

Inspection of Step by Step Day Nursery

Monument Gardens, Benden House, Lewisham, London SE13 6PY

Inspection date: 28 February 2023

Overall effectiveness

Inadequate

The quality of education

Inadequate

Behaviour and attitudes

Inadequate

Personal development

Inadequate

Leadership and management

Inadequate

Overall effectiveness at previous inspection

Outstanding

What is it like to attend this early years setting?

The provision is inadequate

The safety, well-being and good health of children are compromised. Risk assessments are ineffective, and staff do not ensure that the premises is secure and safe. The learning and development needs of children are not met well, including for those children with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). During busy periods, such as the beginning of the day, there are not enough staff to meet required adult-to-child ratios. In addition, staff are not deployed well enough to ensure that key persons are available to meet children's emotional needs, including as they settle into new routines.

Weaknesses in teaching hinder the progress that children make. Children do not benefit from activities that challenge them and arouse their curiosity. Those children who need additional help with their learning do not receive targeted teaching or consistent support from staff to help them engage in learning. This does not prepare them well for their next stages in learning, including school.

Despite this, children have some positive experiences. They enjoy sensory experiences as they explore water or roll tubes in paint. Children seek adults out for reassurance and receive warm hugs and cuddles from staff. Babies join in with action songs and use their bodies well. Some children focus and pay attention during large-group activities, which helps children to develop their early literacy skills.

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

- The provider does not monitor the service sufficiently well. Her communication with the manager and her ability to review activities do not help her to accurately identify what needs to improve. This has contributed to a significant drop in standards.
- The provider does not ensure that staffing arrangements consistently meet legal requirements. On the morning of the inspection, there were not enough staff available to meet the needs of children. Staff attempt to keep children on a carpeted area with very little to do. Some very young children eat snacks that may pose a choking hazard without the supervision of an adult.
- Key-person arrangements are not effective. Children do not consistently have access to a key person to meet their ongoing needs. They are not provided with the support they need at key times of the day. This does not support children's emotional well-being, particularly as they settle.
- Staff do not receive effective supervision and support to help them carry out their roles and responsibilities effectively. The manager no longer meets individually with staff, as several work on a part-time basis. Staff do not show that they understand what is expected of them, particularly in the absence of

the manager and more experienced practitioners. For example, staff do not set out activities for children to engage in and enjoy as they arrive.

- Staff do not plan and implement an effective curriculum. They do not consider the individual learning needs of children in their care, including children with SEND and those in receipt of additional funding. For instance, staff read to children using books that are too small for them to see. This limits the ability of children to engage well in learning and make the progress they are capable of.
- Staff do not support children's communication and language well. Children have few opportunities to build their vocabulary or hold back-and-forth conversations. They do not use teaching methods that support children who have an identified gap in this area of learning.
- Staff teaching is weak. This impacts on children's behaviour. Staff fail to intervene when children throw resources with force into cupboards and slam doors of the pretend kitchen. Children become distressed, lose focus and become disinterested during poorly planned activities that do not meet their needs.
- Parents report that staff are friendly, inclusive and supportive. Parents mention the benefit of video calls, remote storytelling and activities for home learning during nursery closure periods. Parents appreciate the addition of equipment to develop their children's physical skills. They receive information about accidents and children's personal care.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are not effective.

On the day of the inspection, the inspector was able to enter the premises unchallenged. Although a broken door mechanism was rectified on the day, children are exposed to further risks. For example, staff do not ensure that the outdoor communal play area is secure. Some fire exit doors are obstructed, and an antibacterial spray was left in the toilet area, accessed by children. The manager and staff complete training to update their knowledge of child protection procedures. They know how to respond if they are concerned that a child is at risk of harm or abuse, or about the suitability of a colleague. The manager works collaboratively with relevant agencies to support children and their families. The provider follows safer recruitment guidance and checks the ongoing suitability of staff.

What does the setting need to do to improve?

To meet the requirements of the early years foundation stage and Childcare Register the provider must:

	Due date
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improve how the overall quality of the provision is evaluated to accurately identify what needs to improve	28/03/2023
ensure that risk assessments are robust and prompt action is taken to minimise risks to children's security, safety and health	28/03/2023
ensure staff-to-child ratios are maintained at all times	28/03/2023
deploy key persons effectively so that they are available to meet the emotional needs of children	28/03/2023
use supervision, training and support to ensure that staff are clear about their roles and responsibilities and implement procedures consistently	28/03/2023
improve teaching so that staff understand how to plan and implement challenging activities that take account of children's individual learning needs, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities	11/04/2023
improve the curriculum for communication and language so that children have regular opportunities to build on and develop their vocabulary, including those children who speak English as an additional language at home	11/04/2023
support staff to manage children's behaviour in a more effective way.	11/04/2023

Setting details

Unique reference number	129055
Local authority	Lewisham
Inspection number	10279647
Type of provision	Childcare on non-domestic premises
Registers	Early Years Register, Compulsory Childcare Register, Voluntary Childcare Register
Day care type	Full day care
Age range of children at time of inspection	1 to 4
Total number of places	52
Number of children on roll	76
Name of registered person	Step by Step Nursery Ltd
Registered person unique reference number	RP909925
Telephone number	0208 297 5070
Date of previous inspection	3 August 2017

Information about this early years setting

Step By Step Day Nursery registered in 1994 and is located in Lewisham. The nursery is open each weekday, from 7.45am to 5.45pm, all year round. There are 27 staff members who work directly with children. Of these, nine staff hold appropriate early years qualifications at level 2 and 10 staff hold qualifications at level 3. The manager holds a relevant level 6 qualification. The nursery receives funding to provide early education places for children aged two, three and four years.

Information about this inspection

Inspector

Kareen Jacobs

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.
- We carried out this inspection as a result of a risk assessment, following information we received about the provider.
- The manager joined the inspector on a learning walk and talked to the inspector about their curriculum and what they want children to learn.
- The inspector talked to staff and parents at appropriate times during the inspection and took account of their views.
- 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 observed the interactions between staff and children.
- The provider and manager met with the inspector and discussed the leadership and management of the nursery.
- The inspector viewed the provision and discussed the safety and suitability of the premises.

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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