff are vigilant about children's safety at all times. Risk assessments are carried out regularly. There are excellent systems in place to ensure that no-one can gain access or leave the setting without the assistance of a member of staff. Good hygiene habits are encouraged by the staff. Children continuously have access to drinks. They are encouraged to develop healthy eating habits and good table manners.

Staff provide a very wide range of activities which are well planned and resourced. These activities allow children to make progress in all areas of their development. Children are positively encouraged to make decisions, explore and investigate and to develop their natural curiosity as learners. The staff are highly skilled at questioning children in such a way that the children are continuously thinking and learning. Staff set high expectations for behaviour and manners, children are praised and encouraged appropriately. Excellent visual cues are used to support children with challenging behaviour.

There is a good partnership with parents. Parents know that the staff know their children well and support them as individuals although there are no formal times to share information. There is an very well supported parent rota. Parents are kept well informed of what is happening in the pre-school through regular newsletters and informal communication.

What has improved since the last inspection?

No actions or recommendations were set at the transitional inspection.

What is being done well?

- The needs of all children are met and their welfare is promoted. The staff plan a very wide range of activities that ensures children make excellent progress in all areas of their development.
- The quality of display throughout the setting is good. Staff display children's work in manner that reflects the value that they place on it. They also create displays that support topic work. These displays are well supported with information texts.
- There is an excellent range of resources that support children's learning and development in all areas. The range of resources is suitable to support the needs of all the children that attend the setting.
- Difference and diversity are well supported. There is a good range of multi-cultural dressing up clothes. There are superb labels that explain what the costumes are and include photographs of children in the clothes.

- Children are encouraged to gain an understanding of many of the issues surrounding food and healthy eating. Children are encouraged to make healthy choices at snack time. The staff sit with them at lunch time and act as a positive role model. Children are gaining an understanding of the social aspect of eating.
- Children with special needs are particularly well supported. The SENCO has a thorough understanding of the Code of Practice. She works closely with the rest of the staff team, identifying and working with children with special needs. She has developed an excellent rapport with the Pre-school advisory teacher.
- The management of behaviour is particularly good. The staff are excellent role models. They apply the agreed strategies consistently. They make good use of visual cues and are particularly skillful in supporting children with challenging behaviour in modifying their behaviour.

An aspect of outstanding practice:

The quality of the interactions of the staff with the children are exceptional. They listen, question, challenge and support the children. They praise and encourage them in a manner that allows the children to gain real confidence in attempting new challenges.

What needs to be improved?

- the qualifications of the deputies
- the registers to reflect the actual times of arrival and departure of children and staff
- the equal opportunities policy to reflect admissions, employment, training and current legislation
- the child protection statement to become specific to the pre-school

Outcome of the inspection

Good

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

Std	Recommendation
1	Provide a written action plan to demonstrate how the deputies will become suitably qualified.
2	Ensure that the register reflects the actual times of arrival and departure of children and adults.
14	Ensure that all policies and procedures, especially those for child protection and equal opportunities, are regularly reviewed and in line with current legislation.

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

How effective is the nursery education?

First Steps pre-school provides high quality nursery education. Children are making very good progress towards the early learning goals in all six areas of learning. Children are keen to participate in all the activities on offer. They behave well and respond positively to the high expectations of the staff. They are keen to talk and to explain their thoughts and ideas. Children have excellent opportunities to explore and investigate. They make superb use of their senses to help them to explore the world around them.

The quality of teaching is very good. Staff have a good understanding of the Foundation Stage. They plan a curriculum that engages the children. Staff make use of a range of strategies to engage, encourage, involve and develop the children. They talk with children, listening carefully to what they say. They make excellent use of praise and encouragement. Staff make good use of the excellent range of resources that they have. They have a good understanding of special educational needs. They develop appropriate individual education plans and give excellent support to these children.

The leadership and management of the setting is very good. The manager devolves day-to-day running to the manager, but is exceptionally supportive when the need arises. There are regular meetings at which the nursery curriculum is evaluated. The setting enjoys the support of its Advisory teacher. The management are committed to making the provision the best it possibly can be. They take advice from professionals and act on it.

There is a generally good partnerships with parents. Parents have access to good quality information about the setting. There are regular newsletters. Staff are always available to discuss children's progress, but no formal information is shared. Parents are expected to support the setting through the parent rota.

What is being done well?

- The quality of the staff's interactions with children is very good. Staff listen carefully to what the children say. They are clearly interested and set challenges all the time that are suitable for the individual child with whom they are working.
- The children's behaviour is exemplary in response to the staff's high expectations. The staff encourage the children to develop a range of skills, including, listening skills, looking skills, thinking skills, particularly during circle time.
- Children are encouraged to become independent. They are able to select for themselves from a broad range of resources and activities. Staff will support them in accessing other items. Four-year-olds are encouraged to develop the

necessary skills to help them to cope with the transition to school.

- Children are given opportunities to use their senses and in particular their observation skills to make sense of the world in which we live. They follow the life-cycle of frogs, from spawn through the stages of tadpole until they are frogs. They see three dimensional displays, information texts and a tank of tadpoles. They observe the changes that occur.
- Children make excellent progress in physical development. They make use of a broad range of one handed tools that ensure that they develop their fine motor skills. The four-year-olds handle items dextrously, for example picking up raisins between finger and thumb, then placing them in their sandwiches.

What needs to be improved?

- regular planned opportunities for children to calculate
- formal communication with parents
- the planning to ensure that it is not onerous but remains rigorous.

What has improved since the last inspection?

First Steps pre-school has made very good progress since the last inspection, where they were set three key issues. The first was to extend the assessment system to include information on knowledge and understanding of the world, physical development and creative development. The setting has adopted the published recording system provided by Plymouth. The system ensures that information is recorded under all six areas of learning.

The second issue was to encourage staff to attend courses and to keep up-to-date with current developments. All members of staff are now encouraged to participate in a minimum of four pieces of training a year. Staff clearly disseminate information on good practice that they encounter to other members of the team. Two members of the staff team are currently completing their NVQ Level 3 qualifications whilst another will be starting an NVQ Level 2 later this year.

The third was to plan activities for quick learners. The staff are clearly well aware of the needs of all of the children in the setting. They ensure that all children are set challenges that are suitable for them and meet their needs.

SUMMARY OF JUDGEMENTS

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Judgement: Very Good

The children come very confidently into the setting. They are able to find their own name card and hand it to the staff. They are excited to participate in the range of activities that are on offer. The children know that they need to take turns and share. Their behaviour is exemplary, they have a clear understanding of the expectations. Four-year-old children practise changing for PE in readiness for starting school. They show an awareness of their own needs as well as those of others.

COMMUNICATION, LANGUAGE AND LITERACY

Judgement: Very Good

The children talk for a range of purposes. They are able to respond to things that they have heard, as well as discussing their own ideas. They talk to their peers and the staff around them. Four-year-old children act out stories as they are read by members of staff. They show a clear understanding that information can be found in books. Children choose to write for a range of purposes, including writing letters to friends and family. Children are supported in forming letters correctly.

MATHEMATICAL DEVELOPMENT

Judgement: Very Good

Children are able to recognise a range of numerals and say what the corresponding number is. Four-year-olds are able to talk about the order of the digits for numbers greater than 10. Children are given opportunities to use the language of calculation but not quite often enough. They can when asked, separate two groups and subtract and join two groups together. Children are making very good progress in all aspects of shape space and measure.

KNOWLEDGE AND UNDERSTANDING OF THE WORLD

Judgement: Very Good

The children have excellent opportunities to explore and investigate the world around them. They make use of their design and making skills, use ICT and are gaining an insight into the culture and beliefs of others. They use their senses to explore in a range of different ways. They look at different types of beans such as, baked beans and coffee beans. They observe the life-cycle of frogs, they also look at the way in which they themselves change over time.

PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT

Judgement: Very Good

Children are making very good progress in all aspects of physical development. They move confidently in a range of ways. They practise and refine their skills, for example by passing a ball back and forth between themselves. The children show an awareness of issues surrounding health. Children have access to a range of large and small equipment. Staff support children in developing the necessary skills to use one-handed tools.

CREATIVE DEVELOPMENT	
Judgement:	Very Good
<p>Children have access to a range of media and materials, including paints and re-cyclable materials that they are able to use in self-directed activities. The children enjoy singing songs from memory, and are able to tap out rhythms in time to the songs. They appropriately respond to the staff's instructions to play in different ways. They enjoy accessing the role play area which focuses on a variety of themes. Children are able to use their imaginations and use one object to represent another.</p>	

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

OUTCOME OF THE INSPECTION

The provision is acceptable and is of high quality. Children are making very 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

There are no significant weaknesses to report, but considerations should be given to improving the following:

- There are no key issues, but consideration should be given to the following.
- Continue to ensure that the planned programme is delivered and that it gives equal coverage to all areas of the curriculum, including calculation, and ensures that planning is not too onerous for staff.
- Devise some formal more means of communicating children's progress to parents.

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.