

# First Steps Pre-School

Inspection report for early years provision

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**Unique reference number**

117187

**Inspection date**

26/04/2011

**Inspector**

Ruth Thrasher

**Setting address**

Methodist Central Hall, Eastlake Street, Plymouth, Devon,  
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**Type of setting**

Childcare on non-domestic premises

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## 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*.

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## Description of the setting

First Steps Pre-school opened in 1992 and is run by the Plymouth Methodist Church. It operates from the Plymouth Methodist Central Hall in the city centre. The pre-school is open each week day during term time from 9.30 am to 12.30 pm and on Wednesdays a lunch-club runs from 12.30 pm to 1 pm.

The pre-school is registered on the Early Years Register to care for up to 26 children aged from two to the end of the early years age group, of these not more than eight may be under three at any one time. There are currently 22 children in this age group on roll. The pre-school provides funded early education for three and four-year-olds. It supports children with special educational needs and/or disabilities and children who speak English as an additional language.

The pre-school occupies two interconnecting rooms on the first floor and has access to a large hall on the ground floor. There is no outside play area.

The pre-school employs six staff who work directly with the children, plus an administrator. Three staff are qualified to Level 3 and three are qualified to Level 2. The manager has a nursery nurse NNEB qualification.

## The overall effectiveness of the early years provision

Overall the quality of the provision is satisfactory.

Children are safe and secure in the pre-school and enjoy learning about their local area through regular trips out. The staff group work well together to support the diverse needs of the children attending and ensure all are included. Children enjoy a variety of planned activities linked to a theme, but these are not always sufficiently linked to the children's identified next steps in their learning to ensure they receive sufficient challenge. Children have some opportunities to make choices and access resources to support their learning and development. Some improvements have been made since the last inspection, which demonstrates a satisfactory capacity to maintain continuous improvement.

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

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

- develop the observation system in place to clearly identify next steps of children's learning and development which can then be measured against their achievements
- extend the current format of planning to include identified next steps in children's learning
- review arrangements for children to access fresh drinking water to ensure it

- is more freely available
- encourage children to develop their personal and social skills by providing more opportunities for them to do things independently, such as accessing resources, initiating activities or pouring their own drinks.

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

Children's safety is given a high priority in the setting. All staff have been suitably checked and there are good arrangements in place to ensure the children are protected from any visitors to the hall and are secure within the building. Staff have a good understanding of how to safeguard children as they have all completed training through the Methodist Church and the manager has completed additional external training.

The manager has completed a self-evaluation of the setting, following discussions with staff, and has identified areas for improvement, such as the use of space. Some of the recommendations from the last inspection have not been fully implemented; however there have been recent improvements to the premises, including new child-sized toilets and new flooring. The current staff do not wish to work towards higher qualifications, but do regularly attend training courses to update their knowledge. This demonstrates a satisfactory commitment to improving outcomes for children.

The pre-school has two main play rooms that provide lots of space, although the smaller room has fewer resources that children can access themselves and is mainly used for snack and activities that involve sitting at a table. Staff plan activities that are linked to themes that change every half term and include two adult-directed craft activities that children can choose to do. They complete observations of the children once a term and sometimes evaluate these and identify next steps in their learning. However, these are not linked to the planning of future activities and this means that not all children receive sufficient challenge in the different areas of learning.

The pre-school has sound partnerships with some external agencies to ensure that they support children's additional needs, such as resources for children who speak English as an additional language. They invite various schools to the children's leaving events and have some links with a local primary school.

The pre-school has appointed an Equal Opportunities officer who ensures that children receive appropriate support. Two staff have share the role of Special Educational Needs Coordinator and have completed training. This commitment to meeting the individual needs of children ensures that the setting is inclusive.

Parents and carers speak highly of the care provided for their children and appreciate the information they receive in the cloth hangers with individual pockets for each child. This includes the children's work as well as newsletters and information about themes and activities. They also receive verbal feedback from staff and their children's key persons about their children's learning and

development.

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

Children enjoy a range of activities, following a familiar routine that includes a number of group activities where they develop their personal and social skills, such as circle time and story-time. They know when the music starts that it is time to help tidy up and pack away the toys. They are able to freely access some resources, but mainly choose from the activities that staff have planned for that day. They go down to the main hall to play with the activities that staff have set out, including play dough, cars and a train set. They wear hard hats as they play with the workbench and tools, discovering how things work as staff show them how to use a screwdriver. They have some opportunities to learn about technology, playing with battery operated toys and sometimes having the use of a laptop.

The pre-school does not have an outdoor area, but effective alternatives are planned. For example children enjoy a wide range of outings to local parks and places of interest, such as a bookshop and the library. They use a variety of different methods of transport including a minibus and ferry, which develops their understanding of the world around them.

Children learn how to keep themselves safe as staff remind them to be careful when they go down the steps. They have discussions at circle time about what they should do if they become separated from adults when in town. Children take part in emergency evacuation procedures and hold on to a rope to ensure their safety. They learn about healthy lifestyles as they join in physical activities in the hall, shaking their bodies to the 'Wiggly Woo' tune. Children enjoy healthy snacks and are given a choice of water or milk to drink, but have to ask for drinks at other times.

Children generally behave well but sometimes become restless in between activities, for example when they are lining up or waiting for the last child to finish their snack. They have some opportunities to do things for themselves to promote their independence and initiate their own learning, and therefore are generally acquiring the skills they need to support future learning. However they do not pour their own drinks or help serve food at snack time and have a limited range of activities and resources that they can select for themselves. Some activities, such as the dressing up clothes or resources for making models from recycled materials, are not available at every session and this limits their creative play. Children are not always sufficiently challenged as staff are not clear about the next steps in their learning and how they can take this forward into the planning of activities.

Children benefit from a secure environment and trusting relationships with consistent adults. Staff are aware of the different backgrounds of the children, ensuring that all children are included. Children develop some understanding of different cultures through activities such as sharing platters of different foods from

around the world.

## 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>	3
The capacity of the provision to maintain continuous improvement	3

### 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>	3
The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	3
The effectiveness with which the setting deploys resources	3
The effectiveness with which the setting promotes equality and diversity	3
The effectiveness of safeguarding	2
The effectiveness of the setting's self-evaluation, including the steps taken to promote improvement	3
The effectiveness of partnerships	3
The effectiveness of the setting's engagement with parents and carers	3

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

The quality of the provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
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### 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	3
The extent to which children feel safe	2
The extent to which children adopt healthy lifestyles	3
The extent to which children make a positive contribution	3
The extent to which children develop skills for the future	3

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