

Early Steps Pre-School

Tirecel Community Centre, Fulmar Drive, South Beach Estate, NORTHUMBERLAND, NE24 3RJ

Inspection date	21/01/2014
Previous inspection date	28/02/2011

The quality and standards of the early years provision	This inspection:	2
	Previous inspection:	3
How well the early years provision meets the needs of the range of children who attend		2
The contribution of the early years provision to the well-being of children		2
The effectiveness of the leadership and management of the early years provision		2

The quality and standards of the early years provision

This provision is good

- Teaching is good because of staff's positive interaction. Children are achieving well and are motivated and keen to learn. They explore confidently and play purposefully and are developing skills they need to support the next stage in their learning.
- The experienced staff's caring and sensitive manner helps children form secure emotional attachments and develops their confidence. This builds a strong and secure base for learning and development.
- Children's safety and well-being are promoted well. Staff are highly attentive to children's needs and are constantly vigilant to ensure that any hazards are successfully minimised.
- The partnership with parents is effectively managed as staff are skilled in sharing relevant information regarding child development, ensuring that children's needs are met.

It is not yet outstanding because

- There is scope to raise all parents' awareness of the benefits that can be gained from them contributing their own observations from home to their children's learning journals, as part of the ongoing observation and assessment process, to help staff understand children's current interests.
- There is scope to enhance opportunities for children to develop their self-care and independence skills at snack time, by them helping to prepare the different foods.

Information about this inspection

Inspections of registered early years provision are:

- scheduled at least once in every inspection cycle – the current cycle ends on 31 July 2016
- scheduled more frequently where Ofsted identifies a need to do so, for example where provision was previously judged inadequate
- brought forward in the inspection cycle where Ofsted has received information that suggests the provision may not be meeting the legal requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage or where assessment of the provision identifies a need for early inspection
- prioritised where we have received information that the provision is not meeting the requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage and which suggests children may not be safe
- scheduled at the completion of an investigation into failure to comply with the requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage.

Inspection activities

- The inspector had a tour of the premises and observed activities in the playrooms and outdoor area.
- The inspector met with the manager, carried out a joint observation and spoke with staff and children at appropriate times during the inspection.
- The inspector looked at children's development records, planning documentation, evidence of suitability of staff working in the pre-school and a range of other records, policies and procedures.
- The inspector took account of the views of parents through discussion at the inspection.

Inspector

Lynne Pope

Full report

Information about the setting

Early Steps Pre-School was registered in 1993 and is on the Early Years Register. It is situated in South Beach Community Centre in the Blyth area of Northumberland, and is run by the South Beach Residents Association. The pre-school serves the local area and is accessible to all children. It operates from two rooms and there is an enclosed area available for outdoor play.

The pre-school employs 11 members of childcare staff. Of these, all staff hold appropriate early years qualifications at level 2 and 3.

The pre-school opens Monday to Friday during term time. Sessions are from 8.45am until 11.45am and from 12.30pm until 3.30pm. Children attend for a variety of sessions. There are currently 39 children attending who are in the early years age group. The pre-school provides funded early education for two-, three- and four-year-old children.

What the setting needs to do to improve further

To further improve the quality of the early years provision the provider should:

- raise all parents' awareness of the benefits that can be gained from them adding their own observations from home to their children's learning journals, as part of the ongoing observation and assessment process, to help staff understand and plan for children's current interests
- enhance children's self-care and independence skills, for example, by providing opportunities for them to be involved in the preparation of different foods at snack time.

Inspection judgements

How well the early years provision meets the needs of the range of children who attend

Teaching is good because staff have a good knowledge and understanding of how to observe, assess and plan for children's learning. They observe new children for the first two days and record what they are interested in and how they are settling. This helps staff to gauge children's interests and capabilities through good observations. From this they provide resources based on children's interests, to promote child-initiated play. Staff observe children and over time keep a record of their development in a learning journal. Observations are supported by photographs of children's activities and staff highlight the areas of learning that they link into. Children's overall progress is assessed twice a year, which helps staff to identify if there are any delays or gaps in their learning and

development. This all forms a strong basis for staff to plan for their individual key children, ensuring that they follow the next steps in their learning and make good progress.

Children show high levels of interest, demonstrate satisfaction in their achievements and clearly enjoy their play and activities. Staff are very good facilitators of children's learning as they join in enthusiastically, which stimulates the children's imagination. For example, they join in with their play in the sand tray. They follow children's direction, adding water, so that children can observe the changes that happen. Staff encourage children's conversational skills asking them to explain to other children what the sand feels like. Children reply that it is 'cold' and feels 'gooey'. Staff repeat what children say so that they learn the correct pronunciation by example. Teaching is good as staff promote children's understanding of listening and saying the initial sounds in letters. Staff follow the same phonics scheme as the main school, which most of the children transfer to. They inform parents about the scheme through a letter, so that they can continue to use the same strategies at home. Each week staff cover a new letter as a whole group and children have one-to-one time with their key person, which reinforces their learning. For example, children learn the 's' sound for snake, weaving their hands like a snake and saying 'sssss'. All children show their appreciation for books. They choose what they would like to look at and carefully turn the pages. Staff help children learn how to handle the books correctly, checking that they are holding it the right way up and ask questions about what is happening in the pictures to help children recall the story. Staff teach children how to form recognisable letters. They help older children start to write their name and this develops children's independence as they form some recognisable letters on their paintings.

Staff make the most of opportunities to count to help children learn how to recite numbers in the correct order. For example, they all count how many children there are before they go back inside after outdoor play. Staff provide lots of resources to stimulate children's interests in other cultures and ways of life. They are looking at Chinese New Year and at group time help children recall how to say 'Happy New Year' in Chinese. In the home corner children play with resources, such as wool, pretending that it is noodles as they try to pick it up with chopsticks. Overall, children's learning and development is in line with the expected developmental ranges for their age. As a result, they are obtaining the skills, attitudes and dispositions they need to be ready for school or the next stage of learning.

Parents are warmly welcomed into the pre-school by the approachable staff. Really strong relationships have been developed that engage them in their children's development and learning in the setting and at home. Parents receive lots of verbal feedback daily and have access to their children's learning journal at any time. Staff encourage parents to add their own observations from home to their child's learning journals. However, this has not been the most highly successful approach, so there is scope to develop this further so that staff can find out more about all children's interests from home. Parents of the younger children can discuss their child's development at any time and meetings are held twice a year for older children.

The contribution of the early years provision to the well-being of children

The staff are very effective in helping children feel secure and to form secure bonds in the pre-school. There are excellent settling-in procedures that start once a child turns two years of age. The pre-school offers a toddler session on Friday mornings, which parents and children attend. This ensures that good communication is established early on between parents and key persons to help build relationships before they start to attend pre-school sessions. When children are ready to start pre-school, parents fill in a document about their child's needs and what they like to do. Staff refer to this if children are unsettled, so that they can provide resources that they know the child likes. Children also have as many settling-in visits as they need and are seen to settle really well and form a strong bond with their key person. Staff are very good role models. They treat children with kindness and respect and speak calmly to them. Children are well supported with learning how to manage their own behaviour and become tolerant of others, for example, sharing and waiting their turn. Discussion during everyday activities helps children to learn how to keep themselves safe. For example, at group time staff talk about what children need to do to stay safe in pre-school and children show their understanding by responding that they must not to run inside as they might fall and bump their heads.

The staff provide a very stimulating environment for children. Both indoor and outdoor areas are well resourced with a wide range of good quality equipment, activities and positive interaction, which engages their interest and develops independence. Children gain high levels of confidence and curiosity by the enthusiastic encouragement from staff. Children's physical development is positively promoted. For example, staff join in with children's play, involving children in practising their ball skills as they hold a hoop for children to throw different size balls through. Children receive lots of praise for their efforts and staff use language, such as 'You may need to throw it higher' to develop children's understanding of different words and their meaning. Staff teach children to be independent in their self-care skills. They encourage children to put their own hats and coats on to go outside and to return them to the correct peg when they come back inside. They give children guidance about where they can go and sit for snack and bring shape and colour language into children's learning. For example, they tell them they can sit at the round, red table or the square, blue table. Staff teach children the importance of cleanliness, as they talk about germs in different situations. Children demonstrate their understanding as they tell staff that they wash their hands after using the toilet or before snack because of germs. A nutritious variety of healthy snacks is offered, which includes fresh fruit. However, as staff prepare snack before children sit at the table, this does not fully promote their independence, discussion around food, or promote further learning through everyday routines.

Good transition arrangements are in place for when children move from one room to another. The child's key person completes a transition summary to help their new key person know about children's progress. Children move after their new key person has visited them, which helps to provide a smooth transition. Staff make positive links with the schools children will attend. Teachers are invited into the pre-school to meet the children and records of children's abilities are shared and discussed to aid children in making a smooth transition when the time comes.

The effectiveness of the leadership and management of the early years

provision

The pre-school is led by a dynamic and enthusiastic manager who is genuinely passionate about providing high quality care and education for children. Safeguarding procedures are fully understood by staff and the pre-school has a full written policy in place to underpin good practice. The safety and well-being of children is effectively prioritised at all times, with all staff clear about the signs and symptoms that may indicate abuse. Excellent adult to child ratios are maintained and staff are very well deployed, ensuring that children are well supported in their play and learning. The premises are very secure, as visitors have to identify themselves before they are allowed in. Staff carry out daily risk assessments to ensure that possible hazards for children are minimised to keep them safe at all times. Recruitment procedures are robust and all staff undergo checks to ensure they are safe and suitable to work with children. New staff benefit from an induction, which ensures they are quickly aware of the routines, policies and procedures that apply to the pre-school. Annual appraisals are in place to discuss staffs individual strengths and weaknesses in practice and to identify any training needs.

Regular management and staff meetings are held to discuss and review each session, and planning of activities to support children's learning needs. The manager evaluates the assessments of children's progress in their learning and development that staff carry out, so that she gets an overall view for how all children are making progress. She is committed to driving the pre-school forward and has met all the recommendations set at the last inspection. For example, comfortable areas have been developed in both playrooms for children to rest or play quietly. Self-evaluation is used to good effect and future goals are identified to continually improve the pre-school, for the benefit of the children. For example, they have identified that they would like to introduce resources in the garden that children can use to make sounds.

Staff build positive relationships with parents and talk to them on a daily basis about their child's achievements and well-being. Staff share any issues or concerns to ensure that children are swiftly given additional support where needed. For example, they are vigilant in identifying any developmental delays so that they can discuss how to provide extra input swiftly, which helps children to catch up with their peers. Parents particularly comment on how well their children have settled and they feel really well-informed about the progress their children are making.

What inspection judgements mean

Registered early years provision

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	Outstanding provision is highly effective in meeting the needs of all children exceptionally well. This ensures that children are very well prepared for the next stage of their learning.
Grade 2	Good	Good provision is effective in delivering provision that meets the needs of all children well. This ensures children are ready for the next stage of their learning.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	The provision is not giving children a good standard of early years education and/or there are minor breaches of the safeguarding and welfare requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage. It will be monitored and inspected within twelve months of the date of this inspection.
Grade 4	Inadequate	Provision that is inadequate requires significant improvement and/or enforcement action. The provision is failing to give children an acceptable standard of early years education and/or is not meeting the safeguarding and welfare requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage. It will be monitored and inspected again within six months of the date of this inspection.
Met		The provision has no children on roll. The inspection judgement is that the provider continues to meet the requirements for registration.
Not met		The provision has no children on roll. The inspection judgement is that the provider does not meet the requirements for registration.

Inspection

This inspection was carried out by Ofsted under sections 49 and 50 of the Childcare Act 2006 on the quality and standards of provision that is registered on the Early Years Register. The registered person must ensure that this provision complies with the statutory framework for children's learning, development and care, known as the Early Years Foundation Stage.

Setting details

Unique reference number	301827
Local authority	Northumberland
Inspection number	876666
Type of provision	
Registration category	Childcare - Non-Domestic
Age range of children	0 - 5
Total number of places	48
Number of children on roll	39
Name of provider	South Beach Residents Association Committee
Date of previous inspection	28/02/2011
Telephone number	01670 367971

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Type of provision

For the purposes of this inspection the following definitions apply:

Full-time provision is that which operates for more than three hours. These are usually known as nurseries, nursery schools and pre-schools and must deliver the Early Years Foundation Stage. They are registered on the Early Years Register and pay the higher fee for registration.

Sessional provision operates for more than two hours but does not exceed three hours in any one day. These are usually known as pre-schools, kindergartens or nursery schools

and must deliver the Early Years Foundation Stage. They are registered on the Early Years Register and pay the lower fee for registration.

Childminders care for one or more children where individual children attend for a period of more than two hours in any one day. They operate from domestic premises, which are usually the childminder's own home. They are registered on the Early Years Register and must deliver the Early Years Foundation Stage.

Out of school provision may be sessional or full-time provision and is delivered before or after school and/or in the summer holidays. They are registered on the Early Years Register and must deliver the Early Years Foundation Stage. Where children receive their Early Years Foundation Stage in school these providers do not have to deliver the learning and development requirements in full but should complement the experiences children receive in school.

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