

# Footsteps Pre-School

Inspection report for early years provision

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**Unique reference number**

EY242708

**Inspection date**

16/05/2011

**Inspector**

Jo Rowley

**Setting address**

Great Dell Scout Hut, Great Dell, Welwyn Garden City,  
Hertfordshire, AL8 7HX

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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*.

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## Description of the setting

Footsteps pre-school registered in 2002 and is run by a management committee. It operates from the Great Dell Scout Hut in the Templewood area of Welwyn Garden City, Hertfordshire. The pre-school serves the local and surrounding areas, has links with the local primary school and is accessible to all children. There is a fully enclosed area available for outdoor play.

The pre-school opens Mon, Tues Thur & Fri, during school term time, from 9.15am until 12pm, with an optional lunch club from 12pm until 1.10pm on the same days. Children are able to attend for a variety of sessions. A maximum of 20 children may attend the pre-school at any one time. There are currently 25 children attending who are within the Early Years Foundation Stage. The pre-school is registered on the Early Years Register and provides funded early education for three and four-year-olds. It supports children with special educational needs and/or disabilities and children who speak English as an additional language.

The pre-school employs four members of childcare staff. Of these, three hold appropriate early years qualifications to level three or above with one member of staff is currently working towards completing the Early Years Foundation degree.

## The overall effectiveness of the early years provision

Overall the quality of the provision is good.

Planning for the Early Years Foundation Stage covers all areas of learning, with staff providing a wide range of resources to ensure that children receive experiences that promote good progress overall. Good relationships with parents and the procedures for assessing children enables staff to build a clear understanding of each child's needs and interests and thereby offer them appropriate support to ensure that inclusion is promoted. Partnerships with parents, carers, other agencies and settings are developed and these help to promote continuity of care and learning for children attending. Staff members demonstrate a positive approach to self-evaluation through day-to-day discussion, however, strengths and areas for improvement are not formally evaluated on a regular basis to ensure that the setting is consistently responsive to the needs of the children and their families attending.

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

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

- obtain children's starting points in order to assess where they are when they start, identify children's next steps and incorporate these into the planning to ensure that activities are tailored to the needs and abilities of individual children
- develop further the use of reflective practice, self-evaluation and informed

discussion to identify the setting's strengths and priorities for development.

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

Children's welfare is well promoted as the setting has robust safeguarding procedures in place. For example, all staff attend regular training to ensure that they are informed and updated, enabling them to work together to protect children. Robust checks ensure that staff are suitable to work with children and thorough risk assessments cover all areas and mean that hazards are minimised. Children gain a good understanding of safety issues through ongoing explanations and good examples which staff promote. For example, at snack time staff reinforce to children the importance of not putting knives into their mouths to eat food from, with children also offering reasons themselves for why this is dangerous. The daily implementation of the setting's policies and procedures further supports the promotion of children's safety and wellbeing.

The team of established staff members work well together and have a clear vision for the continuing improvement of the setting, which involves staff, parents and children in reviewing the setting's practice. The staff are currently in the final stages of completing the Herts Quality Standards award and are using the information gained through this process to make changes and update valid information such as the setting's policies and procedures, thereby improving outcomes for children. Staff are supported by the leader and management committee in attending further training and they are encouraged to continue with improving their practice. This promotes an environment where both staff and children develop positive attitudes to learning. Resources are used well to promote children's learning and development. For example, good use is made of the outdoor play area to ensure that children are offered an extended range of opportunities.

All staff have a good understanding of anti-discriminatory practice, enabling them to review their policies and ensure that the service they provide is inclusive to all children and their families. They work closely with parents and carers to ensure that they understand each child's background and needs, considering this information when they are planning activities and play opportunities. Parents receive thorough information about their child's progress and activities, for example, through newsletters, daily discussions with staff and regular opportunities to look at their children's learning journeys. The setting also works well with others to ensure the continuity of children's care and to promote their development. For example, they work closely with the local children's centre and the nearby primary school to help prepare children for the transition to school. Self-evaluation is in place, however, not consistently used to develop priorities for development.

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

Children make effective progress in all areas of learning because staff have a good understanding of the Early Years Foundation Stage. They implement procedures for assessing children, utilising this information to inform activity planning and to ensure that children are offered activities that promote their development. However, staff are not fully aware of children's starting points when they begin and they do not consistently identify children's next steps in order for these to be incorporated into the planning of activities. This means that activities are not always tailored to the needs of the individual child. The use of the key worker system means that staff know the children well and can therefore provide appropriate support whenever needed. Children are confidently encouraged to explore and develop their own play, with staff intervening appropriately to extend children's knowledge and understanding. An example of this is where children enjoy regular opportunities to go with staff into the woodland area adjacent to the setting. Children are encouraged to explore their natural environment whilst enjoying additional activities such as when they are balancing on the stepping stones, weaving in and out of the logs, climbing the wooden log steps or sitting and listening to the birds singing in the trees.

Children's ideas are encouraged and their learning is enhanced as they take part in themed topics. An example of this is where children are currently learning about the lifecycle of a frog. They take great pleasure in describing how the frogspawn turns into tadpoles and how these then turn into frogs which they are going to release into a pond. The theme is extended to include stories and art and craft opportunities where children can make their own frogs or work with others to create a large pond. Children's enjoyment is enhanced and their learning extended because staff join in with their play. For example, children enjoy using musical instruments and sing along with staff to the different sounds that they make. They enjoy role-play resources and have their likes and interests developed to create further learning opportunities. For example, one child recently shared information about a camping trip his family had been on. This encouraged other children to talk about their experiences so staff extended these ideas and interests and together with the children they created their own campsite using tents, sleeping bags and play food.

Children have many opportunities to learn about the uses of information and communication technology, therefore gaining valuable skills for the future. For example, they use a laptop computer, binoculars and digital cameras. They are settled and have secure, trusting relationships with staff, showing genuine pleasure as they happily run into the setting and hug the staff affectionately. Children develop a good understanding of appropriate behaviour because they are offered clear explanations by staff. They learn about sharing, cooperation and negotiation as they work out turn-taking and help with tasks such as tidying up. Children are developing a good understanding of diversity as they participate in a range of activities and play experiences to support this. For example, they celebrate festivals and special events such as Mother's Day and the recent Royal Wedding. The good procedures for working with parents and other professionals

mean that children who have special educational needs and/or disabilities or who speak English as an additional language are offered appropriate and consistent support to enable them to participate and make good progress. Children have opportunities to develop early reading and writing skills. They participate in songs and rhymes to help them identify letters and enjoy writing and mark-making as part of their role play. Children are encouraged to develop healthy lifestyles. Their understanding of the relevance of healthy eating is promoted as they participate in discussions at snack time, talking about foods that give them energy and help keep their bodies strong and healthy.

## 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>The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage</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	2
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	2
The extent to which children adopt healthy lifestyles	2
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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