

Inspection of Footsteps Stafford

Newport Road, Stafford ST16 1BA

Inspection date: 3 February 2022

Overall effectiveness	Good
The quality of education	Good
Behaviour and attitudes	Good
Personal development	Good
Leadership and management	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Requires improvement

What is it like to attend this early years setting?

The provision is good

Children enjoy the time they spend in this welcoming, well-resourced environment. They are confident and eager to try new experiences. Children build good relationships with staff, actively seeking them out for a cuddle if they are tired or need reassurance. Younger children play happily alongside their peers, and older children seek out their friends to join in their play. They learn to share and take turns.

Children are motivated to learn and explore. Babies wait expectantly for staff to open the 'magic bag'. They explore the items that they find in the bag, and smile and sway as they listen to the corresponding song. Older children thoroughly enjoy blowing bubbles as they dance and jump to their favourite songs. They are curious as they investigate why the bubbles will not blow when the mixture has run out. Children explore textures such as glittery play dough, and rice scented with rosemary, sage, mint and coriander. All children make good or rapid progress from their initial starting points. They build on their skills as they move through the nursery and are well prepared for their next stage of learning and eventual move on to school.

What does the early years setting do well and what does it need to do better?

- The nursery benefits from a strong, dedicated manager and a supportive senior management team. They, along with the staff, are passionate to talk about the changes they have made since the previous inspection and how this has impacted on the outcomes for children.
- The manager works to staff's strengths. She motivates staff to continue their learning and take on additional roles within the nursery. She monitors practice and shares ideas for improvements, to further enhance the quality of teaching. Staff say that they feel valued and supported.
- The forest school leader is inspirational. Her passion to encourage children to enjoy outdoor experiences is evident. As a result, children who attend the nursery relish the time they spend outdoors and develop a deep-rooted love of nature.
- Older children build fires. They use a wooden mallet and a billhook to split wood for kindling. Children learn how to use the tools safely and persevere until they succeed. They know that they light the fire with a spark from a flint and that they have to add the kindling slowly so that the fire does not go out. The forest school leader extends children's learning as she teaches them that fire can be used for heat, light, food and safety from animals.
- Children's communication and language is exceptionally well supported. Staff continually model language to children and encourage them to repeat words and engage in conversation. They ask questions and are interested in what children

have to say. Staff use sign language to further support children's understanding and communication from an early age.

- Children throughout the nursery develop a love of books. They listen attentively to stories and can recall familiar characters and phrases. Occasionally, the organisation of story time does not enable all children to fully participate, and staff sometimes interrupt stories before the end to introduce another activity.
- The manager has a clear overview of what she expects children to learn. Staff plan activities based on children's interests and what they need to learn next. They assess children's progress and share this information with parents and other professionals who may be involved with the children. Those with special educational needs and/or disabilities are fully supported.
- Children's behaviour is generally good. Older children are kind and caring towards their younger peers. However, staff do not consistently remind children of the rules and boundaries for behaviour. For example, when children throw resources, they are not reminded that this behaviour is unacceptable.
- Partnership with parents is a real strength of the nursery. Parents are fully involved in their children's learning. Their views are sought through a parents' forum and their suggestions are considered and acted on. Staff share information through extracurricular activities and home learning bags to encourage parents to continue and support children's learning at home.
- The nursery has forged links with local schools that children move on to. Information is shared about children's learning and development through transition documents. However, staff do not share as much information with settings where children also attend, including childminders, to ensure consistency in their learning.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Staff have a good knowledge of the signs that may indicate a child is being abused or neglected. They attend training to further their knowledge and ensure that they know the procedures to follow should they have a concern about a child in their care. Staff are aware of the whistle-blowing procedure to report a concern about a colleague. Children learn how to keep themselves safe. For example, when walking around the fire during forest school sessions, they know that they must take their aprons off first so that they do not dangle in the fire, and pour the vegetables carefully into the saucepan so that hot water does not splash.

What does the setting need to do to improve?

To further improve the quality of the early years provision, the provider should:

- organise activities even more effectively to meet children's varying needs and to make sure that they are all able to fully participate

- remind children about following simple rules and boundaries for their behaviour
- share more information with settings where children also attend, to ensure consistency in children's learning and development.

Setting details

Unique reference number	EY542647
Local authority	Staffordshire
Inspection number	10120794
Type of provision	Childcare on non-domestic premises
Registers	Early Years Register
Day care type	Full day care
Age range of children at time of inspection	0 to 4
Total number of places	81
Number of children on roll	133
Name of registered person	Footsteps Day Nurseries Limited
Registered person unique reference number	RP520741
Telephone number	01785 215347
Date of previous inspection	8 August 2019

Information about this early years setting

Footsteps Stafford registered in 2017. The nursery employs 26 members of childcare staff. Of these, three hold qualifications at level 6, three hold level 5 and 11 hold level 3. The nursery operates all year around. Sessions are available Monday to Friday from 7.30am until 6pm. The nursery provides funded early education for two-, three- and four-year-old children.

Information about this inspection

Inspector

Rebecca Johnson

Inspection activities

- This was the first routine inspection the setting received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. The inspector discussed the impact of the pandemic with the setting and has taken this into account in their evaluation of the setting.
- A meeting was held between the inspector and the manager.
- The inspector looked at a selection of documentation and checked the suitability of staff working with the children.
- The inspector spoke to children, staff and parents at appropriate times during the inspection and took account of their views.
- The inspector carried out a joint observation with the manager.
- The manager and the inspector completed a learning walk together. They observed staff's teaching practice during activities.

We carried out this inspection under sections 49 and 50 of the Childcare Act 2006 on the quality and standards of provision that is registered on the Early Years Register. The registered person must ensure that this provision complies with the statutory framework for children's learning, development and care, known as the early years foundation stage.

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