

# First Steps Pre-school

Inspection report for early years provision

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**Unique reference number**

108454

**Inspection date**

07/10/2009

**Inspector**

Jill Milton

**Setting address**

The Methodist Church, Woodlands Park Road, Maidenhead,  
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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 Pre-school opened in 1988 and is managed by a voluntary committee. It operates from two rooms in a Methodist church in the Woodlands Park area of Maidenhead and there is access to an outdoor play area. Children attend from the local residential area and the pre-school is in receipt of funding for the provision of free early education for children aged three and four years. The pre-school is registered on the Early Years Register and the compulsory part of the Childcare Register. A maximum of 24 children may attend at any one time and there are currently 25 children on roll. The pre-school operates during school term times with sessions from 09:30 to 13:25 on Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday. On Thursday, the session ends at 12:30 and on Friday, there is an extended session until 14:00. The pre-school employs eight staff and of these, seven hold appropriate early years qualifications. The group has achieved the Pre-School Learning Alliance quality assurance scheme.

## The overall effectiveness of the early years provision

Overall the quality of the provision is good.

The pre-school offers children a comfortable place to play where they can make good strides in their learning and development. The staff promote many good aspects of care with only minor weaker areas. They use an effective range of techniques to monitor their own standards and over time are improving the pre-school in order to help children achieve. The staff work well with parents and other professionals so that all are working together to care for the children. Staff take into account the ages and abilities of individual children as they plan the activities, providing a good emphasis overall on inclusion.

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

To further improve the early years provision the registered person should:

- ensure the summary grid of staff checks includes the issue date of a CRB disclosure
- review arrangements for hand washing to reduce the risk of cross-infection and protect children's health
- update the record of risk assessment to include any assessments of risks for outings

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

Staff recognise their responsibility to keep children safe and they attend updates to child protection training and review their policies relating to safeguarding. Staff understand how to address any concerns they may have for a child. Those working directly with the children undertake a suitable range of checks, although records of

those checks are not in one easily accessible format. An established team of staff who have a good range of qualifications runs the pre-school. They regularly attend courses to keep their knowledge of early years practice fresh and the group are successful in achieving a recognised quality assurance scheme. The staff are willing to improve their practice and take active steps, such as extending outdoor play, in order to promote good outcomes for the children attending. Staff evaluate their work at several levels and keep carefully documented notes of meetings for future reference. The manager is willing to let her team trial new ideas so that all have input into the daily procedures. Documentation linked to the smooth running of the pre-school is an area that is continually improving as staff update policies. When this happens, the staff ensure each parent receives a copy and is in agreement with procedures. This is one of a number of successful strategies for sharing information with families. The staff display a broad range of helpful materials for parents and this includes many examples of how children are learning through play. Overall, parents talk of their satisfaction with the caring pre-school and staff are on hand at the start and end of each session to discuss issues. Staff make links with other professionals to help support children and they take steps to make sure families feel welcome. They call upon extra services, such as an interpreter, to help with communication when families attend for whom English is an additional language. The staff make good use of the available accommodation to set out a wide variety of attractive activities. They ensure resources are suitable for the age range attending and that items are clean and in good condition. Staff make daily checks of indoor and outdoor play areas so that the children play in safety and a full risk assessment takes place at regular intervals. This currently does not include a record for the occasional outing into the local community.

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

Children are able to progress well with their early learning since the staff have a strong understanding of the Early Years Foundation Stage. Staff plan the daily routine effectively so that the children receive a good balance between child-initiated and adult-led activities. The children spend time in different rooms to provide them with a variety of scene and the use of these different areas for small group times is working successfully. The staff understand that each child in their care has unique abilities and they use their information to plan activities that help children progress. They regularly update children's records of development so that it provides a clear picture of progress towards the early learning goals. Children bring in photographs from home of special people in their families and this is making an attractive booklet for them to discuss with staff and look at during their time in pre-school. Staff help children to settle and overall this is working well with most children confident and assured in the surroundings. Children generally behave well and staff challenge unwanted actions and they offer praise for positive behaviour. Children know how to take turns on the computer using a sand timer and adding their name card to a list. The children are using a good range of equipment that promotes their understanding of technology and child-friendly cameras are proving very popular with young photographers. The children benefit from frequent references to letter shapes and sounds. They recognise their own names and enjoy visiting a writing area to experiment with early mark making.

Staff and children happily share conversations about families and story times focus on vocabulary linked to themes like 'night and day'. Small groups of children use visual props on a white board to tell well-known stories like 'The Gingerbread Man' and this provides focus and concentration. Staff incorporate practical number activities as children work out whether there are more boys or girls in the group or counting at singing time. Children use construction bricks to build tall towers and count out cooking ingredients, exploring aspects of mathematics as they play. Activities like this are contributing well to developing children's skills for the future.

Children are learning how to keep healthy as they visit the bathroom independently or help themselves to drinks from their own bottle. They share chopped fruit and vegetable snacks and helpful nutritional advice is on offer for parents if children stop for lunch club. Staff follow suitable hygiene procedures in many areas of the pre-school, though the use of communal towels for hand drying may compromise children's health. Outdoor play is on offer as part of the daily activities and if the weather is poor, staff ensure children participate in active play indoors. Children enjoy using the small outdoor area and staff use a portable trolley to make equipment quickly available. Along with the enjoyment of energetic play, the children also learn about the natural world as they help to maintain their small garden with herbs, sunflowers and vegetables. There are a wide range of opportunities for children to express their ideas and they sit contentedly at a craft table exploring textures like feathers. They are gaining confidence at using tools safely, commenting that it is best to sit down when cutting because 'scissors are sharp'. Children learn how to use equipment like the climbing frame safely with staff stepping in when the play becomes too exuberant. Children's opinions are important to the staff and this helps all to feel included. Children make suggestions about what they would like in the imaginative role-play area and staff add resources to support their play with themes such as castles or outer space. Children also use resources that help to develop their respect and awareness of the wider world and families receive encouragement to share in special celebrations.

## 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>	2
The capacity of the provision to maintain continuous improvement	2

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

<b>How effectively is the Early Years Foundation Stage led and managed?</b>	2
The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	2
The effectiveness with which the setting deploys resources	2
The effectiveness with which the setting promotes equality and diversity	2
The effectiveness of safeguarding	3
The effectiveness of the setting's self-evaluation, including the steps taken to promote improvement	2
The effectiveness of partnerships	2
The effectiveness of the setting's engagement with parents and carers	2

### 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>	2
The extent to which children achieve and enjoy their learning	2
The extent to which children feel safe	3
The extent to which children adopt healthy lifestyles	3
The extent to which children make a positive contribution	2
The extent to which children develop skills for the future	2

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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