

Footsteps Trust

New River Sports Centre, White Hart Lane, London N22 5QW

Inspection dates

30 January–1 February 2018

Overall effectiveness	Good
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Good
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Good
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good
Outcomes for pupils	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Requires improvement

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- Since the previous inspection, leaders have improved the school. As a result, the school provides its pupils with a good education.
- Teachers use assessment information well to plan learning that helps pupils make good progress from when they join the school.
- The curriculum provides pupils with a suitable range of subjects that meet their needs. Further, leaders give pupils good-quality career information and guidance. As a result, the vast majority of pupils continue into post-16 education.
- All members of staff care greatly about the well-being of pupils. They offer pupils much personal mentoring to help them build their self-belief. They encourage them to improve their behaviour, develop positive attitudes to learning and to aspire for successful careers.
- Through working with a range of agencies, leaders ensure pupils' well-being and safety. Pupils get on well together in the school and feel safe. They have many opportunities to learn about dangers and how to keep themselves safe.
- Pupils mostly join this alternative provision with much lower standards than expected for their age. As a result of good pastoral care and teaching, they make good progress in their personal development and academic learning.
- Pupils attend this school more regularly than they typically did at their previous schools. There are some, however, who do not arrive punctually. They miss learning at the start of the day and this slows their progress.
- At times, teachers do not set tasks that are challenging enough for the most able pupils. This limits their potential to reach higher standards.
- Teachers give feedback to pupils in line with the school's policy. Not enough pupils, however, make the expected improvements to their work. This slows their progress.
- Teachers regularly set homework to consolidate pupils' learning. Some pupils do not, however, complete the work.
- Leaders make sure that all the independent school standards are met. Trustees, however, do not challenge leaders and check regularly on the quality of teaching and pupils' outcomes.

Compliance with regulatory requirements

The school meets the requirements of the schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014 ('the independent school standards') and associated requirements.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching and pupils' outcomes by ensuring that:
 - teachers set work that is more challenging, especially for the most able pupils
 - there is greater consistency in pupils' learning from their mistakes and correcting their work, in line with the school's marking and feedback policy
 - teachers and leaders encourage pupils and hold them to account for consistently completing their homework assignments.
- Continue to try to make sure that a greater number of pupils arrive on time to school.
- Improve the effectiveness of leadership and management by trustees providing support and challenge to school leaders to improve further the quality of teaching and pupils' outcomes.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- School leaders, including those responsible for governance, communicate a clear vision. They aspire to give pupils who have had poor experiences of school a fresh start and the opportunity to set themselves on a course for a successful future. Through strong pastoral support, high expectations for improving behaviour and effective teaching, they succeed in their mission.
- Since the previous inspection, senior leaders have introduced rigorous systems for holding members of staff to account for their performance. Through biannual reviews, regular observations of teachers and learning mentors, leaders know the strengths and development needs of all members of staff. Senior leaders arrange professional development opportunities to help drive improvement. For example, all subject teachers have spent time working with subject leaders in a large maintained school. They observed teachers across years and ability groups to learn from best practice. As a result of these developments, the quality of teaching has improved and is now good.
- Pupils join the school at various points during the year, mostly during Year 11. Leaders have good systems for assessing pupils on entry, and preparing individual learning plans. These include a raft of targets, including for academic and behavioural achievements, and the strategies the school will provide to help pupils to achieve their goals. These strategies help pupils to settle down well and become successful learners.
- Leaders use tracking systems often to check pupils' progress, and report fortnightly to parents and carers on their children's academic progress, behaviour, attitudes and attendance. Leaders use this information to identify underperformance and arrange further academic and pastoral support, as needed. These systems have a positive impact on pupils' outcomes.
- The academy leaders on each site know the pupils extremely well. They and the learning mentors build up strong and trusting relationships with the pupils. They offer pupils personal coaching and encouragement that helps them to develop positive attitudes to learning and to behave in a responsible manner. This makes a strong contribution in helping pupils make a success of their time at this school, and in preparing them for the future.
- Leaders have refined the curriculum since the previous inspection. It now offers pupils GCSE courses in English, mathematics, biology and religious studies. In addition, all pupils study for a Level 1 Sport BTEC National Diploma. Leaders have made sure that teachers of these courses teach effectively and have good subject knowledge. Leaders enrich the formal curriculum through offering additional art, African drum workshops and visits such as to art galleries, museums and a Gurdwara, for instance.
- Aspects of the GCSE courses make a good contribution to pupils' personal development. Pupils study Christianity, Sikhism and religious moral dilemmas in religious studies. In addition, the effective personal, social, health and economic education (PSHE) programmes cover topics such as sexual orientation, equality and understanding faiths. These studies are effective in making sure that pupils learn about people of the protected

characteristics and prepare them for life in modern Britain.

- Leaders benefit from termly reviews led by teams from the referring local authorities. This external scrutiny helps leaders to know the strengths and weaknesses of their provision. Leaders take on board the reviewers' recommendations and act on them to improve the school.

Governance

- The board of trustees are responsible for the governance of the school. The principal is one of the trustees.
- School leaders and trustees have made sure that the school meets the independent school standards and other requirements.
- There is regular informal discussion between the principal and other trustees, especially the chair. Trustees, however, do not have established systems for supporting and holding senior leaders to account for the quality of teaching. They do not consistently check on pupils' progress. Their last formal meeting was in July 2017, and they are not briefed on the progress that current pupils are making.
- Trustees have recruited two people who they expect to join the trust shortly. The intention is that these people will add capacity to check the school's work more closely. One has a background in education and the other has expertise in safeguarding.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- The principal and three other senior leaders are trained as designated safeguarding leads. They make sure that all members of staff are kept up to date with the latest guidance. Leaders require every member of staff to undertake online refresher safeguarding training at least once a year. Furthermore, senior leaders set regular tests for all members of staff to make sure that they continue to be fully aware of safeguarding guidelines and procedures. As a result, there are high levels of vigilance, and members of staff report any concerns without delay.
- Because of the very caring environment, pupils build strong relationships with members of staff. Pupils share with them any safeguarding and welfare concerns that they have for themselves and for their peers. Leaders respond to concerns without delay. They work closely with the safeguarding and social work teams across London's local authorities to address any safeguarding and welfare concerns.
- The curriculum helps pupils understand how to stay safe in a range of potentially dangerous situations. Pupils benefit from workshops delivered by a variety of providers. These include sessions on gangs, knife crime, substance misuse and child sexual exploitation.
- The school publishes its safeguarding policy on its website. The policy has proper regard to current government requirements.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Teachers assess pupils' skills when they join the school, and continue to assess their progress frequently. They use this information to plan effective learning and personal support. This helps pupils make good progress.
- Teachers plan learning activities systematically. This helps pupils build on their prior knowledge and gain new skills.
- There is a teacher and a learning mentor in each class. This means that pupils benefit from individual attention, encouragement and support. When pupils get stuck, teachers and mentors help them to address any misconceptions that arise. Consequently, pupils become successful learners and make good progress.
- Teaching makes a good contribution to pupils' moral development. In religious studies lessons, pupils discussed the rights and wrongs of abortion and euthanasia. In English, pupils read articles to understand homelessness, and they wrote a response to the question of, 'Should the death penalty be reintroduced?'
- Teachers do not consistently have high enough expectations of what pupils, especially the most able, can achieve. They do not set work that is challenging enough to make sure that the most able pupils reach their potential.
- In line with the school's policy, teachers give pupils feedback on how they are doing and set them a follow-up task to improve their work. They also set weekly homework tasks that help pupils consolidate and build on their learning. Some pupils, however, regularly fail to carry out these assignments. This slows their learning.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Typically, pupils join the school with low self-esteem as they have been disengaged from their education. Members of staff patiently help them realise that if they put in the effort, they can make a success of their lives. As a result, pupils learn to settle down to work and, as they taste success, they gain in self-confidence.
- Pupils learn about healthy lifestyles and all take part in a range of sports activities, including football and boxing. One pupil told the inspector that boxing provides him with a positive channel to funnel his aggression. These opportunities ensure pupils' physical well-being.
- Pupils learn to trust members of staff as they see that they care about them. This helps pupils to feel that they can discuss any problems that they have, as they know the staff will listen to and support them. Leaders have established good links with a range of external agencies. They refer pupils for professional help, when appropriate. In these ways, the school promotes pupils' positive emotional well-being and mental health.
- Pupils in this small school get on well with and respect each other. They report that there is no bullying in the school. Through the curriculum, they learn how to keep safe and manage risks.

- Pupils receive effective impartial information and guidance. They discuss their options and long-term career aspirations and pathways with school leaders and their learning mentors. They attend a London-wide skills programme where they gain further information about a range of careers. This helps pupils to plan for successful careers, once they leave the school.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Pupils who join this school have typically displayed poor behaviours and attitudes in their previous schools. Leaders set out clear expectations for good behaviour. Leaders deploy a range of strategies for rewarding good behaviour and have well-defined sanctions for misbehaviour. Members of staff mentor pupils effectively. Consequently, pupils begin to understand that improving their behaviours will help them succeed in their lives. Pupils, therefore, as they settle into the school, begin to transform their behaviours. They develop positive attitudes and increasingly cooperate with their teachers and learning mentors. As a result, they become successful learners.
- Most pupils markedly increase their attendance at this school compared to their previous schools.
- A few pupils consistently arrive late in the mornings. Consequently, they miss parts of or entire lessons at the start of the day. This has a negative impact on their learning.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- Most pupils join the school at various points during Year 11. They arrive at this school with low starting points, including in English and mathematics. This is because they were disengaged at their previous schools, and their attendance was often very low.
- Because of the effective pastoral care, good teaching and support, they make good progress from their low starting points. This enables them to achieve the necessary qualifications to pursue their chosen careers.
- In the 2017 tests, pupils gained functional skills qualifications in English and in mathematics. The proportion that attained 5+ GCSE passes was above the national average for alternative provisions. A few pupils gained good GCSE grades in English and in mathematics.
- Current pupils, including the most able and pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities are making good progress, overall. The most able, however, are not making the strong progress of which they are capable. This is because teachers do not consistently set work which is challenging enough.
- The vast majority of pupils leave the school and proceed to post-16 education. Last year's graduates are studying a range of courses, such as in health and social care, business, performing arts, sports and childcare.

School details

Unique reference number	141859
DfE registration number	309/6004
Inspection number	10041405

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.

Type of school	Alternative Provision
School category	Independent school
Age range of pupils	12 to 16
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	45
Number of part-time pupils	1
Proprietor	Footsteps Trust
Chair	Giles Hall
Headteacher	Christopher Hall
Annual fees (day pupils)	£8,160–£9,330
Telephone number	0208 881 4050
Website	www.footsteps.uk.com
Email address	info1@footsteps.uk.com
Date of previous inspection	12–14 January 2016

Information about this school

- The Footsteps Academy aims to 'provide students with the necessary tools and skills to build a successful future and to be able to make a positive contribution to their community.'
- The Footsteps Academy was founded in 2010 as a Football Academy by the current Principal and CEO. The Footsteps Academy was registered by the Department for Education in February 2015, and this is its second standard inspection.
- Since the previous inspection, the school no longer operates across three sites, but two. In autumn 2017, trustees assigned one site for the education of girls, and the other for

boys.

- The school is registered to educate up to 80 pupils. There are currently 45 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 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 school does not use any alternative provision.

Information about this inspection

- The inspection was conducted without notice.
- The inspector was only able to observe learning in four lessons, as the inspection took place during the school's assessment week.
- The inspector scrutinised pupils' work across the two sites and across subjects.
- The inspector met with staff, pupils and leaders. The inspector spoke by telephone with the chair of trustees and the local authority safeguarding officer.
- The inspector observed pupils during social times.
- Documentation, policies and all aspects of the school's work were checked for compliance with the independent school standards.
- This report is unable to include information on the progress and behaviour of the extremely small number of key stage 3 pupils, as this would identify them individually.
- The inspector could not take account of the responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire for parents (Parent View), as there were no responses.

Inspection team

David Radomsky, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

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