



Office for Standards
in Education

COMBINED INSPECTION REPORT

URN 129340

DfES Number: 546031

INSPECTION DETAILS

Inspection Date 08/02/2005
Inspector Name Maura Pigram

SETTING DETAILS

Day Care Type Sessional Day Care
Setting Name First Steps Pre-School
Setting Address Victory Hall
Long Marston
Tring
Hertfordshire
HP23 4QS

REGISTERED PROVIDER DETAILS

Name The Committee of First Steps Pre-School Parent Committee
1102166

ORGANISATION DETAILS

Name First Steps Pre-School Parent Committee
Address Victory Hall
Long Marston
Tring
Hertfordshire
HP23 4QS

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 opened in 1997 and is managed by a Voluntary Parent/Carer Committee. It operates from Long Marston village hall and parking is available close by. The pre-school serves the village of Long Marston and other surrounding villages.

There are currently twenty children from 2 to 5 years on roll. This includes 7 funded three-year-olds and 7 funded four-year-olds. Children attend for a variety of sessions and there is a key worker system in place. The group supports children who have special needs and would support children who speak English as an additional language.

The group is open between 09:15 - 11:45 on Mondays, Tuesdays, Thursdays and Fridays, term time only. A lunch club is offered two days a week from 11.45 to 13.00.

On the day of inspection there were 16 children present. Six part-time staff work with the children. Most of them have relevant early years qualifications level 2 or 3 and two staff are currently on training programmes. The setting receives support from the local primary school which is located across the road from the Pre-school.

How good is the Day Care?

First Steps Pre-school provides satisfactory care for the children.

The pre-school is held in a village hall and has access to an enclosed outdoor play area as well as playing fields containing a wooden play apparatus. The team work very well together, with the manager and the deputy being effective role models. The manager has a clear understanding of the groups needs. Communication with the staff takes place regularly and there is a sound relationship with the committee. Staff provide some positive interaction throughout the activities and the lunch club offered.

The supervisor generally has a satisfactory knowledge of health and safety issues, although some aspects need attention. Children with special educational needs are

supported well. The children are able to freely choose from the range of activities on offer, although the needs of older or more able children require attention. However, activities during the lunch club take older and more able children's needs into consideration. New children settle easily into the setting. There are clear boundaries and adults encourage children to develop social skills.

There is an effective partnership with parents and carers in which information about the child's day and future events are shared. Parents and children are invited to visit prior to starting at the pre-school. Some of the documentation necessary for pre-school practice requires attention. The manager is intending to review formal sharing of information with parents and the recording of attendance.

What has improved since the last inspection?

At the last inspection the manager agreed to develop and review a risk assessment; devise a no smoking policy and ensure equal opportunities are reflected through access to resources. All of these issues have been addressed with the risk assessment and the development of equal opportunities being continued regularly.

The manager has devised detailed risk assessments and the team are more aware of the need to develop children's awareness of equal opportunities. They have added to their resources in the home area such as play food and dressing up clothes. They encourage boys and girls to have equal access to resources.

What is being done well?

- The children are encouraged to respect and value each other and social skills are developed. The staff aim for high standards of behaviour and liaise with parents when necessary. Adults intervene during disputes at appropriate times and encourage children to negotiate turn taking and sharing.
- The supervisor is an effective role model. She has a natural manner with the children and develops warm relationships with them. During register time she engages the children's attention and provides a stimulating experience for them. She clearly explains the activities on offer and discusses any necessary rules such as when playing with balls and hoops.
- There is a very clear and informative policy in place for supporting children who may have special needs. This is shared with parents and offers a sound knowledge base of the support and procedures in place. The Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator has attended relevant training and is pro-active in gaining further knowledge. She has developed links with outside agencies and uses these for advice and guidance when necessary.

What needs to be improved?

- attendance records and the recording procedures
- recording procedures on accident records, the complaints and lost child policy

- procedures regarding written parental permission for emergency aid
- knowledge of Area Child Protection Committee guidelines.

PREVIOUS COMPLAINTS (This section applies only to inspections carried out from September 2004. The complaint record relates to complaints from the last inspection or 1st April 2004 whichever is later.)

Since the last inspection Ofsted has not received any complaints about the provision.

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

Std	Recommendation
7	Ensure the accident book is signed by staff and that written parental permission is obtained for the administration of emergency aid.
13	Obtain the area child protection committee guidelines.
14	Review attendance records, complaints and lost child procedures and ensure completed risk assessments are available for inspection (this refers to recording times of attendance of staff, children and visitors. It also refers to including the regulator's contact details and procedures to be followed in the event of losing a child).

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

How effective is the nursery education?

The provision for nursery education at First Steps Pre-School is of good quality overall.

It enables the children to make very good progress towards the early learning goals in their personal, social and emotional development. Generally good progress is made in the other areas of learning.

The quality of teaching is generally good. Staff have some understanding of the Foundation Stage. Further development of knowledge and planning would enable the staff to extend the children's learning more effectively. The staff are actively engaged with the children throughout the sessions, although at times do not sufficiently challenge older and more able children. The staff are enthusiastic and positive role models. Issues of disruptive behaviour are dealt with calmly and effectively. Relationships are secure and activities are clearly introduced. Staff generally make satisfactory use to time giving individual and group support, although opportunities for recognising numbers and writing for different purposes are limited. The system of Jolly Phonics has recently been successfully introduced.

The leadership and management of the pre-school are generally good. The manager has built a strong partnership with the local school and liaises with them on a regular basis. The team are supportive of each other and work well together knowing their roles and responsibilities. Regular meetings are held and discussions on the development of the Pre-School are shared.

The partnership with parents is generally good and contributes positively to the children's progress towards the early learning goals. Parents are given valuable opportunities to share what they know about their children. They are given clear information about the setting and some information on the Foundation Stage. Staff and parents exchange information daily. The manager is intending to review the formal system in place regarding sharing children's progression.

What is being done well?

- Staff obtain valuable information about the children from the parents on enrolment. This enables the staff to learn about the child and their learning needs. The staff are very enthusiastic and are a well matched team. They are supported by the chairperson and the parent/carer committee and regular meetings are held to enhance the children's learning and practice. Long term aims include completion of the Herts Quality Standards award.
- Parents receive regular feedback sheets informing them of the weekly events and topics covered. These are clear and informative allowing parents and carers to become involved in their child's learning and development. An example of this includes information on the Jolly Phonic letter and sound

which is currently been learnt and activities which can be carried out at home.

What needs to be improved?

- staff's knowledge of the Foundation Stage and stepping stones
- the use of activities so that progression and challenges can be met.

What has improved since the last inspection?

Generally good progress has been made since the last inspection. The manager has implemented themes such as 'all about me' to increase the children's awareness of how their bodies work. This awareness is also addressed during activities such as music and movement.

She has also built strong links with the village school and obtains advice about writing styles and letter sounds. From this the Jolly Phonics system has been introduced to the pre-school. Staff have quickly become familiar with this method and are enthusiastic practitioners. The manager is in regular contact with the school for continued advice and support.

SUMMARY OF JUDGEMENTS

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Judgement: Very Good

Staff know the children very well and give ample opportunities for them to contribute their own thoughts and experiences. Children are keen and interested in the activities provided. Sharing of toys and equipment is encouraged and staff effectively support children to learn and develop social skills. Children are encouraged to be independent and to be considerate to each other. The children develop a strong sense of community through regular discussions about local events.

COMMUNICATION, LANGUAGE AND LITERACY

Judgement: Generally Good

The children are keen communicators and enjoy listening to stories. Books are displayed attractively. The Jolly Phonics scheme has recently been introduced. Worksheets with suitable props assist the children in recognising letters and sounds. Children recognise their first names by the use of names on individual baskets. Some children attempt to write but there are limited opportunities for them to practise and develop writing skills.

MATHEMATICAL DEVELOPMENT

Judgement: Generally Good

The children's understanding of numbers and mathematical language is adequate and reinforced throughout the daily routine. Examples of this are counting each other at registration time and playing with peg boards. They use practical activities such as making play dough and cooking to experience measuring and change. However, there are missed opportunities at snack time for children to practice and extend mathematical language and skills such as pouring drinks.

KNOWLEDGE AND UNDERSTANDING OF THE WORLD

Judgement: Generally Good

Planned activities help children notice changes that occur. This is regularly carried out by making play dough and cooking. Children are given regular opportunities to investigate objects and materials. They carefully make models from recycled tubes and boxes. They are easily able to access items to use in their construction such as scissors and glue. The children have some use of interactive toys with some adult support.

PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT

Judgement: Generally Good

The children move confidently and with ease pushing wheeled toys indoors. They can throw and catch beanbags, balls and hoops. The children benefit from the nearby play area containing suitable equipment. When weather permits they sometimes use the outside area for climbing and walking. An awareness of health is promoted through the encouragement of hand washing. Children use play dough and equipment with comfort and construct small world play items regularly.

CREATIVE DEVELOPMENT

Judgement:	Generally Good
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Children enjoy helping to make their own play dough. They are encouraged to choose the colour to add to the mixture and to feel it throughout the process. Children are given ample opportunities to join in craft and painting activities and have good adult support. They join in familiar songs as part of the routine of the day. The staff are intending to review the layout of home area and its resources to enable children to play in this area more effectively.

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

- improve staff knowledge and understanding of the Foundation Stage so that they are more familiar with the stepping stones and the early learning goals
- adapt activities so that progression and challenges are offered.

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.