

Inspection of First Step

Tangmere Crescent, Hornchurch, Essex RM12 5PP

Inspection date: 2 March 2020

Overall effectiveness	Outstanding
The quality of education	Outstanding
Behaviour and attitudes	Outstanding
Personal development	Outstanding
Leadership and management	Outstanding
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Outstanding

What is it like to attend this early years setting?

The provision is outstanding

Leaders plan a highly engaging environment to meet the needs of children attending. The high ratio of staff to children contributes to the level of attention each child receives, and the meaningful interactions that take place. This helps children to feel happy and secure. Staff are exceptional. They show genuine care and compassion, and are thoroughly invested in each child. Children form very strong attachments with key persons. They smile and laugh with the adults who care for them. A real sense of joy runs through every aspect of the provision, such as the way families are welcomed, and how children develop the confidence to explore. Parents speak incredibly highly of managers and staff. They describe the support they receive as being 'invaluable', and consider the setting to be unique. Staff are very calm and positive role models. They gently encourage children to consider others. They use words and visual aids to help children to develop an understanding of boundaries. Staff understand that a child's behaviour is an expression of their feelings, and that it is a method of communication for children. The curriculum is skilfully tailored to meet children's needs. This setting excels in supporting all children to reach their full potential. The managers' undeniable commitment, passion and determination to provide an exceptional provision for children to flourish in, is inspiring.

What does the early years setting do well and what does it need to do better?

- Leaders and managers seek the views of parents, staff and external professionals to contribute to evaluating the provision accurately. They are clear about the strengths, and reflect on the needs of children to identify areas to enhance. For instance, a new system for staff to meet and discuss observations daily reduces workload and ensures time with children takes precedence. This enables all staff to know children extremely well.
- A robust professional development programme equips staff with expertise, skills and qualifications, including emotional literacy support assistant, and deaf-blind intervenor. Highly skilled staff share their expertise with one another and use their knowledge to enhance children's well-being, communication and overall development. They do this extremely well.
- Staff expertly help children to express their needs and wishes. They build on children's communication skills by expanding their vocabulary. They use sign language, picture symbols, and objects of reference. Staff promote a love of books through highly imaginative sensory storytelling experiences. Children respond to staff and involve them in their play, such as by placing an adult's hand on a spinning block to spin the toy for them.
- Children develop their physical skills using a range of large equipment, such as tricycles and trampolines, in an outdoor space. Staff support children to adopt a can-do approach to challenges. This has a remarkable impact on their self-

esteem. Children thrive as they explore a sensory garden. Staff talk to children about the herbs they can smell, and help them to develop a love of nature and a curiosity about the world around them.

- High expectations of each child and a meticulously devised curriculum help to ensure planned next steps are purposeful and challenge children effectively. Bespoke sessions that are tailored to specific needs are instrumental in supporting children to feel comfortable and thrive. For example, children with physical and medical needs learn together in a different environment from those who have social communication difficulties. These children follow a structured session, including workstations and free play.
- Excellent resources and environments contribute to children's learning experiences. A sensory room and well-equipped music room help children to learn about cause and effect when they touch pads to turn on lights and push keys on a piano. A toy library encourages children to share favourite resources with their family at home. This helps to ensure continuity of care, and supports parents to enhance their child's learning at home.
- Partnerships with parents are exemplary. The manager consistently goes above and beyond to support the entire family. For example, parents attend a stay-and-play playgroup before children start at the setting, and contribute to facilitating parent support groups alongside staff. Parents attend monthly coffee mornings, even after children leave the setting. This provides ongoing communication and a strong network to support families.
- Leaders and managers have incredible vision for every child in their care, and ensure that they are well prepared for future learning. They work closely with other providers to support smooth transitions on to school placements. They liaise with the local authority and external agencies to ensure that funding is in place to maintain the quality of education for every child with special educational needs and/or disabilities, when they move on from early years to specialised or mainstream provision.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders and managers follow robust safe recruitment procedures to ensure the suitability of those working with children. They ensure that ongoing training and supervision keep staff's knowledge current and up to date. Staff have an extremely secure understanding of safeguarding. They know the signs of possible abuse, and are alert to signs that a child may be at risk of extreme ideas or views. They are clear about documenting concerns precisely and following correct procedures to escalate concerns regarding a child's welfare. Leaders and managers place the utmost importance on safeguarding children in their care, ensuring that children's well-being is at the heart of all that they do.

Setting details

Unique reference number	EY341003
Local authority	Havering
Inspection number	10137988
Type of provision	Childcare on non-domestic premises
Registers	Early Years Register, Compulsory Childcare Register, Voluntary Childcare Register
Day care type	Sessional day care
Age range of children at time of inspection	2 to 4
Total number of places	12
Number of children on roll	32
Name of registered person	First Step Opportunity Group Ltd.
Registered person unique reference number	RP523943
Telephone number	01708 556355
Date of previous inspection	4 May 2016

Information about this early years setting

First Step has been operating since 1988 from single-storey premises on the site of The R J Mitchell Primary School, in Hornchurch. The setting employs nine members of childcare staff. Of these, one has an early years qualification at level 6, and eight have qualifications at level 3. The setting operates from Monday to Thursday during term time. Sessions are from 9.30am to 3pm. The setting operates for identified sessions for a few weeks during the summer holiday. All the children attending have special educational needs and/or disabilities.

Information about this inspection

Inspector

Leanne Stranger

Inspection activities

- The inspector and the manager completed a learning walk and discussed how the environment is organised to support children's learning.
- The inspector and the manager carried out a joint observation of an activity.
- The inspector held discussions with leaders, managers and staff, and interacted with children at appropriate times during the inspection.
- The inspector met with parents, carers and grandparents, and took account of their views.
- The inspector observed the quality of interactions between staff and children.
- A range of documentation was sampled by the inspector, including training certificates, policies and observation records.

We carried out this inspection 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.

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