

Inspection of Avenue Nursery and Forest School

Ross Wood Campsite, Herne Road, Herne Bay CT6 7GJ

Inspection date: 30 November 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	Not applicable

What is it like to attend this early years setting?

The provision is good

Children feel safe and enjoy the freedom they have to investigate the forest school environment. They are fully aware of the rules and boundaries within the outdoor space. For instance, children talk to staff about not going past the red rope or eating anything they find in the forest. They understand the importance of following these rules to keep themselves and others safe.

Children's behaviour is good. Older children kindly assist their younger friends with finding resources and knowing the best places to dig in the mud. Children develop good manners and recognise the importance of helping and sharing with their friends. For instance, they pretend one of the trees is an ice-cream shop. They take turns to be the ice-cream sellers as they engage in role play and develop their imagination.

Children use rakes and wheelbarrows to move leaves and twigs in search of worms and bugs. They use spades and hands to dig in muddy puddles. Children enjoy the feel and texture of the mud as they search for hidden fossils and dinosaur bones. Children have a wealth of experiences to learn how to care for nature and the world around them as they develop their life skills.

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

- Staff at this nursery and forest school work very closely with a second nursery owned by the provider. This helps to ensure children attending the two settings receive a seamless continuity of care and learning. The special educational needs coordinator (SENCo) works across both settings to support any children with special educational needs and/or disabilities. The provider has made good use of extra funding. For instance, they have purchased additional role play resources to help support children's language skills and social and emotional development. The SENCo has built strong links with other professionals to help ensure children receive any assistance that is available to them.
- Children have a wealth of opportunity to develop their muscle strength and practise their physical skills. Staff encourage children to take managed risks as they climb onto tree stumps and balance on branches. Staff make effective use of praise to build children's confidence and encourage them to have a go. Children gain a sense of pride in their achievements.
- Staff enable children to take ownership of their learning, for instance by using resources in an imaginative way. They offer children a wide range of media and materials to use to develop their fine motor skills. For instance, children use scissors to cut up leaves as they develop their scissor control. They use sticks in the mud to make marks as they explore patterns and develop their early writing skills.

- Relationships with parents are strong. Staff keep parents informed about their child's care and development, as well as the daily activities they engage in. Staff invite parents to visit the forest school environment and learn about the benefits of outside play for children's learning and development.
- Staff have high expectations for what children can achieve. They make use of children's focused play to support language development, such as the use of repetition to ensure children hear the correct pronunciation of words. Staff engage children in conversations and ask questions. However, on occasion, they do not give children time to process and respond to these, to promote children's thinking skills as effectively as possible.
- The provider is extremely focused on developing and continually improving the forest school. They understand the importance of supporting staff through regular training opportunities. For example, they encourage new staff to observe existing staff to learn about the forest school ethos and different way of working within an outdoor environment.
- Staff are passionate about the benefits of outdoor learning for children. They are dedicated to ensuring children have an opportunity to develop life skills and have the freedom to learn about nature and how to care for the environment. Yet, opportunities to further expand children's understanding of life in modern Britain are not as strongly embedded in the curriculum. As a result, children do not have as many opportunities to learn about the wider community.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

The provider ensures that staff keep their safeguarding knowledge and training updated. Staff are aware of signs and symptoms that might indicate that a child may be at risk of harm. They have clear procedures in place to record and report any concerns they might have. The provider has a robust recruitment process in place to ensure all staff working with children are suitable. They understand the importance of supporting staff's physical and emotional well-being. Staff carry out thorough risk assessments to ensure they maintain children's safety and welfare. For instance, they have secure plans in place in the event of the forest school not being accessible due to extreme weather conditions.

What does the setting need to do to improve?

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

- support staff to help them understand how to develop children's thinking skills
- increase the opportunities children have to learn about different cultures and communities.

Setting details

Unique reference number	2605878
Local authority	Kent
Inspection number	10251689
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	2 to 4
Total number of places	14
Number of children on roll	49
Name of registered person	Avenue Nursery & Forest School Limited
Registered person unique reference number	RP528678
Telephone number	01227 370085
Date of previous inspection	Not applicable

Information about this early years setting

Avenue Nursery and Forest School registered in 2020. It is located in Herne, Kent. It is one of two settings owned by the provider. The forest school operates Monday to Friday from 9.30am to 3.30pm, for most of the year. There are seven staff working at the forest school, of whom five hold a relevant early years qualification at level 3. Two staff also hold a level 3 forest school leader qualification. The provider has a level 6 early years qualification and has achieved early years professional status. The provider offers funded early education for two-, three- and four-year-old children.

Information about this inspection

Inspector

Sara Garrity

Inspection activities

- This was the first routine inspection the provider received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. The inspector discussed the impact of the pandemic with the provider and has taken that into account in their evaluation of the provider.
- The inspector observed staff's interactions with children and spoke to staff and children at appropriate times during the inspection.
- The forest school leader led the inspector on a tour of all areas of the outdoor environment and discussed how they implement the curriculum.
- The inspector carried out a joint observation with the provider and they discussed the impact the activity was having on children's learning.
- The inspector spoke to parents and read letters of reference to take their views on the service they receive into account.

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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