

Inspection of Footsteps Stafford

Newport Road, Stafford ST16 1BA

Inspection date: 1 November 2023

Overall effectiveness **Good**

The quality of education **Good**

Behaviour and attitudes **Good**

Personal development **Good**

Leadership and management **Good**

Overall effectiveness at previous inspection Inadequate

What is it like to attend this early years setting?

The provision is good

Children are greeted at the door by caring and friendly staff, who warmly welcome them in. They separate with ease from their parents and are eager to go and see what fun activities await them inside. Children's independence is promoted well by staff, who encourage them to take their own coats off and find their pegs to hang them up. Other opportunities include children pouring their own drinks and serving their own lunch. Nursery rules help children to understand and manage their behaviour. Staff talk to them about 'kind hands' and 'listening ears'. They support children to resolve conflicts when they arise. Overall, children behave well.

Children feel safe and secure. Staff are positive role models, and they help children to settle. Cuddles and reassurance are given to those children who need it. Younger children have opportunities to practise their developing physical skills as they climb, crawl and pull themselves up on the climbing steps inside. Staff give lots of positive praise and encouragement. Outdoors, toddlers enjoy exploring different textures in the water tray. They use utensils to scoop and pour and tweezers to try and grip leaves to place in their jugs. This helps improve their small muscles and dexterity for later handwriting skills. Pre-school children enjoy climbing up and sliding down the slide or fireman's pole on the climbing apparatus. They use scooters and ride-on equipment to race each other around a circuit in the garden.

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

- The manager and her staff team have worked hard to make changes to improve the quality of the provision and care that is provided for children. The premises are safe and suitable. Mealtimes have been reviewed to ensure that staff are available to sit with children while they eat. This ensures children's safety.
- A revised curriculum now meets the needs of the children. Staff implement it across all areas of learning effectively. As a result, children are making good progress in their learning.
- Effective staff supervisions and observations of staff's practice and training ensures that the quality of teaching is now good. Staff comment that there have been many positive changes since the last inspection, and they work well as a team.
- Forest school sessions are delivered to children using an outdoor classroom and spacious garden. Children learn how use tools safely. They enjoy manipulating clay and using googly eyes and other materials, such as straw, runner beans and dried fruit to press into their clay to make faces.
- There is a strong focus on curriculum and language, and children are exposed to a rich vocabulary. Staff skilfully ask questions that support children to become critical thinkers. Children talk about the weather and that it is cold and cloudy.

Staff explain that they have covered the weather in that sentence, but also the temperature. Children recall past knowledge that they have learned and talk about ice being cold.

- Children love literacy and enjoy choosing stories they want to hear. They snuggle together under a canopy as staff read 'Tabby McTat'. Children meow like a cat and giggle. Staff provide activities related to children's favourite stories. Children make eulogies of the stick man by using play dough, twigs and sticks. Staff praise children for their efforts, and this helps their self-esteem.
- Staff provide lots of opportunities for children to practise their emerging skills. For example, toddler children use balance beams to help continue to strengthen their core muscles. However, on occasion, staff do not always recognise and allow sufficient time for children to practise something they cannot do. For example, when blowing bubbles, some children have not yet mastered this skill and they are not given enough time to keep preserving.
- Staff know the children well. Accurate assessments enable staff to provide activities that ignite children's curiosity and thirst for learning. Children show an interest in minibeasts. Staff recognise this interest and support children to go on a hunt in the garden. Children find ladybirds, worms and woodlice. They cannot, however, find 'ants' because they are 'too small'. Staff suggest getting magnifying glasses, but do not do this. They say they may do it later. This means that children's learning is not always enhanced when it could be.
- Partnership with parents is strong. Home-learning bags and a lending library are provided. This helps parents to support their children's learning at home. Parents comment that staff are very friendly and welcoming and that their children are happy. Information is shared verbally on collection and more detailed information is given using an online application and parent evenings. Parents are welcomed into the setting to collect their children.
- Staff introduce mathematical concepts and language to children. Children mix water with food colouring and talk about the new colours they have made. Staff use language, such as big, small, heavier or lighter as children use scales to weigh different-coloured objects.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Staff have a good, robust knowledge of safeguarding and know the procedures to follow if they have concerns about children in their care. All staff undergo training in child protection, which helps to consolidate their knowledge and understanding. Effective recruitment procedures and updated induction process ensures that staff are suitable. Children's personal and self-care needs are fully met. Tissues are available indoors and outdoors. Staff support children to wipe their noses and change them out of wet clothes. Room changes where children are cared for mean that age-appropriate toilet facilities and hand washing are now available for all children. Staff and children follow good hygiene practices, and these help to keep children healthy.

What does the setting need to do to improve?

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

- embed the activities that are provided, so children's learning is frequently enhanced
- support staff to recognise when children need more time to practise their emerging skills.

Setting details

Unique reference number	EY542647
Local authority	Staffordshire
Inspection number	10303280
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	1 to 4
Total number of places	81
Number of children on roll	97
Name of registered person	Footsteps Day Nurseries Limited
Registered person unique reference number	RP520741
Telephone number	01785 215347
Date of previous inspection	21 June 2023

Information about this early years setting

Footsteps Stafford registered in 2017 and is located in Stafford. The nursery employs 31 members of childcare staff. Of these, one is qualified to level 6, four are qualified to level 5, 10 are qualified to level 3 and two are qualified to level 2. The nursery opens Monday to Friday, all year round. Sessions are from 7.30am to 6pm. The nursery provides funded early education for two-, three- and four-year-old children.

Information about this inspection

Inspector

Johanna Holt

Inspection activities

- The inspector discussed any continued impact of the COVID-19 pandemic with the provider and has taken that into account in their evaluation of the provider.
- The inspector viewed the provision and discussed the safety and suitability of the premises.
- The deputy manager and the inspector completed a learning walk together of all areas of the nursery and discussed the early years foundation stage curriculum.
- Staff spoke to the inspector during the inspection.
- The inspector observed the quality of education being provided, indoors and outdoors, and assessed the impact that this was having on children's learning.
- The inspector carried out joint observations of a forest school group activity with the manager.
- The inspector looked at relevant documentation and reviewed evidence of the suitability of staff working in the nursery.
- Parents shared their views of the setting with the inspector, and written feedback was reviewed.

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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