

First Footsteps Ltd

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique reference number EY227324
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Inspector Linda McLarty

Setting address 17 Oakfield, Anfield, Liverpool, Merseyside, L4 2QH

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Type of setting Childcare on non-domestic premises

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).

Description of the setting

First Footsteps was registered in 2002 and is part of a chain. It operates from a house in the Anfield district of Liverpool. All children share access to an enclosed outside play area. The setting is open Monday to Friday 07.30 to 18.00, 52 weeks of the year.

The setting is registered on the Early Years Register. A maximum of 43 children may attend the nursery at any one time. There are currently 53 children on roll on the Early Years Register, aged from birth to five, of whom 13 receive funding for nursery education. Children attend from the local community. The setting supports children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, and also supports children who speak English as an additional language.

There are 14 members of staff, 10 of whom hold appropriate early years qualifications to at least NVQ level 2. The setting receives support from the local authority

Overall effectiveness of the early years provision

Overall the quality of the provision is inadequate. All children are welcomed warmly by staff, who are consistently kind to them and who know their individual needs well, based on careful observation and assessment. This supports inclusion satisfactorily. However, information gathered is not used effectively to plan for individual children's next steps in their learning and development. The setting shows its commitment to continual improvement by ongoing self-evaluation leading to action planning to address identified areas for development and working with external agencies to improve the provision.

Overall, the early years provision requires significant improvement. The registered person is given a Notice to Improve that sets out actions to be carried out.

What steps need to be taken to improve provision further?

To comply with the requirements of the EYFS the registered person must take the following action by the specified date:

- plan and provide experiences which are appropriate to each child's stage of development as they progress towards the early learning goals (Learning and Development)

17/07/2009

To improve the early years provision the registered person should:

- support the development of independence skills
- plan and resource a challenging environment where children's play can be supported and extended and enhances their ability to think critically and ask questions

- improve the way adults systematically help children to learn so that they make connections in their learning, are actively led forward and can reflect on their learning.

The leadership and management of the early years provision

The management have a strong commitment to ongoing improvement and use written and informal self-evaluation to identify many areas for development. They support staff training well and seek, value and act on the views of parents and other professionals. However, self-evaluation and monitoring lack rigour and does not accurately identify the weaknesses in planning and teaching. Consequently there is a lack of balance between adult led and child led activities and children's learning is not systematically planned for. The management recognise that the current planning system is not working and that staff lack confidence to evaluate the suggestions from external agencies and sometimes implement them without fully understanding the impact on children.

Parents are supportive of the nursery and its work and are informed about nursery life and their children's day through daily diaries, informal chats and newsletters. They have ongoing access to the assessments of children's progress. The manager has forged productive working relationships with the local children's centre, and learning is enriched by joint activities there, for example, using the multi-sensory room. Staff have accessed joint training at the centre. The manager has initiated contacts to establish partnerships with other providers of early years education but as yet these are not fully reciprocated.

The management have effective systems in place to ensure that children are safeguarded, particularly with regard to child protection. For example, parents are encouraged to send in photographs of those authorised to collect children, a CCTV camera monitors practice in all of the rooms and all staff are suitably vetted and recently trained in safeguarding and know their responsibilities. The contract with parents is not signed until parents have signed to say they have read and understood the setting's policies and procedures, including the child protection policy which describes the nursery's responsibilities to report incidents of concern.

The management recently invited a health and safety expert to help them risk assess the premises and have an action plan in place to address the risks identified. Careful supervision, discussion and reminders keep children generally safe. However, some hazards, such as ladders hanging from hooks in a wall near the exit to the garden are not identified.

The quality and standards of the early years provision

Staff observe children of all ages frequently and use these observations to assess their progress against the expectations of the Early Years Foundation Stage. These indicate that most children are making satisfactory progress towards the early learning goals. Observation sheets identify children's next steps in their learning.

However, the information is filed and not used to plan the activities for each room. Planning is minimal as staff focus on continuous provision, and some activities are inadequately prepared, for example, sand trays with insufficient sand, empty water play trays and poorly resourced home play areas. Not all staff in a room know what the focused activity is, even when there is only one activity planned in a day. Planning is not specific enough to meet the children's individual needs and adults are not focused sharply enough on the learning outcomes of each session or what they want the children to learn from the activities. Adults do not use assessment information well enough to ensure that all individuals are appropriately challenged and consequently children are not making as much progress as they could.

Staff have identified the weaknesses in the current planning system and are keen to improve it, but are less aware of the areas for development in the adult interaction with children.

Some children are not sufficiently supported in acquiring independence skills because staff do too much for them, such as putting on their coats and chopping up their food. Some sessions are too noisy and background music inhibits the way younger children learn the sounds which make up language, hear instructions or communicate with one another and with staff. Staff do not always control the noise levels well enough to maintain a peaceful and productive learning environment, for example, staff over-excite children during singing, and are then unable to prevent children shouting out.

There are some good quality books in all rooms, many of which reflect positive images of a diverse society, but there are insufficient books in each room to encourage a love of reading. There are many examples of mark making and early writing in children's files and on display, but writing areas are not inviting as they have a limited choice of writing materials. Writing is not encouraged within relevant and meaningful play situations, such as role play. There are too few opportunities for children to use their emerging mathematical skills to solve practical problems. Staff do not always introduce activities well enough to explain to children what is expected of them and the reliance on free-play means that much of the learning is haphazard rather than systematically planned for. Children are happy and feel valued because staff show that they enjoy their company, which builds self-esteem. The refurbished outdoor play area is extremely popular with children, and they have many opportunities each day to enjoy the fresh air. However, staff do not plan for children to develop and make progress in their physical skills. The climbing equipment lacks challenge for older and more able children. Children have access to a computer and programmes to support aspects of their learning such as early reading, counting and shapes. Children enjoy tactile play, such as cutting out and naming play dough shapes and babies enjoy playing in a paddling pool full of shredded coloured paper. There are some very good quality resources, which staff have supplemented with imaginative home made items, such as small bottles filled with coloured jelly, glitter, oil and other interesting liquids for the toddlers to explore. The reliance on child-led play means that children are confident to choose activities throughout the sessions.

Children enjoy a healthy home cooked diet, with plenty of fruit for snacks, although staff do not always monitor the self-service snack time sufficiently to

ensure consistently good hygiene practices or to check that all children access the fruit before it gets taken away. Children's health and safety is also protected by the high ratios of staff with current first aid certificates. Most of the learning environments are bright, well decorated and welcoming, although the management have identified some areas which need urgent refurbishment. The daily routines are predominantly child led, so children are confident at selecting resources and activities.

Children learn about the needs of others as they raise money for charitable causes. Older children practise writing the class rules which are displayed well and staff model being kind to others. They help children to learn to stay safe, for example, by not running across a room.

Although children enjoy their time at the setting, they are not achieving as well as they could because the uneven quality of teaching, poor organisation of some rooms and resources and the weaknesses in planning means that the staff are not making the most of the learning opportunities available. This means that children are not acquiring the knowledge, skills and attitudes necessary for their future success in school as quickly as they could.

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

Overall effectiveness

How effective is the provision in meeting the needs of children in the Early Years Foundation Stage?	4
How well does the provision promote inclusive practice?	3
The capacity of the provision to maintain continuous improvement.	3

Leadership and management

How effectively is provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage led and managed?	3
How effective is the setting's self-evaluation, including the steps taken to promote improvement?	3
How well does the setting work in partnership with parents and others?	3
How well are children safeguarded?	3

Quality and standards

How effectively are children in the Early Years Foundation Stage helped to learn and develop?	4
How effectively is the welfare of children in the Early Years Foundation Stage promoted?	3
How well are children helped to stay safe?	3
How well are children helped to be healthy?	3
How well are children helped to enjoy and achieve?	4
How well are children helped to make a positive contribution?	3
How well are children helped develop skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being?	4

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