

First Steps

Inspection report for early years provision

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Inspector

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Type of setting

Childcare - Non-Domestic

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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*.

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.

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Description of the setting

First Steps is owned by a private provider and was registered in September 2010. It operates from a converted, detached house in the village of Great Lumley, in Chester Le Street. Children are accommodated on both the ground and first floors of the premises and there are three main playrooms, two bathrooms and a kitchen. There is a fully enclosed area available for outdoor play.

The nursery opens Monday to Friday all year round, with the exception of a week at Christmas and public holidays. Sessions are from 8am to 6pm. Children are able to attend for a variety of sessions. Some children are taken and collected from the local primary school and nursery school. A maximum of 33 children may attend the nursery at any one time. There are currently 38 children on roll of whom 35 are in the early years age group. The nursery also offers care to children aged over five years to eight years. The nursery supports children with special educational needs and/or disabilities. The nursery is registered on the Early Years Register and the compulsory and voluntary parts of the Childcare Register.

The nursery employs six members of child care staff. Of these, all hold appropriate early years qualifications. There is also a member of staff employed to undertake cooking and domestic duties. The setting receives support for the local authority.

The overall effectiveness of the early years provision

Overall the quality of the provision is good.

Children are happy, settled and enjoy positive relationships with staff who know their individual needs very well. Overall, planning and organisation is good, providing purposeful learning opportunities that support children in making progress in all areas of their learning and development. Children enjoy a safe environment in which to play, and their welfare is promoted well. The nursery has worked successfully to build partnerships with parents and other childcare practitioners. There is a clear commitment to the continuous improvement of the provision and this leads to improved outcomes for children.

What steps need to be taken to improve provision further?

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

- build upon the systems for monitoring children's progress to show how children's next steps are effectively addressed
- improve further children's opportunities for social interactions for example, by ensuring staff sit at the table with the children during meal times.

The effectiveness of leadership and management of the early years provision

The staff have a good awareness of safeguarding issues and there are clear policies and procedures in place for staff to follow should they have a concern. There are effective recruitment and induction procedures in place, to ensure suitability of those involved in children's care and play. A detailed range of policies and procedures, are understood and consistently implemented by staff. These are used to inform practice and promote the welfare of the children who attend. This combined with effective recording systems for medication administration, accidents and allergies further ensures children are well protected. Robust risk assessments are carried out for all areas of the premises and for any outings. This supports staff in being able to identify and minimise any potential hazards and ensure children remain safe. The learning environment is thoughtfully planned to enable all children to easily access the good range of resources, encouraging free choice and independence. The nursery benefits from a Specialist Educational Needs Coordinator who is confident in her role and positive about working with other providers to meet children's individual needs and to ensure an inclusive service.

The enthusiastic team share good relationships, which contributes to the welcoming environment they provide. A particular strength of the setting is the good partnership established with parents and carers which ensure children's individual needs are met. Staff successfully utilise notice boards, newsletters, daily diaries and daily discussions with parents to ensure they are kept suitably informed about the organisation of the nursery and events. Parents are encouraged to provide detailed information about their child when starting at the nursery, so that the child's key person knows their individual interests, welfare needs and developmental starting points to inform the initial planning. Staff exchange information daily with parents about children's care and share children's learning and development records on a regular basis. They also offer parents the service of texting so they can check how their child has been or to inform staff of any information regarding the child. Staff are keen to involve parents in their children's learning to provide them with ideas and resources for activities so they are able to continue supporting their child's development at home. This is also reciprocal as parents are encouraged to use the 'Ideas from Home' message board which enables them to have input into the nursery activities or to give suggestions of things staff could do. Feedback from parents is positive and complimentary and demonstrates their satisfaction with the service. Good working relationships with other professionals, such as the speech and language therapist have been developed in order to maintain a consistent approach in meeting children's needs. Partnerships with local schools are also positive and support a consistent approach to children's transitional needs as they move onto school.

The setting effectively evaluates the service they provide. They are able to identify their key strengths and areas they wish to develop. They use questionnaires, discussions and monitor daily practice to ensure standards are maintained and to extend their already good service. Regular training opportunities enable the team to develop and continuously improve outcomes for children. All actions and

recommendations made at the last inspection have now been addressed, demonstrating their ability to maintain continuous improvement.

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

Caring and nurturing relationships with staff enable children to form close attachments and feel secure. Furthermore, the warm and welcoming atmosphere creates a positive climate for learning. Children make good progress towards the early learning goals because staff have a clear understanding of the Early Years Foundation Stage and this is reflected in their practice. Observations and monitoring of children's progress is thorough and reflects the staff's good knowledge of the individual children in their care. It is evident that the assessments made from the observations are used effectively to plan the next steps in learning for each child. However, staff do not record within the children's Learning Journeys how this is addressed.

Staff prepare a busy and stimulating environment, which immediately captures children's imagination on arrival at the setting. They fully support and enhance the children's learning as they explore the activities, lead their own play and make choices and decisions for themselves. This results in children becoming active learners, confident and independent. Enjoyable activities such as making biscuits develop children's skills in counting and recognition of shapes, as well as developing an awareness of weight and measurement, as they weigh out the ingredients. Children engage in meaningful conversations and staff use good questioning to reinforce their language skills and introduce new words into their vocabulary. Children have opportunities to mix with different age groups during part of the day. This encourages their social skills and interaction with their peers. Children are happy and relaxed and show by their body language and interactions that they are secure. They are nurtured by attentive staff who give plenty of cuddles and physical contact. For example, they readily find a favourite book and choose to sit cosily on the staff member's lap to have the story read. As a result, they have their needs met for physical contact while enjoying the story, and begin to develop their early fundamental skills in order to secure future learning and development.

The nursery is very much part of the village community and engage in local events and activities such as those held at the community centre and church. The staff's positive attitude to equal opportunities ensures children have a good awareness of the wider world. This is further promoted with access to relevant resources and by inviting visitors to the nursery. For example, during their celebration of Chinese New Year they invited a local Chinese resident to come and talk to the children about their culture and to share authentic artefacts with them. All children have access to a safe outdoor area where they are able to get fresh air and exercise. They learn about nature and the world around them through growing things in the garden such as potatoes, carrots and peas.

Children's health, safety and welfare are well promoted. Children enjoy nutritious meals, prepared daily on the premises by the nursery cook, using fresh

ingredients. Menus are displayed and staff are aware of children with allergies or particular dietary needs. Main meal times are a social occasion however, staff miss opportunities to become even more involved as they tend to stand rather than having a seat at the table so they are at the children's level. Children's knowledge about personal safety is encouraged by gentle reminders from staff and the through the well established daily routines. This combined with the high priority that is given to road safety, the wearing of high visibility jackets during outings and regular fire evacuations positively contributes to children developing a sense of danger and how to keep themselves safe. Children behave well and are beginning to understand the consequences of unacceptable behaviour to others. The staff have good strategies in place for managing behaviour, which are appropriate to the children's ages and stages of development and understanding.

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

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

The effectiveness of leadership and management of the early years provision

The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	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	2
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	2
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
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Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage

Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	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	2
The extent to which children develop skills for the future	2

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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