

# Inspection of First Steps

129 Medway, Great Lumley, Chester-le-Street, County Durham DH3 4HU

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Inspection date: 31 January 2023

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<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	<b>Outstanding</b>
The quality of education	<b>Outstanding</b>
Behaviour and attitudes	<b>Outstanding</b>
Personal development	<b>Outstanding</b>
Leadership and management	<b>Outstanding</b>
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Good

## **What is it like to attend this early years setting?**

### **The provision is outstanding**

Children are wonderfully enthusiastic, confident and happy at the nursery. They constantly practise their independence and develop many impressive skills. Children are extremely well prepared for their future learning. For example, at mealtimes, young children delight in making their own toast, pour drinks carefully and serve their own vegetables using scoops. Children relish the nutritious home-made meals. Babies feed themselves confidently with spoons. Staff are close at hand to guide children expertly, should they need any help. Children develop the strength and knowledge during their play that they need to tackle everyday activities. For instance, staff show them how to tip jugs of water little by little into a tray. Children are eager to try hard and concentrate for long periods of time relative to their ages.

Staff are marvellous role models and have very high expectations of children. They are consistently calm, patient and engaged with each child. Staff build a comprehensive and well-designed curriculum so that children face challenges that help them to achieve their very best. For example, babies relish making marks with paint and brushes, while older children move on to mixing their own colours using powder. Children's behaviour is exemplary. Staff explain to children how their actions impact on others, and they set clear boundaries. Children make firm friendships and cooperate very well together.

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

- The nursery is extremely welcoming and inclusive. Children settle very quickly and are exceptionally keen to attend nursery. All children make rapid progress from their starting points in learning, including children with special educational needs and/or disabilities. Staff know each child's interests and needs in depth. They identify any gaps in children's learning and address these swiftly.
- Children lead their own play. Staff take every opportunity to extend children's knowledge. They provide stimulating and interesting resources, such as basil leaves, rosemary and cinnamon alongside play dough and a range of tools. Babies and children develop their own ideas and explore and investigate using all their senses. Young children are proud of their achievements, for instance when they succeed in using scissors to cut leaves.
- Staff prioritise the strong development of children's communication and language skills. They follow a 10-second rule, allowing children plenty of time to respond. Staff introduce new words, such as 'fragrant'. They weave children's favourite rhymes and reading books throughout the day. Staff encourage children to think creatively, for example by asking what will happen next in a story. Children join in with lively conversations and ask staff questions.
- Parents value highly the impressive family atmosphere at the nursery and the

immensely caring and supportive staff. They feel that the exchange of information with staff is 'fantastic', both face to face and in the regular written reports that they receive about children's rapid progress and their next steps in development.

- Staff suggest fun ideas that are targeted for each unique child to extend their learning at home. Activities are accessible, such as nature walks, baking and singing familiar songs. During the COVID-19 pandemic, staff provided ideas daily for purposeful, free experiences.
- There is a wealth of opportunities for children to find out about the wider world around them. For example, children visit a community centre and socialise with others at the Christmas party. They learn about the similarities and differences between themselves and others.
- Children of all ages enjoy fresh air and vigorous exercise every day. They confidently balance and climb in the outdoor area, taking safe risks. Babies progress to walking on reins through the local area, building up their strength to walk longer distances. Children willingly walk long distances to take part in adventures. For instance, they explore a castle and build dens at forest school. Children's physical development is very well promoted.
- Managers are passionate about their shared vision for the nursery. They are committed to offering children experiences that will inspire them with awe and wonder. The management team constantly reflects on ways to maintain and improve the setting's very high standards.
- Staff's well-being is a priority, as is their professional development. Staff share what they have learned at training to enhance the staff team's teaching skills even further. Managers frequently work alongside staff in addition to providing regular supervision meetings. This helps to ensure that there is a consistently high quality of teaching throughout the nursery.

## Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Managers follow robust procedures to ensure that suitable staff are recruited and that they are trained in safeguarding. They regularly check that there are no changes to staff's suitability. Staff are confident in their knowledge of signs that children may be at risk of harm. They understand what to do if they have concerns about children in their care. Children have an excellent understanding of how to keep themselves safe from harm, such as during visits to the woods. For example, staff say, 'If you cannot see me, I cannot see you.' Children know how to stay close to the group.

## Setting details

<b>Unique reference number</b>	EY415762
<b>Local authority</b>	Durham
<b>Inspection number</b>	10263903
<b>Type of provision</b>	Childcare on non-domestic premises
<b>Registers</b>	Early Years Register, Compulsory Childcare Register, Voluntary Childcare Register
<b>Day care type</b>	Full day care
<b>Age range of children at time of inspection</b>	0 to 5
<b>Total number of places</b>	44
<b>Number of children on roll</b>	56
<b>Name of registered person</b>	First Steps Nursery (Lumley) Ltd
<b>Registered person unique reference number</b>	RP547142
<b>Telephone number</b>	0191 3881978
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	16 May 2017

## Information about this early years setting

First Steps is located in Chester-le-Street, Durham and registered in 2010. The nursery employs 10 members of childcare staff. Of these, eight hold an appropriate early years qualification at level 3 and two are working towards this. The nursery opens from Monday to Friday, all year round, except for bank holidays. Sessions are from 7.30am to 6pm. The nursery provides funded early education for two-, three- and four-year-old children.

## Information about this inspection

### Inspector

Cathryn Clarricoates

## Inspection activities

- This was the first routine inspection the provider received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. The inspector discussed the impact of the pandemic with the provider and has taken that into account in their evaluation of the provider.
- The manager completed a learning walk with the inspector and talked about their curriculum and what they want children to learn.
- The inspector talked to staff at appropriate times throughout the inspection and took account of their views. She spoke with children about their time at the nursery.
- The manager carried out a joint observation with the inspector.
- The inspector took account of parents' views in verbal and written feedback.
- The inspector looked at relevant documents and reviewed evidence of the suitability of staff working at the nursery.

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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