



First Steps Childcare: Our Local Offer

As part of our commitment to supporting families to access quality affordable childcare solutions, the statements below have been produced to enable parents and carers to see clearly what services are available for children with SEND at First Steps settings.

1. How does First Steps Childcare know if children need extra help and what should I do if I think my child may have special needs or disabilities?

All children have a designated key person and a co-key person, and it is their role to build strong trusting relationships with the children and their parents/carers. Your assigned key person has a key role when supporting your child and ensuring that their individual care and learning needs are met. Ongoing observational assessments are carried out for all children, and these are linked to the Development Matters ages and stages document. These observations will provide a platform that will enable your allocated key person to be knowledgeable about your child's individual learning needs. These observations are readily available for parents to access at any time.

If you have any worries, or points that you would like to discuss, you can ask for a time to discuss these in private with your key person. Each setting has a named SENCO, and they are able to offer your child's key person support to create an individual plan to best support your child's needs. The settings SENCO will also, with your permission, liaise with other professionals to seek advice and support is needed.

2. How will staff at First Steps Childcare support my child?

Prior to starting at a First Steps setting you will be invited to participate in a minimum of two 'settling' sessions. This will provide an opportunity for you to meet your allocated key person, and together you can complete our 'getting to know you' document. This will help you to provide all sorts of essential information about your child, their strengths and their needs.

We are committed to working in partnership with parents and carers to provide the very best opportunities and experiences for all children. We will listen to you and your child, to ensure that their individual needs can be met.

Individual Learning and Provision plans are also important when planning to meet children's needs, and these will be created in partnership with the key person, parents and carers and the setting SENCO.

3. How will the curriculum offered be matched to my child's needs?

We will get to know all about your child before they start at the setting, and this knowledge will be built upon through regular, on-going observation, reviews, and planning for your child's next steps. We will work closely with you, reviewing the previously planned next steps, planning new ones, and offering you ideas to use at home to support your child.

4. How will both you and I know how my child is doing?

Assessment systems are in place such as the 2 year old check and ongoing observational assessment; we also use the Early Childhood Service on-line tracker, which are all linked to the EYFS ages and stages of development.

There are opportunities, daily, at drop off and collection to talk with your child's key person or co-key person. We also provide two opportunities each academic year for you to be able to make time to talk to your child's key person, and look through their learning journal.

Our open door policy, means that you are always welcome to tell us about how your child is doing, and we hope that this encourages open two way communication between the setting team and parents.

5. What support will there be for my child' overall well-being?

Our practitioners are friendly and welcoming, providing an inclusive, sensitive approach. They provide good role models for positive behaviour and are consistent in the day to day care of all our children. We are flexible in our routines to provide a positive environment to support child's personal care, and personal health care plans can be created and adapted, if necessary. Staff will be trained in giving medication for your child if needed.

Activities will be adapted to ensure that your child is able to interact fully with the environment, and visual strategies, such as visual timetables, are used frequently to help children become familiar with the routines of the day.

6. What specialist services and expertise are available at or accessed by First Steps Childcare?

All First Steps staff hold either a full and relevant early years qualification or are working towards one, and we have a vast range of experience and expertise in our teams.

We can offer the support and guidance of the setting Early Years Teacher or Early Years Practitioner and SENCO. We have developed strong links with a wide range of external specialist, and local Children and Family Centre's, and feel very confident and able when working closely in partnership with yourselves and inclusion support available from the Early Childhood Service, to ensure that all children access the best possible opportunities and experiences when attending our settings.

The inclusion support team are an invaluable resource that we access, with your permission, and they are able to advise, guide, and support parents and practitioners, by offering home advice, suggesting ways of supporting individual children, and signposting to other agencies that might be able to offer help, for example speech and language.

7. What training are the staff supporting children with SEND offered?

All staff are supported to identify training needs to enable them to be an effective key person to the children in their key group. We use a wide range of strategies to support staff development, such as staff meetings, sharing good practise, and attending external training opportunities.

First Steps Childcare has two whole team development days a year and these are used to their maximum potential.

8. How will my child be included in activities outside the setting, including trips?

All visits and trips will be planned in order to include all children. A risk assessment would be carried out prior to the visit. We would also take along all aides and medication that your child might need.

9. How accessible is the indoor and outdoor environment at First Steps settings?

All First Steps settings have good access to all areas of their indoor and outdoor spaces. Chichester Nursery is a two storied building; however, we have provided a carry chair to use to assist if needed.

10. How will First Steps Childcare prepare and support my child to join the setting, and how will they support transition to a new setting or school?

We offer a minimum of 2 sessions for settling prior to your child starting at a First Steps setting. The purpose of these sessions is to allow your child to become familiar with the environment and their key person, and also for you to share information about your child with their key person to help build their knowledge and the relationship. These sessions can be extended if your child should have any difficulties, and your key person will support you in making the transition as smooth as possible.

When it is time for your child to move onto either school or another setting, the key person will prepare the child's learning journey and any relevant information for you to pass onto the new setting or school. With your permission, we welcome visits from teachers or practitioners from the new setting, and value the opportunity to help support the smooth transition.

11. How are the resources matched to support children with special educational needs?

First Steps Childcare has budget available to provide training and development for practitioners. We would apply for Inclusion funding to support your child in our settings if required.

12. How is the decision made about what type and how much support my child will receive?

Through the observational process linked to the EYFS ages and stages of development, and in discussion with you, the key person, and the setting SENCO will identify what support is needed. From this individual plan will be created to identify the areas and actions for focus and this will be shared with all relevant practitioners and yourselves.

Our ongoing partnership with you, and other professionals, will support the decision making process.

Settings will use whole staff meetings or team meetings to share the support strategies, to ensure that staff are all working towards supporting your child with their strengths and needs in a consistent way.

13. How are parents involved in First Steps settings? How can I be involved?

We have an open indoor policy that encourages parents and carers to be involved in our settings. This might be by sharing your skills and knowledge – members of the emergency services are always welcome to bring their Fire Engines, Police Cars or Ambulances, and some parents prefer to be involved in fund raising. The opportunities are unlimited.

14. Who can I contact for further information?

You can access further information about this policy from either Sue Carpenter – Senior Childcare Manager, or the setting manager.

The Local Authority's Local offer can be found on the West Sussex County Council Family Information Service website