

Footsteps (South West) Ltd

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique reference number	EY296229
Inspection date	13/05/2009
Inspector	Gail Robertson

Setting address	Culverhay School, Rush Hill, Bath, Avon, BA2 2QL
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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.

Description of the setting

Footsteps was registered in 2004. It is a privately owned nursery operating from a house in the grounds of Culverhay School, on the southern side of Bath. There is easy disabled access to the setting.

It is registered to care for a maximum of 49 children aged from birth to eight years at any one time and currently has 147 children on roll, most of whom attend part-time for a variety of sessions. Of these, 24 are in the Early Years Foundation Stage and receive funding for nursery education.

Footsteps is open from 08.00 to 17.30, five days a week, except over Christmas. The nursery has sole use of the building which includes enclosed areas for outdoor play. The nursery currently supports children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and children who speak English as an additional language. The setting is registered on the Early Years Register, and both the compulsory and voluntary part of the Childcare Register.

There are 12 staff working with the children, 10 of whom have early years qualifications and two are working towards qualification. Both owners have a teaching qualification, one of whom works directly with the children. The deputy manager is waiting to start a diploma in childhood studies. The setting receives support from the local authority and has close links with Culverhay School and other providers in Bath.

Overall effectiveness of the early years provision

Overall, the quality of the provision is good. As one parent said 'We were lucky to find this place, everything here is just right'. Children are well cared for in a warm and pleasant house with good garden space for outside learning and exploration. They are safe in this happy, busy environment and show their feelings in their smiles and laughter. Staff work hard, they are good role models and ensure that the children's needs are met. The owner has good relationships with other providers and outstanding relationships with the parents. The nursery has good capacity to improve.

What steps need to be taken to improve provision further?

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

- continue to develop children's creativity and imagination through the exciting 'Side by Side' project
- ensure that there is a comfortable and quiet area for children to go to if they are tired or need to be away from all the activity
- continue to develop children's learning diaries by involving other providers to give a complete picture of what children can do so that future planning is well matched to their needs

The leadership and management of the early years provision

The owner provides good leadership in promoting staff team work. Together they have created a happy, interesting and fun place for children to explore and learn, use their imagination, make friends and enjoy each session to the full. Parents reported that 'even when ... is not feeling well he wants to come, in case he misses something.' The owner believes strongly in listening to children to find out what is important to them. Staff appreciate the lead that the owner gives and the standards she sets.

Monitoring and reviewing of the provision and practice is well established and improvements are made for the benefit of all the children. For example, the nursery has joined a programme called 'Side by Side' to help children become more creative and imaginative in their play and work. This is having a good impact on children's independence and social skills.

The owners have a good knowledge of the strengths and areas to develop within the setting. This ensures that the good quality provision is maintained and changed to ensure children's needs are met. The recommendations in the previous report have been fully addressed. All safeguarding procedures are in place and rigorously implemented. The quality of risk assessments is outstanding and these are effective in ensuring all children are kept safe.

The owner is committed to improving her knowledge and that of the staff. Every opportunity is exploited to further the staff's knowledge through in-house training and through external providers. The manager has a complete picture of the training undertaken by each staff member.

There are good procedures to ensure key workers know their children very well and build up that extra relationship with them. Staff make observations of the children and use this information most effectively to guide their planning in response to the child's next steps in learning and the child's interests. Parents are fully included in the assessment process and informed about their child's development and progress through informal and formal meetings, and the learning journey logs. The nursery has good relationships with other providers but as yet does not share sufficiently the knowledge contained in the children's learning diaries.

The partnership with parents and carers is outstanding. They feel confident that their contributions to their children's learning is valued and acted upon. They are consulted before changes are made and fully informed of the work children do on a daily or long term basis. Parents appreciate 'the most welcoming and approachable staff'. There are strong links with the school which allows free access to its grounds and woods during the school holidays. There are also excellent links with other local schools and preschool providers.

All staff use the Early Years Foundation Stage guidance to provide good quality

provision for all the children in their care. Children simply love coming here and they thrive in the care and devotion of the staff.

The quality and standards of the early years provision

All children enjoy learning and are provided with an interesting range of activities to help them learn and develop inside and outside. Children's curiosity and desire to explore are exploited to the full. This was evident in the baby room where the 'Ragrats' were exploring the feeling of sand as staff let it trickle through the young children's hands. They then scrunched and twisted shredded paper to feel the difference. All children thoroughly enjoy their activities like the 'Little Monsters' who were experimenting with sounds and playing games with the staff. There is a good balance of adult-led and child-initiated activities. On the walls there are many examples that show how staff take notice of children's interests and then develop their ideas. The owner reported that the 'Side by Side' project is making a big difference to the children's confidence. Many of the wide range of resources are stored at low level to enable children to make their own choices and learn to become independent. Staff are fully aware of what children can see as they were observed playing with children at their level.

In the 'Smarties' room, for the preschool children, the alphabet is displayed where children can easily see and refer to it. They love counting and reciting counting rhymes and enjoy the stories staff tell them. Staff are good at helping children to develop their speaking, listening and counting skills. Children love the outside area with its wealth of activities for them to explore. There were many photographs of children exploring and enjoying all the physical activities but the weather was far too wet to go outside on the day of the inspection. The staff made arrangements for children to exercise inside. There was, however, nowhere comfortable for tired children or those who wanted peace and quite to retire to.

Comprehensive assessment procedures ensure that all key workers know their children well. Observations of the children are both incidental and more formal. This information is used effectively to plan further activities in response to children's needs and interests. A high emphasis is given to communication and language skills and this is evident in the children's confidence when speaking.

The welfare of the children is good. Children behave well because of the expectations the adults have of them. They learn to share, play and have fun with each other and look forward to coming to further develop their friendships. They are clear about staying safe. Snack and lunch times are used very effectively to promote healthy eating. They are developing knowledge of the wider world and the world of work through their play, visits to the library and visitors to the setting.

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?	2
How well does the provision promote inclusive practice?	1
The capacity of the provision to maintain continuous improvement.	2

Leadership and management

How effectively is provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage led and managed?	2
How effective is the setting's self-evaluation, including the steps taken to promote improvement?	2
How well does the setting work in partnership with parents and others?	1
How well are children safeguarded?	2

Quality and standards

How effectively are children in the Early Years Foundation Stage helped to learn and develop?	2
How effectively is the welfare of children in the Early Years Foundation Stage promoted?	2
How well are children helped to stay safe?	2
How well are children helped to be healthy?	1
How well are children helped to enjoy and achieve?	2
How well are children helped to make a positive contribution?	2
How well are children helped develop skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being?	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
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The provider confirms that the requirements of the voluntary part of the Childcare Register are:	Met
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