

# First Steps Nursery

Inspection report for early years provision

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**Unique reference number** 127184  
**Inspection date** 27/04/2011  
**Inspector** Cilla Mullane

**Setting address** First Steps Nursery, 25-27 Thanet Road, MARGATE, Kent, CT9 1UB  
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**Type of setting** Childcare on non-domestic premises

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## 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.

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## Description of the setting

First Steps Nursery opened in 1994. It operates from a converted church and an attached house in Margate, Kent. The nursery has access to six rooms, an office, toilets and a kitchen. The nursery is open each weekday from 7.30am to 5.30pm for 50 weeks of the year. Children share access to secure enclosed outdoor play areas. Access to the upper floors is via stairs.

The nursery is registered on the Early Years Register, as well as the compulsory and voluntary parts of the Childcare Register. A maximum of 100 children may attend the nursery at any one time. There are currently 142 children on roll, all of whom are in the early years age group. Funding for free nursery education is provided for two-, three- and four-year-olds. The nursery supports children with special educational needs and/or disabilities and children who learn English as an additional language.

There are 22 staff, including the owner and two managers, of whom 20 hold qualifications equivalent to a National Vocational Qualification (NVQ) at level 3 and above and two are qualified to NVQ level 2. One member of staff is working towards a NVQ at level 3. The nursery receives support from the local authority.

## The overall effectiveness of the early years provision

Overall the quality of the provision is outstanding.

All children make extremely good progress from their individual starting points, due to careful planning of activities according to each child's interests and abilities. Children's welfare is promoted to a very high standard, so they are free to explore and investigate freely and safely. Babies are very safe and secure in their own routines and show fascination, trust and confidence as they explore happily and interact with staff positively. Parents are extremely well informed and supported, and have access to a wealth of information about their child's care and learning, so they feel included and have great confidence in the staff. Overall, the extremely strong management, skilled and knowledgeable staff and effectively targeted plans for development result in continuous improvement and excellent outcomes for children.

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

To further improve the high quality early years provision the registered person should consider:

- introducing systems for monitoring and evaluating staff's practice.

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

Children's welfare, safety and good health are extremely well promoted. Child protection procedures provide concise information for parents. They are thorough and clearly understood by staff, who prioritise children's safety. Adults working with the children are rigorously vetted. Risk assessments are extremely effective in keeping children safe, as they cover every aspect of the children's environment and their care in detail. The superb environment is well equipped, safe, welcoming, and stimulating. Children initiate their own learning, and also enjoy well-planned and challenging adult-led activities.

Strong leadership and management result in highly motivated and enthusiastic staff who know that training is provided according to their needs and interests. Their many certificates are prominently displayed, making them feel valued, and demonstrating that their hard work is appreciated. Management fully understand the importance of keeping children's records up to date, and enable staff to take time away from the children to maintain these effectively. Therefore, very well maintained records are a good tool for staff to plan for each child, and they inform parents accurately about children's progress. Appraisals build on staff's confidence, and enable management to know that each staff member is doing a good job. There are plans to develop this by introducing formal systems, such as peer observations to monitor and evaluate staff's practice.

Children and their families are very much valued as individuals. Staff know them well, and each child and carer is greeted with genuine warmth on arrival. Children's routines, such as sleep times and feeds, are known to staff, which means they are able to meet individual needs. Children see many positive images of diversity and the wider world around the nursery, such as figures from other countries around the fences outside. Labelling in other languages helps children learn to respect differences. Children with special educational needs and/or disabilities are fully integrated and included. Knowledgeable and appropriately trained staff liaise carefully and sensitively with their parents and are highly committed to working with other agencies to meet their needs and successfully promote their learning, development and welfare.

Self-evaluation is highly effective in raising standards and improving all aspects of the provision. Each child's progress is monitored, resulting in all children receiving a good balance of challenging experiences tailored to their interests and needs. The provision of activities is evaluated to ensure all areas of learning are included in planning, and recent improvements in the provision of problem solving, reasoning and numeracy proves that this is successful, as more opportunities are now offered for children to calculate. Management and staff play equal parts in evaluating the provision, parents' views are respected, and children's interests are noted, leading to the purchase of new resources. The environment is wonderfully rich and stimulating, enabling children to make choices work on their own or with skilful support from adults, and take charge of their own personal hygiene.

Partnership with parents is strong. They know about the Early Years Foundation

Stage requirements from attending parents' evenings. Children's 'Unique stories' give them all the information they need to learn about their children's progress, and enable them to continue their learning at home. They express immense satisfaction with all aspects of the provision, including the support they receive from their child's key person, the sensitive settling in procedures, the friendliness and skill of staff, and the happy atmosphere within the nursery. Throughout the building, well presented and informative displays of information and children's work give them all the knowledge they need to be fully involved in their children's care and learning.

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

Children throughout the setting show high levels of interest and motivation, and make excellent progress in all areas of learning. Staff support and build on children's learning very competently, asking meaningful questions, and answering children's questions in ways which are age and stage appropriate to the child they are talking to. Adults are skilled at making children's learning relevant, for example, by going on 'number and shapes walks' looking at shapes in the community, and relating mathematical concepts to real life. Children state that boxes are rectangular or square, and move the hands on a clock to the number three to show their age. Children develop a very good understanding of the world around them. They enjoy exciting outings into the local community to look at different occupations. For example, visits to the optician and post office, helps children to learn about diversity and different types of people. They care for the land snails, and know that they need to water the plants to make them grow. Interesting and stimulating exploration tables give children opportunities to think about science and nature. They are fascinated as they shine torches around the ceiling, and experiment with magnets.

Computer games enhance children's number skills, as they group and count, using skilful mouse control. They solve problems, persevering independently, discussing if bridges built with bricks need to be bigger or smaller to allow objects to pass underneath. Children love books and stories, reading to their friends, and on their own, turning the pages carefully. Babies show wonder as staff sing to them, watching with wide-eyed fascination, and starting to attempt actions.

Babies and toddlers are enthralled by messy activities, such as gloop, exploring the feel and texture. They watch the bubble machine, laughing enthusiastically as they pop the bubbles, holding out their arms and stating 'all gone!' and repeatedly asking for more. They are developing skills for the future. They are inquisitive, exploring how things work, such as looking down a tube to see where the ball has gone. They are starting to vocalise and interact with staff, holding eye contact and initiating games such as 'Peek-a-boo'.

Extremely consistent and positive behaviour management techniques and high expectations of adults result in self-controlled and independent children. Children are keen to act independently, taking off their shoes to play on the soft play

equipment, and washing their hands independently. They develop a lovely sense of humour, for example, telling an adult they are going to draw a big circle, and laughing when they produce a line instead.

Children show that they feel safe, and have a highly developed sense of belonging within the setting. Babies crawl onto adults' laps, and are confident to explore with familiar adults nearby. Staff respect individual children's routines, such as for sleep or feeds, resulting in babies having a very good sense of security. A key person system is very effective in helping children to settle, and older children develop positive relationships with their special person. Photographic displays help children feel they belong and make learning relevant. Children enthusiastically join in the nursery's 'First Steps Song', promoting a sense of identity. Older children take responsibility for their own safety, explaining how to use scissors safely, and discussing looking both ways as they cross the road and stay close to grown-ups. Hygiene is excellent throughout the setting, showing children the importance of personal care. Healthy eating is given a high priority, resulting in an award for providing nutritious snacks, and encouraging parents to provide balanced packed lunches.

## 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>	1
The capacity of the provision to maintain continuous improvement	1

### 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>	1
The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	1
The effectiveness with which the setting deploys resources	1
The effectiveness with which the setting promotes equality and diversity	1
The effectiveness of safeguarding	1
The effectiveness of the setting's self-evaluation, including the steps taken to promote improvement	1
The effectiveness of partnerships	1
The effectiveness of the setting's engagement with parents and carers	1

### The quality of the provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage

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

<b>Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage</b>	1
The extent to which children achieve and enjoy their learning	1
The extent to which children feel safe	1
The extent to which children adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which children make a positive contribution	1
The extent to which children develop skills for the future	1

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## **Annex B: the Childcare Register**

The provider confirms that the requirements of the compulsory part of the Childcare Register are: Met

The provider confirms that the requirements of the voluntary part of the Childcare Register are: Met