



First Steps Bath

**Your Child's Nursery
and Pre-School Place at
First Steps Moorlands Children's Centre**

Parents and Carers Handbook



A Sure Start Children's Centre

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1. Who runs this Children's Centre?

First Steps Moorlands Children's Centre is run by a local charity, First Steps (Bath). We receive some funding from Bath and North East Somerset Council to run two Sure Start Children's Centres in South West Bath, and a range of family support services across the county. Our mission is:

To work in partnership with children, families, colleagues and the community by being a responsive, informed, reflective and innovative provider of early years education, childcare and integrated family services.

Further information about our guiding principles and our priorities is given in our latest Annual Report and Business Plan – available from reception.

First Steps (Bath) is governed by a Charity Board of Trustees, which includes parents / carers using our services and local professionals. They delegate the day to day running of the organisation to the Director and the Senior Management Team – the names and photos of the managers and staff are on a display board in reception.



2. When is the Children's Centre nursery open?

The nursery is open between the hours of 8.00am and 5.30pm from Monday to Friday.

The nursery is closed for Bank Holidays, between Christmas and New Year, and for three In-Service training (INSET) days per year. These dates and any other closure dates are published in our newsletter. A copy of the latest newsletter can be found in reception.

3. Can my child come in at any time when the nursery is open?

The nursery is registered under OFSTED to provide 50 child places, of these 10 are for children under the age of 2. First Steps' day care places are all year round (unless your child only attends for the free Early Years Entitlement (EYE) during term times).

In order to offer flexibility to parents / carers we do not have set sessions (times may be booked in half hour slots), however if bookings are for four hours or less, they need to be made within the morning (from 8.00am to 1.00pm) or the afternoon (from 1.00pm to 5.30pm), so that we can offer places to as many families as possible.

Before starting any session, we complete an admission form with you and a deposit of two weeks' fees must be paid at this point. This deposit will be repaid to you when your child leaves, provided all fees have been paid.

It is essential to stick to the booked time agreed as we cannot have more than the specified number of children on site at any one time. Two weeks notice is required for any changes to your booked times. We can **occasionally** offer extra hours on a one-off basis. This can usually only happen if we know that another child will be absent due to illness or holidays. Please ask reception if you wish to do this.

4. What happens when my child has been given sessions?

We aim to make the big step from home to nursery a positive experience for everyone.

Once your sessions have been agreed, you and your child can start a 'settling-in' period. This consists of two visits to the nursery, when we ask you to stay with your child. You are not charged for these two introductory sessions. After these visits full fees are payable for your child's booked hours, but you are welcome to stay with your child for some of the time or build up their attendance slowly if this helps them to settle.

You are allocated a member of staff or 'key person' who will be there for you when you make the visits to ensure that your child's start to nursery life is fun and exciting. This person will work closely with you and your child to build relationships and to work through both the good and the challenging times.



5. How do I pay nursery fees?

Fees are calculated by the hour and you will receive regular invoices for them in advance. You can pay by standing order, or at reception by cheque, cash or card. Fees can be paid weekly or monthly. Nursery fees and meal charges are set and annually reviewed by our Board of Trustees. New rates are implemented on 1st September each year, and parents are notified of these at least one month in advance. For our current charges please see our information leaflet 'Day care and education at First Steps Moorlands Children's Centre'.

If you experience any difficulties in paying please see the Children's Services Manager, who will check whether you are eligible for any subsidies.

In the event that fees fall into arrears your child's place may be reduced or cancelled. Full fees are required if your child is sick or absent from nursery. However, in lieu of a reduction when you are on holiday, half the weekly fees are charged for the last two weeks of August, providing there are no arrears on fees.

The term after your child's 3rd birthday you are entitled to a free 12 hours per week place (or 15 hours in term times only). Some 2 year olds may also be entitled to free childcare hours. For eligibility and further information about the Early Years Entitlement (EYE), please see our separate leaflet.



6. Who will be looking after my child?

First Steps (Bath) adheres to and exceeds the number of staff needed to fulfil the ratios laid down by OFSTED. We always have more than half the staff on site with nationally recognised qualifications of level 3 and above (e.g. Qualified Teacher, Early Years Professional, NNEB, NVQ in childcare, BTEC National Diploma in Nursery Nursing). Staff members are appointed in accordance with current legislation. Qualified Teachers and a graduate Early Years Professional lead on the education of our pre-school children.

In order to ensure all staff are suitable to work with children, they have to provide a full employment history and two satisfactory references. They also all have to undergo a selection interview, part of which involves a group of children, and an Enhanced Criminal Records Bureau check.

Our staff undergo a range of training which includes Safeguarding/Child Protection, First Aid and Food Hygiene. Many are trained in Makaton (using signs) and use this with the children to help their language development.

Your key person will be your usual first point of contact on a daily basis. The key person will build a special relationship with your child and help them to build friendships with other children and adults. They also keep a learning diary of what your child can do, in order to help them reach their full potential. These diaries contain photographs of your child at play, pictures they have created, observations and quotes from your child. You and your children are welcome to look through these at any time and add your own comments and observations, as this will help us to understand your child better.

Throughout the year you will be invited to reviews with your key person when you will be able to share your child's progress and find out what they will be working on next. You are welcome to ask for a review at any time.

If the key person is absent, other staff will also know your child and will be able to ensure they are still well cared for.

7. What will my child do?

We as a staff team believe that children of all ages learn through play and we offer them a wide variety of new and favourite experiences. The activities which your child initiates are just as important a learning experience as the ones which we plan. The main learning at nursery comes from the interactions between your child and the other children and adults, and also from exploration and investigation, rather than creating an end product.

We welcome all involvement from parents / carers as we realise the importance and value of your role.

Our day is divided up into different periods:

- Free play - where the child initiates activities and the adult is there to support and extend from the child's lead.
- Adult led times - where the nursery staff plan activities, linked to the children's interests, using the Early Years Foundation Stage as a guide. Copies of the activities planned are available for you to see so that you can talk to your child about their day.
- Outside play – whatever the weather we try to get the most out of the outside environment using free play and planned activities.
- Group time – this consists of singing, stories and spending time together talking.



8. How will you help my child to learn?

Staff working with your child will use the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) to record your child's interests, development and aspects of their lives, and also to plan activities that will help your child to develop to the next stage. A qualified teacher is employed to give overall guidance when planning for the children.

There are six areas which staff focus on with regards to the children's development. These are:

- Personal, Social and Emotional Development
- Communication, Language and Literacy
- Problem Solving, Reasoning and Numeracy
- Knowledge and Understanding of the World
- Physical Development
- Creative Development

Please see our separate leaflet on the Early Years Foundation Stage for further information.



9. What if my child does not speak English?

We hope to make all children and families feel welcome. Staff will therefore try to learn a few key words and phrases in your child's first language and we are likely to ask you to help with this. Very young children may find it easier to learn two languages, but may take longer to start to talk as they have more to learn. We help them by playing alongside them and through rhymes, stories and songs. We may also draw up a plan with specific targets so all staff can work towards these, and we sometimes also ask for support from a specialist agency.

10. What will my child need to bring with them when they start?

We encourage the children to play in the garden in all weather conditions, so please make sure that they attend in appropriate outer wear. In hot weather, we ask that you bring your child with a sun hat and we will apply sun cream. However, if your child has sensitive skin, you may like to supply the child's own appropriate cream.

We ask that you do not allow your child to bring toys from home as we cannot take responsibility for any toys that get lost or broken. This does not include comforters which you are welcome to bring if this will help your child.

If your child is over two years of age:

It is always advisable for your child to bring a spare set of clothes in a named bag. Although we remind children to use the toilet they sometimes forget when they are busy. If they are using nappies please also supply sufficient nappies and wipes.

If your child is under two years of age

Please supply a change of clothes, sufficient nappies and wipes and any personal comforter. You also need to provide any feeds. When your child is ready to move onto solid foods we can offer a blended/chopped nursery lunch or you may supply prepared food.

11. What should my child wear?

The children are involved in many creative activities and, although they wear painting aprons, clothes will sometimes get paint, glue or mud on them. Therefore, please send them in clothes that can be easily washed.

Sweatshirts and t-shirts with the First Steps logo are available from reception.

12. Does my child have to be using the toilet by the time they are two?

Children do not become toilet trained at any particular age so the nursery has nappy changing facilities in both play rooms. We have set times to check and change all children who are in nappies, but also change them at other times if necessary.

When your child does start to use the toilet or a potty, please talk this through with your child's key person so that the staff can follow through what you have been doing at home. Please remember to send in lots of spare clothing, especially pants and trousers, in case of accidents.

13. What about meal times?

Our healthy menus, including a vegetarian option, are displayed in the nursery. We cater for individual dietary needs and discuss this with you before your child starts attending nursery. The children have a morning snack between 9.30am and 10.30am, lunch just after 12.00pm, and tea at 4.00pm. For our current charges please see our information leaflet 'Day care and education at First Steps Moorlands Children's Centre'.



We encourage the children to eat the things they like and to 'try just a little bit' of the things they are unsure about. We do not stop them from having pudding if they have not eaten a main course, as the puddings are also healthy.

We may have children with allergies and so we do not use nuts, including peanut butter, in any food provided by the nursery.

We hope that our nursery lunches will meet your child's needs, as this gives them a healthy midday meal and the opportunity to develop their social skills. However, if you wish to send your child with a packed lunch we ask that you help us by avoiding nuts and peanut butter. We also ask that you do not include fizzy drinks, cakes or sweets.

14. How do you encourage children to be healthy?

Alongside our healthy meals and snacks, we promote basic hygiene routines such as regular hand washing and blowing noses. A range of active play activities are offered during the day, both indoors and outside. We meet or exceed the recommended guideline that children between 2 ½ and 5 receive 60 minutes of physical activity per day.

The activities that are planned for the children include learning about healthy practices and road safety - these are overseen by our Healthy Early Years co-ordinator. We have monthly walking days when everyone is invited to walk to the centre, or leave the car a little further away. A notice is displayed daily to inform you of active play sessions offered and how long they ran for. We have lots of ideas for activities that can be used at home; please feel free to ask a member of staff.



15. How long does my child need to stay at home when they have been ill?

Infections spread easily among children and they also want to be at home with their parents / carers when they are unwell, so it is important that they do not attend. When they are ill, please telephone us to let us know. You will still be charged for booked session, but not meals provided you have contacted us before 10.00am. We can also then tell you the recommended exclusion period (e.g. 48 hours for diarrhoea and sickness).

In some circumstances we can administer medicine that has been prescribed by your doctor, but only with your written permission. In this case, please see a member of staff upon arrival, who will take details from you and ask you to sign to give your permission. You would then also be asked to sign when collecting your child to confirm that they have been given the medicine as requested.

16. What should I do if my child has headlice?

Unfortunately this is common in nurseries. We have a leaflet explaining what to do should this happen. It is important to remember it happens to all children and is not linked to their hygiene, or something to feel embarrassed about.

17. How do the staff encourage desirable behaviour in the children?

We model good behaviour for the children in our care and we praise desirable behaviour in the children. There are also 'golden rules' which the children and staff follow. These are discussed and agreed with the children so they have an understanding of them.

Physical punishment such as smacking or shaking is never used or threatened. Staff only use physical restraint if a child is in danger of hurting themselves or others – in which case the staff record this and parents / carers are informed.

We give praise for appropriate behaviour and avoid giving unnecessary attention to undesirable behaviour. When appropriate, we give the child a short time away from other children to think about what they have done and what they could do to make things better. Parents / carers are then told about such incidents.

There is a behaviour co-ordinator who attends specific training and supports staff and parents / carers. Support is also available from our link worker from First Steps Family Services Team (see section 19 below).

For more information please see our 'Behaviour Management Policy' in the Policies and Procedures folder.



18. Is there anything I can do to help?

We encourage parents / carers to become involved in all aspects of the Children's Centre, and the children really enjoy times when parents / carers come in to help in nursery sessions by reading, painting, playing with dough, cooking or whatever takes your fancy.

We also welcome applications to join our Board of Trustees, who look after the overall running of First Steps (Bath).

We recruit volunteers and provide vouchers to help with any childcare costs while they are volunteering. Please speak to the Children's Services Manager for further information.

19. Who can I go to if I am worried about my child?

The first point of contact should normally be your child's key person. However, depending upon the nature of your concern you can also discuss this with:

- The Children's Services Manager
- The Assistant Manager
- The Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator
- The Family Services Manager

Please ask at Reception for their contact details, or see the staff display board.



20. What other services can I get through the Children's Centre?

Our own staff and several other organisations provide services at or linked to this Children's Centre. Our Family Services Team run 'Stay and Play' and 'Bumps and Babies' groups for parents / carers with their children. They can offer support for your family, for instance, with your child's behaviour at home, or with budgeting. They can also put you in touch with other services who can offer you more specialist help. Other services provided here include baby massage, a baby clinic and sessions from the Citizen's Advice Bureau.

Full details of the range of services available can be found in leaflets available at reception, together with a 'What's On' timetable. Please ask the Children's Services Manager if you want to meet a worker from our Family Services Team, or would like any further information.

21. What should I do with any compliments, complaints or suggestions?

We welcome any compliments, complaints and suggestions about the service we provide and there is a comments box in reception for this purpose. We also ask parents / carers to fill in short questionnaires during reviews.

Your first point of contact if you are unhappy about the service we provide is the Children's Services Manager who, if you wish, will make a record of your concern, and then investigate and report back to you within 28 days. There is an open record of complaints which parents / carers may see at any time. Our 'Compliments and Complaints Policy and Procedure' gives more information about the process.

We are registered and inspected by Ofsted Early Years and, should you feel it necessary, you can refer any concern to them at:

Ofsted

Piccadilly Gate,

Store Street

Manchester

M1 2WD

Telephone: 0300 123 1231

The Ofsted registration number for First Steps Moorlands Children's Centre is EY287532

22. How does the Centre promote and work towards excellent practice?

We collate the feedback and suggestions we receive from you and use these to inform our planning and to improve our services. We close three times a year for all First Steps staff to train together to develop our practice.

We work towards and have achieved certificates for our good practice in areas such as the Healthy Early Years Award (for our work towards a healthy lifestyle), the Bristol Standard quality kitemark and the Children's Rights Charter (emphasising giving children choice). We join other local initiatives as they arise. We have also received a high rating for our kitchen from Environmental Health.



23. What about keeping my child safe?

It is vitally important that you let us know any changes to people who are authorised to collect your child. Should anyone arrive to collect your child without us having this prior knowledge, we telephone to check the arrangements and only release the child if permission is given. It is therefore also very important that you let us know of any change to your contact details. If a child is left uncollected by a parent / carer, a senior member of staff attempts to contact the parents / carers and all other authorised contacts given to us. If all attempt to make contact fail, then the Social Services Emergency Duty Team are informed.

First Steps (Bath) aims to create an environment in which children are safe, and one in which any suspicion of abuse is promptly and appropriately responded to in accordance with the safeguarding procedure from the Local Safeguarding Children Board. In addition, if any staff have concerns about a child's welfare we record this on an incident form or 'areas of concern' sheet and/or a body map.

Staff are not allowed to have personal mobile phones within the playrooms and we ask parents and carers not to use theirs whilst within the nursery areas either.

Please see our Safeguarding Policy for further details.



24. What happens in exceptional circumstances?

Very occasionally unexpected events may mean that First Steps has to reduce or even close services for a short time. This might be necessary if:

- There is severe bad weather and staff are unable to get to work
- One of our centres is affected by fire or flood
- Large numbers of our staff are ill at the same time
- We are told or advised to shut our services because a disease or serious health problem could spread if children and families are together
- There is a power failure or other problem with the building that makes it impossible to provide services safely

In these situations, we will do our best to keep you informed and let you know of any service reductions or closures as quickly as possible.

If we have to shut one or more of our Children's Centre nurseries, we will put a notice on our website www.firststepsbath.org.uk and on Bath and North East Somerset Council's website www.bathnes.gov.uk, and we will ask Bath FM, Heart (formerly GWR) and Radio Bristol to broadcast the information. We will also inform the B&NES Family Information Service, Tel: 0800 073 1214.

If we have to cancel one of our groups for families, we will place a notice on the gate/door of the venue, and put a message on the answerphone of our Family Services team (01225 314111)

If we have to reduce our services, we will try to contact people before they have left home, and ask them not to come. We will give priority to providing a day care service for vulnerable children whose place has been funded by the local authority.

If we do have to ask for children to be collected from either of our Children's Centre nurseries because we are unable to provide sufficient staff and/or a safe service, we will do so in the following order:

1. Non working parents of children aged 0-2 years
2. Non working parents of children aged 2-3 years
3. Non working parents of children aged 3-5 years
4. Working parents of children aged 0-2 years
5. Working parents of children aged 2-3 years
6. Working parents of children aged 3-5 years

Parents / carers will not be charged for any hours that First Steps have not been able to provide them with a service.

25. How will you help my child move on to school?

Early in the summer we begin to get the children ready for school by reading relevant books, showing uniforms and having group discussions. We invite the reception teachers to come in so the children can meet them and, where possible, we make visits to the schools with the children. We also take part in the 'Get Set' scheme which can help children who need a little extra support to transfer to some schools. For more information please see our 'First steps into school' leaflet.

We are registered to take school age children under 8 for after school and holiday sessions, and on occasions we can help by offering sessions while your child is settling in to school and doing part days there. Please ask the Children's Services Manager for further details.



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If you would like to know more about any of our policies, they are available in the reception area, or please see a member of staff.

We look forward to getting to know you and your child and working with you to help them to grow and develop.

For further information, please contact:

Lysha Goode (Children's Services Manager)
First Steps Moorlands Children's Centre
Moorfields Road
Bath
BA2 2DQ
Tel: 01225 317123
Fax: 01225 422948
E-mail: moorlandsc@firststepsbath.org.uk
Website: www.firststepsbath.org.uk



First Steps (Bath) is a registered Charity, Number 1012690
providing **Sure Start Children's Centres** and
family services in the community.

For more information please see our website www.firststepsbath.org.uk

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