

Inspection of First Steps Pre-School

The Manor Youth Centre, Hanover Way, Windsor, Berkshire SL4 5NW

Inspection date: 13 July 2023

Overall effectiveness	Good
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The quality of education	Good
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Behaviour and attitudes	Good
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Personal development	Good
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Leadership and management	Good
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Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Good
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What is it like to attend this early years setting?

The provision is good

Staff greet children with warm smiles and chatter with them about their morning. Children are happy and excitedly wave goodbye to their parents as they enter the homely pre-school. Staff and children share close and caring bonds, which helps children to feel safe and secure. For example, children snuggle with their key persons as they share stories. Children are happy to approach staff for comfort and reassurance when they need it.

Staff have high expectations of children's behaviour. Staff promote positive behaviour rules in play. For example, they expertly intervene when children struggle to take turns with toy keys. They quickly model how to ask for a turn with a toy and explain the emotions children are going through, such as 'sad'. Children are learning the skills they need to resolve conflicts between themselves.

Children have plenty of opportunities to build their physical skills. For example, they try hard to climb frames and smile with joy when they independently achieve this. Children are confident in running, hopping and using large arm muscles to draw shapes on the floor in the garden. This helps them to develop their skills to control their arm movements. These activities help to support children's development and enable them to engage in more physically challenging play.

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

- Staff promote children's communication and language well. They use a wide variety of strategies to support children's early speech development. For example, they offer parents a lending library of 'chatter packs', which encourages children to talk about and share books at home. Staff use stories and nursery rhymes throughout the day to support the language-rich environment. Children have a wide vocabulary and use this to share their thoughts and ideas. For example, they delight as they pour water down funnels in the garden and excitedly shout, 'I am soaked', to friends. Children have strong communication and language skills.
- Staff use observations and assessments well to plan a sequenced curriculum based on children's interests. Staff challenge older children well. For example, they introduce them to letters in their names and talk about the sounds they represent. However, at times, teaching is not always fully effective for the younger children. For instance, staff do not always fully consider what the younger children know and can already do to let children build on these skills and knowledge.
- Children with special educational needs and/or disabilities make good progress. For instance, they happily play with toy castles and giggle as they play a game of hide and seek with toy people. They have the social skills necessary for future

learning. However, on occasion, some staff overlook the opportunities to help children who speak English as an additional language (EAL) learn the social skills they need to play with others. This means that, at times, some children who speak EAL quietly play alone for periods of time.

- Leaders are proactive and continually reflect on practice. For instance, after the COVID-19 pandemic, leaders enrolled in a 'COVID recovery plan' to help them to support children even further. Through this programme, leaders and staff identified that children need a space to help them to self-regulate their emotions. As a result, they have built a covered den to encourage children to take quiet time when they need it. Children regularly visit this new area, and they enjoy playing with toys, chattering to themselves as they do so. This helps children to develop their personal, social and emotional skills.
- Partnerships with parents are good. Staff build close bonds with parents and families. For instance, parents are confident to ask staff for their advice as they drop off their children in the morning. This helps them to share knowledge and support children's continuity of care. Parents say that all staff are 'heart-warmingly' caring, and children settle quickly in their care.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders and staff know their roles and responsibilities to safeguard children. They attend regular training to keep their knowledge up to date. For example, they know how to spot signs and symptoms if a child is at risk of physical abuse. Staff know the procedures to follow if they have concerns about a child's welfare. Leaders fully understand how to respond if an allegation is made about a staff member. Staff and leaders carry out thorough risk assessments. For example, they ensure that all internal doors are secure so that the public cannot enter the pre-school from adjoining buildings. This helps to minimise the risk to children.

What does the setting need to do to improve?

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

- improve the quality of teaching for the youngest children to ensure they are consistently challenged in their learning and able to build on their existing knowledge and skills
- increase opportunities for children who speak EAL to develop confidence and engage in play with others.

Setting details

Unique reference number	108441
Local authority	Windsor and Maidenhead
Inspection number	10301587
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	36
Number of children on roll	42
Name of registered person	First Steps Windsor Committee
Registered person unique reference number	RP518119
Telephone number	01753 206800
Date of previous inspection	16 January 2018

Information about this early years setting

First Steps Pre-School registered in 1999. It operates from the Manor Youth Centre, in Dedworth, Windsor. The pre-school is open from 8.45am until 3.30pm, Monday to Friday. Funding is accepted for the provision of free early education for children aged two, three and four years. The manager holds a foundation degree in early years. Of the remaining staff, five hold relevant qualifications from level 2 to level 5.

Information about this inspection

Inspector

Mandy Cooper

Inspection activities

- This was the first routine inspection the pre-school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. The inspector discussed the impact of the pandemic with the manager and has taken that into account in their evaluation of the pre-school.
- The manager and inspector completed a learning walk together of all areas of the pre-school and discussed the early years curriculum.
- Children told the inspector about their friends and what they like to do when they are at pre-school.
- The inspector talked to staff at appropriate times during the inspection and took account of their views.
- The inspector observed the quality of education being provided, indoors and outdoors, and assessed the impact that this was having on children's learning.
- The manager and the inspector carried out a joint observation during a group activity.
- The inspector spoke to several parents during the inspection and took account of their views.
- The manager showed the inspector documentation to demonstrate the suitability of staff.

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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