

# Millennium First Steps

Inspection report for early years provision

---

**Unique reference number**

EY420136

**Inspection date**

24/04/2012

**Inspector**

Karen Molloy

**Setting address**

Unit-1A, Station Approach, HITCHEN, Hertfordshire, SG4  
9UW

**Telephone number**

0208 4412321

**Email**

millengrangcare@aol.com

**Type of setting**

Childcare - Non-Domestic

---

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 2012

## 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

Millennium First Steps registered in 2010. The nursery was previously operational under another company name. The nursery operates from five playrooms within a sole-use building close to the centre of the town of Hitchin, Hertfordshire. The building is accessed directly from a parking area and is set across two floors linked by stairs. Children have access to the fully enclosed outdoor play area. The nursery adopts the Montessori approach to learning in the pre school rooms.

The provision is open each weekday throughout the year and sessions are from 7.30am to 6.30pm. The provision is closed during Christmas and Bank Holidays. A maximum of 116 children may attend the setting at any one time. The provision is registered on the Early Years Register and on the compulsory part of the Childcare Register. There are currently 90 children on roll.

Most of the children live locally or travel from the surrounding villages and the setting serves a large number of commuters. The setting supports children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and children for whom English is an additional language. There are 20 staff members with two additional bank staff members. Of these, 17 hold relevant childcare qualifications.

## The overall effectiveness of the early years provision

Overall the quality of the provision is satisfactory.

Millennium First Steps Nursery provides a welcoming and inclusive environment for children. All the required policies and procedures are in place for the safe and efficient management of the setting. Children make sound progress overall in their learning and development with most children's individual needs identified. Generally, the organisation works well to ensure children are happy and secure in their environment. Systems are in place to safeguard children and staff are generally aware of their role in dealing with any concerns they may have. Staff form sound partnerships with parents to ensure information about each child is shared effectively. This is the nursery's first inspection since re-registration, therefore self-evaluation systems to review practices within the nursery are still evolving and not yet fully effective.

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

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

- develop a quality improvement process, such as self-evaluation, to monitor and extend effective practice to ensure continuous improvement
- develop planning systems to ensure observation and assessment informs planning and children's individual learning needs and next steps are clearly identified
- ensure all staff have an up-to-date understanding of safeguarding children

- issues and be able to implement the safeguarding children policy and procedure appropriately, in line with LSCB guidance and procedures
- plan and organise the grouping of children throughout the day to ensure that their individual needs are met by their key person.

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

Children are adequately safeguarded and protected in the setting. Staff understand their role and responsibility in reporting their concerns to the appropriate people. However, their knowledge of current Local Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB) procedures is not up-to-date because they have not received any training on current safeguarding issues. Sensible rules and suitable supervision keep children safe. Staff are appropriately vetted and are safe and suitable to work with young children. The building and environment is of a satisfactory standard with some areas identified for improvement, such as the bathrooms. All the appropriate risk assessments are in place to support staff in ensuring the areas used by the children are safe and secure. This means that children move safely and freely around the building.

Staff are generally knowledgeable about the Early Years Foundation Stage and use this well to support children in their learning. The environment is mostly well organised and accessible to the children but there are some inconsistencies across the rooms. For example, most rooms are bright and spacious to enable children to move around freely and toys and resources are stored at low level to encourage children to make independent choices. This means that children make good progress in their development. However, in some of the rooms and outdoors, resources are in poor condition, limited in quantity and do not provide sufficient challenge for the children. 'Our art gallery' displays children's work and promotes a sense of pride.

Although the nursery has been running for a number of years, it has been under new ownership in recent months. A system to monitor practice and drive improvement is still in the early stages, although senior staff and the owners have started to identify areas for improvement, such as staff training, regular appraisals, staff supervision and 'parents voice' to encourage parents to become involved in their child's learning. However, organisation of the nursery is sometimes not managed effectively, which means that children are not always cared for by their key person because they are grouped together to ensure adult:child ratios are maintained. As yet, there is no systematic way to routinely gather feedback and views from parents in order to contribute to self-evaluation.

Staff form sound working relationships with parents and carers. They obtain useful information about each child, such as likes and dislikes, routine, dietary and personal care needs and other information through an 'All about me' format. This gives staff an insight into their needs and interests and means that parent's wishes and children's individual needs are effectively met. Children are supported to settle in gradually and key workers support a smooth transition from room to room. Ongoing communication is through a nursery brochure, policies and procedures,

newsletters and day sheets for the younger children detailing their food, sleep and activities. Six monthly consultations are an opportunity for staff and parents to share important information about children's progress. Relationships with other provisions/professionals involved with the children are in the early stages, with an annual visit to the local children centre.

Staff have a positive approach to supporting children who have special educational needs and or disabilities. They obtain key words from parents to support those who have English as an additional language and greetings posters display welcome and goodbye in various languages. Staff will adapt activities to ensure all children are fully included in the life of the setting.

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

Children are making sound progress towards the early learning goals. However, inconsistent practice within the nursery means the opportunities and quality of practice is not the same for children in each of the rooms in the nursery. Planning and assessment is generally effective, and good in some rooms, and supports planning for individual children's needs and interests. Most children are busy and engaged, although they are not always fully challenged in some rooms and observation does not always inform planning. Individual learning journals detail observations, examples of children's work and photographs. These link to the areas of learning and most identify the next steps in children's learning. Children are happy and settled in the setting. Staff develop close relationships with the children and their interaction is positive. They are caring and enthusiastic in their manner; they support the children well and are on hand to guide them when necessary. Staff listen effectively to children and in turn they respond and approach them with confidence.

Children participate in a range of activities and experiences. Their communication, language and literacy skills are promoted well. For example, an engaging story telling session with props ensures children are thoroughly absorbed and keen to listen. Young babies enjoy looking at books, with staff close by to point out pictures and encourage them. Children enjoy getting cosy on the sofa with an adult to read a story. She extends their thinking and adds to their vocabulary by asking them to think of a flavour beginning with 'v'. Pre-school children use sandpaper letters and 'letter of the week' to practise their sounds as they think of words beginning with 's'. 'Dot to dot' helps them to form letters and handwriting books support them in their emergent writing. Children begin to develop a knowledge and understanding of the world; they play imaginatively with animals, dolls and other small world resources. They learn about nature through activities about life cycles and they plant sunflower seeds. Children's physical skills are promoted as they use a variety of indoor resources and babies' mobility is encouraged, as they use walkers to practise their new found skill.

Children's personal, social and emotional development is encouraged. Babies and children are responded to appropriately and promptly if they are upset. Babies are given cuddles and comfort and staff remind children to share, even at an early

age. Children have opportunities to develop their independence, although in some rooms this is not always encouraged, for example during snack time. Children play and work together cooperatively, for example to complete a puzzle. Children's creative development is fostered; older children are able to self-select junk resources and enjoy car wheel painting. Early mathematical concepts are introduced through various activities. As children learn to fill and empty lentils into a tray they also develop their coordination as they pour the lentils carefully through the funnel. A selection of Montessori resources, including sandpaper numerals, number rods and inset shapes promotes children's understanding of number, shape and measure.

Children develop an awareness of their own safety. In the older rooms children understand the sensible rules, such as 'indoor feet and indoor voices.' Although they have not had one for a while, children participate in fire drills and they walk safely out into the garden. Children's good health is promoted. Illustrated posters remind children to wash their hands and they discuss germs and why they need to wash hands. Good hygiene practices are encouraged; they take a tissue, throwing it in the dustbin when used and clean their teeth each day at nursery. Children benefit from a range of healthy meals and snacks and enjoy their fruit, breadsticks and drink. Their general well-being is fostered as they spend some time outdoors, benefiting from regular fresh air and exercise. Indoors, children use bikes, rockers, tunnels and balancing steps, thereby developing their physical skills.

Children behave well because staff give them positive attention and children are generally busy and engaged. They are familiar with the positive rules, such as 'if we forget, we can always ask for help'. Group times are used to talk about sharing, taking turns and people's feelings. Children develop a sense of belonging; they have their own individual coat pegs with their name on and their art work is displayed. In the pre-school rooms their independence is encouraged as they help to clean and tidy up. Children receive lots of praise, which encourages their good behaviour and develops their self-esteem.

## 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	3
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	3
--	---

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

<b>Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage</b>	3
The extent to which children achieve and enjoy their learning	3
The extent to which children feel safe	3
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

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