

# First Steps St Matthews

Inspection report for early years provision

---

**Unique reference number**

EY289609

**Inspection date**

08/02/2011

**Inspector**

Alison Edwards

**Setting address**

St. Matthews Neighbourhood Centre, 10 Malabar Road,  
LEICESTER, LE1 2PD

**Telephone number**

0116 2221068 or 6

**Email**

**Type of setting**

Childcare on non-domestic premises

---

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, work-based learning and skills training, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for looked after children, safeguarding and child protection.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk).

You may copy all or parts of this document for non-commercial educational purposes, as long as you give details of the source and date of publication and do not alter the information in any way.

T: 0300 123 1231  
Textphone: 0161 618 8524  
E: [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk)  
W: [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)

© Crown copyright 2011

## Introduction

This inspection was carried out by Ofsted under Sections 49 and 50 of the Childcare Act 2006 on the quality and standards of the registered early years provision. 'Early years provision' refers to provision regulated by Ofsted for children from birth to 31 August following their fifth birthday (the early years age group). The registered person must ensure that this provision complies with the statutory framework for children's learning, development and welfare, known as the *Early Years Foundation Stage*.

The provider must provide a copy of this report to all parents with children at the setting where reasonably practicable. The provider must provide a copy of the report to any other person who asks for one, but may charge a fee for this service (The Childcare (Inspection) Regulations 2008 regulations 9 and 10).

The setting also makes provision for children older than the early years age group which is registered on the voluntary and/or compulsory part(s) of the Childcare Register. This report does not include an evaluation of that provision, but a comment about compliance with the requirements of the Childcare Register is included in Annex B.

Please see our website for more information about each childcare provider. We publish inspection reports, conditions of registration and details of complaints we receive where we or the provider take action to meet the requirements of registration.

## Description of the setting

First Steps, St Matthews registered in 2004 and is a pre-school run by Action for Children. It is linked to a Sure Start Children's Centre in the St Matthews area of Leicester and serves the local community. It is based in a self-contained suite of ground floor rooms in the St Matthews Neighbourhood Centre. There is lift access to the first floor where children also have supervised use of an additional hall. There is no adjoining outdoor play space, but the pre-school now has sole use of an enclosed courtyard a short distance away. The pre-school opens from Monday to Friday during school terms within the hours of 9am and 4pm. Children attend for morning and afternoon sessions. It is registered on the Early Years Register and the compulsory and voluntary parts of the Childcare Register to care for a maximum of 36 children under the age of eight years at any one time, all of whom may be in the early years age range. It receives funding to provide early education. There are currently 40 children on roll, all in the early years age range. This total includes a majority of children with English as an additional language and some with special educational needs and/or disabilities. Including the manager, there are currently four regular childcare staff within the pre-school. Of these, one holds a recognised qualification at Level 5, one at Level 4, and two at Level 3.

## The overall effectiveness of the early years provision

Overall the quality of the provision is good.

This pre-school provides a welcoming and very inclusive environment which is used well overall to help children to make good progress in their development and learning. Staff give very high priority to promoting children's personal and social skills, often working extremely effectively in partnership with others to support the inclusion and achievement of children with a variety of individual needs and backgrounds. Systematic and robust arrangements to identify specific priorities for further improvement effectively support staff in their commitment to continue to build on the existing high quality of the provision.

## What steps need to be taken to improve provision further?

To further improve the early years provision the registered person should:

- explore further ways of using the outdoor environment to extend children's exploration and learning across all areas of development
- explore further ways of promoting all parents' understanding of key policies and procedures underpinning arrangements for their children's care and learning

## **The effectiveness of leadership and management of the early years provision**

Children are cared for in a secure, well-organised and stimulating environment, where systematic risk assessment procedures are in place to underpin careful safety precautions and supervision arrangements. Consequently, children safely develop excellent levels of purposeful independence in their indoor play. The pre-school has worked with external agencies to acquire sole use of an enclosed courtyard a short distance away from its premises. Refurbishment of this area is just being completed to make it suitable for children's use. The pre-school already incorporates daily local outings to enable all children to participate in regular outdoor experiences. However, staff recognise that the outdoor provision does not yet fully extend children's exploration and learning across all areas of development. Clear records are kept of children's individual contact, personal and medical details and there are effective systems to record the administration of any medicines, or the circumstances and treatment of any accidents. This helps to underpin the safe management of children's care. There are effective recruitment and induction procedures, including systems to ensure that required Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) checks are undertaken. This ensures that staff are suitable to work with children and have a good understanding of their roles. Staff are clear on the nationally and locally agreed procedures to be followed by registered early years settings, in the event of any concerns about a child, or in the event of any allegation of abuse against staff. References to key elements of these are incorporated into the organisation's overall internal safeguarding policy, helping to ensure that staff are able to act in children's best interests in the event of any child protection concerns.

The pre-school has excellent links with a range of early years professionals and other relevant agencies. This ensures that there are well-established channels of communication between those working with individual children and families to support their specific needs. Staff work closely with other early years providers, such as, staff in reception classes to which children transfer. This enables them to share techniques and best practice ideas, for example relating to behaviour management, so promoting continuity and progression for children. The pre-school is already exploring a range of ideas to promote parental involvement across all sections of its community. For example, it has introduced the use of a 'talk button' to encourage parents to listen and respond to survey questions in different community languages relating to their children's care. The introduction of flexible arrangements for parents and children to spend time choosing books to borrow and share at home has successfully extended links between pre-school and home. Such arrangements demonstrate the pre-school's excellent commitment to promoting the inclusion and integration of each child and family. Staff use captioned photographs and 'learning journeys' to share information with parents about children's progress, and use attractive display boards to provide information about many aspects of the pre-school's provision. However, the pre-school recognises it currently lacks systematic and fully effective methods to promote all parents' clear understanding of key policies and procedures, such as the collection of children by authorised adults.

Staff and managers form an effective and enthusiastic team who show high levels of continuing commitment to ongoing professional development. Informal discussion, together with scheduled individual and team meetings, promote staff's involvement in the ongoing review of the pre-school's provision. This, together with relevant input from external sources such as local authority advisors, forms the basis of an agreed action plan, helping to ensure that there are clear and specific targets enabling the pre-school to further build on the existing high quality of its provision.

## **The quality and standards of the early years provision and outcomes for children**

Children's health and safety are promoted well. Children enjoy choosing from a healthy selection of snacks, such as breadsticks, and sliced apples and pears. Staff encourage their independent use of covered jugs of milk or water, helping to ensure that they take plenty of fluids. Children quickly develop good hygiene practices, for example as staff encourage their independent use and prompt disposal of tissues to wipe their own noses. Staff actively work with parents and children to encourage awareness of the importance of outdoor activities in a range of weather conditions, so helping to promote children's energetic play in the fresh air. Consequently, children begin to develop good levels of confidence and skill when using equipment such as climbing frames and slides. Children enjoy responding to different rhythms and sounds in music and singing activities. They enjoy a wide range of opportunities to develop their dexterity, for example as they paint with chunky brushes or tear and mould clay. Children are encouraged to use resources, such as, computers and torches independently and responsibly within the pre-school. Staff make good use of routine events, such as, fire drills, to help children extend their safety awareness. For example, they acknowledge and praise children's calm and orderly response to the alarm, and spend time at the assembly point talking with children about the reasons for the evacuation and how to call the emergency services in the event of a real fire.

The pre-school is extremely successful in helping children with a variety of individual backgrounds, language skills and levels of maturity to quickly develop very high levels of confidence and security. Staffing is organised so that each child receives high levels of attention, both on an individual basis, and in small groups. As a result, staff have an excellent awareness of individual children's needs, abilities and preferences, and children develop very high levels of self-esteem because they know that they are recognised and valued. Staff use an extremely good selection of books and stories about different events and experiences, such as, the birth of a new sibling, to help children understand their own emotions. Children, including those with little previous experience of socialising with others, quickly begin to develop secure relationships, for example, when enthusiastically recognising friends as they view digital photographs on a computer. Staff make excellent use of positive and consistent techniques to help children understand what is expected of them. Consequently, children very rapidly develop high levels of concentration and independence in their activities, including those with very limited prior experience of practical play.

Staff have a thorough understanding of what children need to learn, and of the value of practical play and first hand experiences in promoting children's development. They have worked closely with advisory staff to develop systems to observe and assess individual children's changing abilities, and incorporate their knowledge of each child's learning needs in their ongoing planning. Consequently, this helps to ensure that children benefit from a broad and balanced range of experiences, well matched to their stage of maturity. Staff give high priority to establishing children's communication skills. They effectively involve small groups of children in 'fun time' to help encourage their confidence and abilities to listen and talk in a small group, and ensure that they spend time talking and listening to individual children every day. Children across the age range enjoy becoming familiar with good quality books as they share and retell favourite stories, sometimes beginning to anticipate rhymes, or using the pictures to anticipate what will happen next. Flexible arrangements for parents and children to spend time choosing books to borrow, help children to extend their learning at home. Children across the age range enjoy freely 'making their own mark' with paints, crayons and pens, and begin to 'write' for a purpose in their pretend play. Children enjoy purposefully using computers to look at photographs of pre-school events, or to begin to play simple games. They enthusiastically experiment with torches, for example, as younger children investigate how the switches work, whilst older children explore light effects in a 'den' which they have helped to build.

Children gain awareness of their community and the natural world, for example, through outings to local shops and library, and through observing and talking about birds, plants and animals which they see. A wide and well-chosen range of books and play materials reflect different cultures, lifestyles, languages and abilities, so effectively helping to promote children's recognition and respect for diversity. Children across the age range enjoy exploring shape, size and position as they build with large soft blocks or join lengths of tubing together to pour water through. They begin to use number names and count reliably as they decide how many people are going for a walk. They begin to compare quantities as they see how many 'little ducks' have swum away in the water tray, or as they decide 'how much more' they need when spooning out ingredients for cake-making.

## Annex A: record of inspection judgements

### The key inspection judgements and what they mean

*Grade 1 is Outstanding: this aspect of the provision is of exceptionally high quality*  
*Grade 2 is Good: this aspect of the provision is strong*  
*Grade 3 is Satisfactory: this aspect of the provision is sound*  
*Grade 4 is Inadequate: this aspect of the provision is not good enough*

### The overall effectiveness of the early years provision

<b>How well does the setting meet the needs of the children in the Early Years Foundation Stage?</b>	2
The capacity of the provision to maintain continuous improvement	2

### The effectiveness of leadership and management of the early years provision

<b>The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage</b>	2
The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	2
The effectiveness with which the setting deploys resources	2
The effectiveness with which the setting promotes equality and diversity	1
The effectiveness of safeguarding	2
The effectiveness of the setting's self-evaluation, including the steps taken to promote improvement	2
The effectiveness of partnerships	1
The effectiveness of the setting's engagement with parents and carers	2

### The quality of the provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage

The quality of the provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
--	---

### Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage

<b>Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage</b>	2
The extent to which children achieve and enjoy their learning	2
The extent to which children feel safe	2
The extent to which children adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which children make a positive contribution	1
The extent to which children develop skills for the future	2

Any complaints about the inspection or report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance available from Ofsted's website: [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)



## **Annex B: the Childcare Register**

The provider confirms that the requirements of the compulsory part of the Childcare Register are:	Met
---	-----

The provider confirms that the requirements of the voluntary part of the Childcare Register are:	Met
--	-----