

Inspection of First Steps Nursery

25-29 Thanet Road, Margate, Kent CT9 1UA

Inspection date: 13 October 2023

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

What is it like to attend this early years setting?

The provision is good

Children arrive at the setting happy and excited to begin their day. They are greeted by managers and quickly settle into their morning activities, supported by staff. Children develop their independence throughout the day, which has been planned for carefully. For example, when arriving, children select their own named picture and move onto a board and hang their belongings in their own space. Staff ensure that children practise important daily skills, such as washing hands before lunch and putting on their coats. Staff teach children the importance of sharing and turn-taking, through gentle reminders, and demonstrate how to respect each other in children's play.

Children show high levels of engagement and staff superbly plan enjoyable and engaging experiences to spark children's curiosity. For instance, children visit places in their local area, such as the post office, library and museum, which links to their topics. Staff are aware of the importance of developing children's vocabulary through songs and rhymes and regularly sing with the children. For example, the younger children sing along to 'Old Mac Donald' with staff during a puzzle activity with farmyard animals. Children have lovely, close bonds with staff, as there is an excellent key-person system in place, and enjoy receiving praise with what they have achieved.

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

- Managers have high expectations of all staff and are very supportive. There is a strong team feel and staff are very proud to work at the nursery. Staff can access regular professional development and new staff are mentored, allowing them to have the best knowledge for children. Staff well-being is well supported, such as through meetings and training opportunities.
- Parents speak very highly of the nursery and praise staff members and the bonds they have formed with their children. Children are happy when entering the nursery once they are settled in. Parents receive regular information on children's development and progress through daily conversations, information shared online and parent consultations.
- Indoors, children have a wonderful environment to explore, which has been carefully planned to facilitate all areas of learning and maximise all children's engagement. However, planning for the outdoor area could be strengthened to enhance learning opportunities and ensure the same levels of engagement are met outside, as this area is popular with the children.
- Mealtimes at the nursery are seen as a social time and a chance for staff to teach children important skills, such as listening to one another and taking turns. For instance, children eat their lunch with their key person at the table. This helps staff to support children to learn about healthy eating and it enables them

to feedback to parents about how children are eating.

- Managers understand the importance of a varied and exciting curriculum and how to plan and sequence experiences for children. For example, staff create an activity with photographs of the children and their local area, allowing children to role play visiting places they are familiar with to encourage communication. Managers plan excellent links with visitors to the nursery to teach children about themselves and others around them, such as the local dentist to teach children about their teeth.
- Children with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are well supported by the special educational needs and disabilities coordinator (SENDCo) and by all staff. For instance, the SENDCo develops staff's understanding of how to support children and implement support, such as through personalised plans. Staff also use spaces within the nursery well, such as quiet areas, to provide individual support and sensory experiences to help children with specific needs.
- Staff understand the importance of developing children's physical skills, such as climbing, catching, and balancing. Managers have added climbing equipment to the younger room in the nursery so children can use this in their play. In the pre-school room, staff provide opportunities for children to use materials, such as play dough, to strengthen their fingers and hands to help them with their early writing and mark making.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Staff understand the importance of safeguarding children and how to identify signs a child may be at risk. They are also aware of their role in reporting any concerns to support children who may be in need. Managers provide staff with regular training to ensure that staff have up to date knowledge on how to protect children from harm. Children follow the rules within the nursery and have a good understanding of why the rules are in place to keep them safe, which is explained by staff. For example, children know how to line up when leaving their classroom and walk carefully when using the stairs.

What does the setting need to do to improve?

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

- support staff to fully refine the organisation and planning of the outdoor learning environment.

Setting details

Unique reference number	127184
Local authority	Kent
Inspection number	10307975
Type of provision	Childcare on non-domestic premises
Registers	Early Years Register, Compulsory Childcare Register, Voluntary Childcare Register
Day care type	Full day care
Age range of children at time of inspection	2 to 4
Total number of places	100
Number of children on roll	76
Name of registered person	Warren, Hazel Ann
Registered person unique reference number	RP902938
Telephone number	01843 294256
Date of previous inspection	22 March 2018

Information about this early years setting

First Steps Nursery registered in 2000. The nursery is open each weekday from 7.30am to 5.30pm, during term time. It is in receipt of funding for the provision of early education for children aged two, three, and four years. There are 10 members of staff. Of these, seven hold relevant early years qualifications at level 3 or above and one member is a qualified early years teacher. There are also two apprentices who are currently training for their level 3 qualification.

Information about this inspection

Inspector

Jade Mellin

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 manager and has taken that into account in their evaluation of the provision.
- The manager and the inspector completed a learning walk together and discussed the early years curriculum.
- The inspector spoke to parents during the inspection and listened to their views.
- The manager and the inspector carried out a joint observation of a group activity.
- The inspector observed the interactions between children and staff and the impact on their learning.

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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