

# First Steps Montessori Prep School

Inspection report for early years provision

---

<b>Unique reference number</b>	405451
<b>Inspection date</b>	04/11/2008
<b>Inspector</b>	Vivienne Rose

<b>Setting address</b>	5 Sebert Road, Forest Gate, London, E7 0NG
------------------------	--

<b>Telephone number</b>	020 8555 0125
<b>Email</b>	firststeps@aol.com
<b>Type of setting</b>	Childcare - Non-Domestic

## **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).

## **Description of the setting**

First Steps Montessori Prep School opened in 1990, and is privately owned. It operates from three rooms in a two storey converted house in Forest Gate in the London borough of Newham. The property is located in a mainly residential area and is in close proximity to transport facilities, schools and shops. The prep school is open each weekday from 07.30 to 18.30 for 51 weeks of the year. The nursery is on two floors which consists of a baby room on the first floor, a toddler room and a room for children aged three to five years on the ground floor. There are accessible bathroom facilities on both floors. There is an office and kitchen. All children share access to a secure outdoor area for play. It is registered with Ofsted on the Early Years Register to care for 28 children from birth to five years.

There are currently 31 children on roll. The nursery is in receipt of nursery education funding and currently supports children with English as an additional language. Children come from a wide catchment area as most of their parents travel to work in and around the area. The nursery has developed a partnership with local schools and exchange written information about the children when they leave the setting.

The nursery employs seven members of staff, all of the staff hold appropriate early years qualifications. The setting receives support from the local authority. The prep school practices Montessori teaching methods and also follows the Early Years Foundation Stage.

## **Overall effectiveness of the early years provision**

Information is gathered from parents to enable the staff to give children individual care and consideration and staff are beginning to use methods to promote the Early Years Foundation Stage. Children in the older age group are making satisfactory progress towards the early learning goals. However, planning for younger children is less focused in its implementation. There are systems in place to support children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and staff work closely with outside agencies. However, staff lack confidence in the management of children's behaviour to fully support their well-being. Since the last inspection improvements have been made including the development of resources for younger children and action has been taken on comments from parents made on questionnaires. The setting does not regularly self-evaluate to help them identify their strengths and weaknesses and adult staff ratios are not always consistent which means that some children sometimes become less focused in their play.

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

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

- develop a rigorous system to risk assess the outdoor area to enable children to develop their physical skills appropriately

- ensure that children's behaviour is managed effectively and in a manner appropriate for their individual needs
- continue to develop the systems for the observations, assessment, evaluation and planning of children's next steps to ensure experiences are appropriate and challenging; in particular opportunities for mark making and creativity
- develop systems to identify strengths and areas for development to raise the quality of care and education
- improve the deployment of staff to ensure that children's security and well-being are supported

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

The setting is led and managed by the owner/manager who supports staff to identify training needs and to access relevant training. As a result staff are beginning to become familiar with the new Early Years Foundation stage (EYFS) framework. An effective recruitment and vetting procedure ensures that all adults working with children are suitable to do so. Most staff are knowledgeable about their roles and responsibilities in safeguarding children and have attended awareness training with the local early years service. On-going suitability of staff is monitored by the manager through regular observations. However, this does not always focus on the needs of the children or how interaction can be improved. Systems to identify weaknesses for the setting to monitor areas for development are not fully implemented. There are some useful opportunities for the parents and carers to share information about the children's developmental progress and to become involved in the nursery activities, for example through a home activities sheet. The nursery has enlisted the support of the early years adviser to help develop their system for recording, planning for children's development, as yet this has not been fully implemented throughout the nursery. Liaison with other professionals to support children, for example the speech therapist ensures that the setting strives to provide an inclusive environment for children. The setting is yet to develop a comprehensive self-evaluation procedure to successfully identify where they need to make improvements. For example, in the organisation of activities to ensure that younger children are fully challenged in their learning. Children are generally well safeguarded as staff carry out daily risks assessments and for outings. However, these are not sufficiently rigorous when organising the outdoor environment for the children. For example, when resources are cramped into a small area which does not allow children to freely move around to promote their physical skills effectively.

## **The quality and standards of the early years provision**

Older children make satisfactory progress in their learning as they are supported by staff that have a good knowledge of the early learning goals. Information is used regarding children's achievements and interests to help children make their next steps for learning. Staff come together as a team to discuss the planning looking at their key child's observations. Staff provide developmentally appropriate themes and activities, for example, children learn about Harvest Festival and Black History month and they enjoy the special table with African artefacts. However, the

planning systems for younger children do not clearly identify learning intentions or reflect what activities are provided for children to fully support children's individual learning. A suitable variety of resources are available and children are generally confident in choosing what additional resources they would like to play with. However, on the day of inspection adults were not always well deployed to support children's learning effectively as ratios are not always maintained. As a result activities for younger children lack structure and direction to fully challenge children. Older children confidently communicate to their peers and staff. A number of children say hello to the inspector and are comfortable about asking questions, children enjoy looking at books independently. Staff chat with younger children and encourage them to take part in activities. Children communicate by non-verbal gesture and eye contact and generally have warm relationships with staff.

Staff support children's understanding of simple maths concepts for example, as they play with number rods and shapes making patterns. Children are familiar with the sounds of letters and those who are ready progress well with early writing. However, there are fewer opportunities for younger children to practise mark making to develop their creative skills. Older children estimate how many more they will need and talk about 'that is bigger and that is smaller'. Children learn about the world around them through visits to the local park, museums and library. They self-select from a range of clothes and accessories that are displayed at their level. The children begin to learn about keeping themselves healthy through discussion and the healthy snacks and meals they are eating. They enjoy fresh air daily however; the organisation of outdoor area does not always promote their physical development and use of space to the children's best effect. However, the management team have identified some areas for improvement in the outdoor area. Documentation to safeguard the children is in place which includes children's attendance details, all medical and dietary needs of children are recorded, as are the relevant permission details.

## 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*

### Overall effectiveness

<b>How effective is the provision in meeting the needs of children in the Early Years Foundation Stage?</b>	3
How well does the provision promote inclusive practice?	3
The capacity of the provision to maintain continuous improvement.	3

### Leadership and management

<b>How effectively is provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage led and managed?</b>	3
How effective is the setting's self-evaluation, including the steps taken to promote improvement?	3
How well does the setting work in partnership with parents and others?	3
How well are children safeguarded?	3

### Quality and standards

<b>How effectively are children in the Early Years Foundation Stage helped to learn and develop?</b>	3
<b>How effectively is the welfare of children in the Early Years Foundation Stage promoted?</b>	3
How well are children helped to stay safe?	2
How well are children helped to be healthy?	2
How well are children helped to enjoy and achieve?	3
How well are children helped to make a positive contribution?	3
How well are children helped develop skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being?	3

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)

