

# The Footsteps Academy

The Frederick Knight Sports Ground, 80 Willoughby Lane, Northumberland Park, London N17 0SL

## Inspection dates

12–13 January 2016

## Overall effectiveness

## Requires improvement

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Requires improvement

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Requires improvement

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Outcomes for pupils

Requires improvement

Overall effectiveness at previous inspection

Not previously inspected

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a school that requires improvement

- Pupils' progress is too variable because teaching does not always stretch and motivate all pupils sufficiently.
- Assessment is not used consistently to identify where pupils have gaps in their learning. As a result, these gaps are not being closed quickly enough.
- Pupils' achievements in English, mathematics and science require improvement. A lack of suitable teachers has limited achievement in science this year.
- Leaders do not monitor the learning and progress of pupils or teaching quality closely enough. New systems to check teaching and pupils' progress have not had time to have an impact.
- The board of trustees lacks the educational experience to challenge the academy about the quality of teaching, learning and progress.
- The curriculum requires improvement to ensure that it meets pupils' interests and needs more closely.

### The school has the following strengths

- Pupils' personal development is promoted effectively. Leaders, those responsible for governance and staff have a positive impact on improving pupils' personal skills and self-confidence.
- All staff are committed to helping every pupil to become a successful member of the community.
- Pupils who have had a history of poor attendance are attending lessons more regularly than in the past.
- Pupils spoken to have very positive views about the academy and the support they get from staff. They recognise improvements in their behaviour and attitudes to education. Pupils are clear that they feel safe and that there is no bullying.
- Relationships between staff and pupils are warm but firm. Pupils appreciate the way they are treated as individuals and show staff a great deal of respect.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is promoted well.

### Compliance with regulatory requirements

- The school must take action to meet the requirements of the schedule to The Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014 ('the independent school standards') and associated requirements. The details are listed in the full report.

## Full report

### What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve teaching and learning by:
  - developing a broader range of techniques to stretch and motivate pupils
  - using assessment consistently to identify gaps in pupils' learning and ensure that these gaps are closed quickly
  - ensuring that science is taught effectively.
- Improve pupils' outcomes by:
  - raising pupils' achievement in science
  - helping pupils to gain higher grades in English and mathematics.
- Revise the curriculum to ensure that all subjects meet pupils' interests and needs effectively.
- Improve the leadership and management of the school by:
  - checking closely the learning and progress of pupils to identify the actions needed to raise achievement
  - monitoring the quality of teaching to ensure that the range of approaches engage all pupils.
- The school must meet the following independent school standards.
  - The proprietor must ensure suitable changing accommodation and showers are provided for pupils aged 11 years or over at the start of the school year who receive physical education (paragraph 23(1)(c)).

## Inspection judgements

### Effectiveness of leadership and management requires improvement

- The Principal provides good leadership and has an ambitious vision for the academy's future. Leaders, staff and those responsible for governance have worked relentlessly to make a positive impact on pupils' personal and social development. They are very effective in supporting pupils to improve their behaviour and attitudes to learning. Pupils are clear that without the support of the academy they would not be in full time education. This is confirmed by past and present pupils who praise their teachers for helping them to mature.
- Leaders have taken action to ensure that the regulations for independent schools are met. However, the regulations are not met in full at the vocational academy building because there are no changing rooms or showers for pupils. Facilities in the two other buildings meet the regulations in full.
- The school is successful in its mission to '...confront and remove all negative aspects of a young person's environment which may adversely affect and hinder their development'. This is because of the commitment of the staff and their belief that every pupil can be a successful member of the community.
- While leaders successfully promote pupils' personal development, work to ensure that teaching has a consistently positive impact on pupils' progress is less effective. This is because the information is not detailed enough. Leaders recognise that this is a priority and have appointed a qualified teacher to lead teaching and learning across the three sites. A number of improved systems to check pupils' academic progress, identify gaps in learning and develop approaches to teaching have been introduced. However, these systems are at an early stage and it is too soon to see the impact on improving the quality of teaching.
- The academy teaches a broad range of subjects but the design of the curriculum requires improvement. This is because some of the subjects offered, especially art, do not meet pupils' interests and needs effectively. Some pupils make good progress in their GCSEs, functional skills and other qualifications. However, this is not consistent for all pupils or in all subjects. Progress in science and art is inadequate. The academy has identified these weaknesses and has begun to review the curriculum to better meet the needs of pupils and improve teaching in science. These developments have so far not had an impact on pupils' progress because they have only just been introduced.
- The academy promotes British values effectively through its curriculum and the emphasis on transforming pupils' behaviour and attitudes. As a result, pupils are generally well prepared for life in modern Britain.
- Leaders ensure that pupils are safe. Staff are appropriately trained in all aspects of child protection and safeguarding and take their responsibilities in this area seriously. There are regular fire drills and checks on fire safety equipment.
- Leaders use the additional funding the academy receives for disadvantaged pupils appropriately to improve attendance and raise basic skills.
- The quality of information provided to parents is good. Information about pupils' achievement is generally clear and there is a good range of policies on the academy's website, including those for behaviour, child protection, safeguarding, health and safety, and complaints.
- Pupils receive helpful careers advice and all are encouraged to apply for at least two, and preferably four, places of work or further study. Last year, all but two pupils went on to work, college or an apprenticeship.
- The academy promotes equal opportunity appropriately, including for the small number of girls and those from a wide range of minority ethnic backgrounds, effectively. This is because of the strong relationships between staff and pupils which help all pupils to move on successfully when they leave.
- The academy has been on a significant journey, successfully establishing itself as a safe environment for vulnerable pupils to mature and take up their place in society. It has an accurate awareness of what it has achieved, and what remains to be done, recognising that it needs to track pupils' academic progress more accurately.
- **The governance of the academy**
  - The Principal and those responsible for governance have ensured that nearly all the independent school standards are met.
  - Members of the board of trustees are highly committed and bring a range of professional expertise including business, legal and information technology skills. However, they recognise that the board lacks the educational background to ensure that they are able to provide a suitable level of challenge, especially in relation to the quality of teaching, learning and progress. The board is currently working to appoint an additional member with an education background.

- Those responsible for governance have ensured that there are clear policies in place and that they are reviewed annually.
- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

## Quality of teaching, learning and assessment requires improvement

- Teaching requires improvement because not all pupils make enough progress. All staff are highly committed to helping pupils turn their lives round and move on successfully to the next stage of their careers. This ensures that the great majority of pupils are ready to learn. However, while teachers know their subjects, they do not have enough understanding of a range of techniques to help pupils learn effectively and make progress. For example, few teachers use questioning to extend pupils' thinking. As a result, pupils' achievements are too variable.
- There is strong focus on English and mathematics and there are regular opportunities for pupils to improve their speaking and listening skills through discussion. Often, these discussions are thoughtful and insightful. However, teachers do not always use these opportunities to ensure that all pupils are involved or to check that everyone has understood. As a result, teaching moves to the next topic before some pupils are ready.
- Overall, the quality of teaching across the three buildings is not consistent. Procedures to monitor the quality of teaching and bring about improvement are at a very early stage of development and it is too soon to see the full impact. In most lessons, teachers plan work in detail. However, planning does not always take enough account of pupils' capabilities. Because of this, the work does not always stretch pupils sufficiently and this limits their learning.
- Teachers assess pupils' work regularly and the information is used to identify individual progress. This provides an overview of performance and staff work usefully with individuals to improve their achievement. However, assessment provides too little information about gaps in learning and staff interventions focus mostly on behaviour. As a result, some pupils do not make enough progress.
- Marking in books is regular but teachers do not ensure that comments to improve or finish work are routinely followed up. As a result, there is unfinished work in books. This means that pupils do not always cover topics in sufficient detail to ensure that their learning is consolidated.
- Relationships between staff and pupils are good. Teachers and learning mentors provide positive role models and are ambitious for pupils. This creates a positive climate in lessons, which helps most to improve their behaviour at school.

## Personal development, behaviour and welfare is good

### Personal development and welfare

- The academy's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good. This is because the academy is successful in enabling pupils to become more self-confident and believe in themselves.
- Staff establish very good relationships with pupils. Pupils have great respect for their teachers and the learning mentors. This is because they feel they are listened to and their concerns taken seriously. As a result, they understand that their difficulties are not a barrier to future success. Many pupils speak with insight about how they have matured at Footsteps.
- Pupils are fulsome in their praise for staff and all say that they enjoy coming to the academy because 'Footsteps is one family'. One pupil said that, 'Footsteps is not like a normal school. It doesn't give up on you'. Pupils feel able to go to staff if they have a problem and are confident that it will be resolved effectively.
- Pupils learn how to keep themselves safe including from knife crime, internet grooming, extremism and radicalisation. They are united in saying that there is no bullying and that if there were an incident it would be dealt with quickly and effectively by the Principal. Pupils discuss these issues maturely and understand about treating everyone, regardless of ethnicity, background or lifestyle, with respect.
- In a number of cases pupils have returned to the academy to work or to volunteer. This provides positive role models for current pupils, enabling them to see others who have changed their lives. A past pupil who volunteers noted that, 'Footsteps has been a life-changing experience for me'.

## Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. This is a major strength of the academy and is the result of the skilled work of all staff to help pupils improve their behaviour and raise their aspirations.
- The strong focus on improving pupils' behaviour and attitudes ensures that, in nearly all cases, lessons progress without disruption. As a result, the attitudes of most pupils are good and show a significant improvement during their time at Footsteps. They understand how poor behaviour in the past has disrupted their learning and have a sense of achievement in how they have changed for the better.
- All pupils spoken to by the inspector said that the academy had helped them improve their behaviour and their respect for others. One pupil said that, 'Footsteps has really helped to improve my behaviour and made me more mature.' Another stated that she is 'a totally different person' and all agreed that 'everyone changes when they come here'.
- There are some good systems to monitor pupils' behaviour and encourage improvement. For example, pupils' attitudes, including attendance, punctuality, behaviour in lessons, rewards and detentions are checked carefully. This ensures that staff are able to identify individual difficulties and provide well-targeted support. As a result, pupils learn self-discipline and conduct themselves well.
- Many pupils start at the academy with very low levels of attendance. In some cases, they have missed a significant amount of school. With the support of the academy, pupils now attend regularly.
- Pupils take their responsibilities as 'VIP' pupils seriously. The head and deputy head pupil are proud of the work they do to support staff, for example by helping with the day-to-day running of the academy.

## Outcomes for pupils

## require improvement

- Pupils start at the academy with significant gaps in their learning and many have troubled experiences of education. As a result, starting points are very low. Pupils' books and assessment information show that during their time at the academy some make good academic progress from their starting points. However, not enough pupils make good progress. They are not always given work that stretches them and assessment is not used consistently to identify gaps in their learning.
- Pupils are prepared for GCSE examinations in subjects including English, mathematics, science, art, citizenship and physical education. In addition, pupils are able to gain vocational, sports and first-aid qualifications. Results for last year show that just under a half of pupils achieved five GCSEs at A\*-G grade but that none achieved at the higher levels. The academy has now begun to give greater focus to helping pupils understand how to take examinations. The academy's information shows that more pupils are making at least adequate progress this year. However, progress still requires improvement because it not yet good for all pupils or in all subjects.
- Pupils who are more able make adequate progress in English but do less well in other subjects. Those who are less able or who have special educational needs are given support by teachers and learning mentors. However, this is mostly focused on pupils' behaviour and attitudes, and does not always target gaps in learning. While this support helps to develop pupils' personal skills, it does not always improve their academic achievement as effectively.
- Achievement in science is poor because the academy has not been able to recruit suitable staff. A new teacher has started this term but it is too early to judge the impact of this.
- In art, pupils make only limited progress. The academy has identified that this is because art does not meet the needs of its pupils effectively and as a result they are poorly motivated. The curriculum review is considering how best to provide a more practical option for pupils.
- When pupils leave the academy, nearly all progress to college or work. Many overcome significant difficulties, especially in their behaviour and attitudes, to achieve this.

## School details

<b>Unique reference number</b>	141859
<b>Inspection number</b>	10008621
<b>DfE registration number</b>	309/6004

This inspection was carried out under section 109(1) and (2) of the Education and Skills Act 2008, the purpose of which is to advise the Secretary of State for Education about the school's suitability for continued registration as an independent school.

<b>Type of school</b>	Other
<b>School status</b>	Independent school
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	12–16
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	51
<b>Number of part-time pupils</b>	0
<b>Proprietor</b>	Footsteps Trust
<b>Chair</b>	Giles Hall
<b>Headteacher</b>	Christopher Hall
<b>Annual fees (day pupils)</b>	£9060
<b>Telephone number</b>	0208 885 4967
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.footsteps.uk.com">www.footsteps.uk.com</a>
<b>Email address</b>	<a href="mailto:info1@footsteps.uk.com">info1@footsteps.uk.com</a>
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	Not previously inspected

## Information about this school

- The Footsteps Academy aims to 'give students the skills, knowledge, and confidence to be able to make positive decisions about their future' and 'work in a flexible, supportive and dynamic environment with a wide range of choices for clients that enables them to learn skills, achieve success, and access further education or employment'.
- The Footsteps Academy was founded in 2010 as Football Academy by the current Principal and CEO. It has subsequently expanded and now operates across three sites to provide vocational and sports facilities.
- There are currently 51 pupils on roll aged between 12 and 16. Most are referred from local authority secondary schools in the London Boroughs of Haringey, Hackney, Islington and Camden. The academy also accepts pupils from the London Borough of Haringey's Youth Offending Service.
- The Footsteps Academy caters for pupils who have a record of poor behaviour and attitudes or a history of poor attendance.
- The Footsteps Trust is overseen by a Trustees Committee and chaired by one of the trustees. The trust is currently working to appoint an additional trustee with an education background.
- The academy does not use any alternative provision.
- The Footsteps Academy was registered by the Department for Education in February 2015 and this is its first standard inspection.

## Information about this inspection

- The inspection was carried out with one day's notice.
- Learning was observed in five lessons all of which were joint observations with the head of teaching and learning. A tour of each site was undertaken with the Principal or a senior leader.
- Samples of pupils' work were scrutinised.
- The inspector spoke to teachers, senior leaders and the Principal. A separate discussion was also held with one of the trustees, responsible for governance.
- The inspector spoke to two groups of pupils: a group of four girls and, separately, a group of one girl and four boys.
- Documentation and policies were checked for compliance with the independent school standards.
- Behaviour and progress records were examined.
- There were insufficient responses to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, to be taken into account.

## Inspection team

Brian Oppenheim, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

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