

Inspection of Alpha Steps Nursery

89 Vallentin Road, Walthamstow, LONDON E17 3JJ

Inspection date:

12 October 2023

Overall effectiveness

Requires improvement

The quality of education

Requires improvement

Behaviour and attitudes

Requires improvement

Personal development

Requires improvement

Leadership and management

Requires improvement

Overall effectiveness at previous inspection

Good

What is it like to attend this early years setting?

The provision requires improvement

Children happily enter this nursery and quickly settle. They have secure emotional attachments to staff and effective settling-in programmes are in place. This helps children to feel safe. However, staff do not consistently plan and implement the curriculum well enough for some children in the nursery. This impacts on the progress they make. That said, babies are nurtured and cared for in the warm, inviting baby room by staff. They respond excitedly and join in with the 'Old Macdonald' song, by pulling out animal figures from a bag and are supported by staff using Makaton signing as they communicate with children. Staff listen and respond to babies' attempts at making sounds and repeat sounds back to them.

Staff do not consistently implement the curriculum effectively with the toddler and pre-school room children. For example, staff do not organise and fully consider the learning environment and resources toddlers require to make the best possible progress. Although staff are attentive and spend time with children as they play, they do not focus their interactions sufficiently well to extend children's knowledge and learning. This inhibits children from making the amount of progress they are capable of. Although children take interest in some of the activities set up for them, at times they soon lose interest and move on before any meaningful learning can take place.

Children's behaviour is generally good, although at times some routines are not considered well enough by staff and children struggle to focus, such as during lunchtime as they wait for their food.

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

- Since the last inspection, the nursery has undergone a great deal of change, having had extensive renovation work carried out on the premises. This refurbishment has greatly benefitted the available play space for children and offers a bright and inviting environment.
- The quality of education is inconsistent. Staff accurately assess children's development and what they need to achieve next. However, they do not effectively provide children with the support and challenge they need to get there. For example, during an activity to support children's ongoing understanding about oral health, staff fail to recall and recap prior learning by questioning and probing them further. Staff do not provide a narrative for what children are doing and build on this knowledge.
- The management team has begun to identify where there are weaknesses in the quality of education and how to address them. Staff are provided with regular opportunities for supervision and their well-being is fostered effectively.
- The manager shows a good commitment to the professional development of the

team. Staff report that they are given opportunities for further learning, which is encouraged and supported. This helps to support staff practice.

- Staff are responsive to the care and learning needs of babies. They give babies eye contact, sing songs and are constantly supporting their language development. For example, when a baby says 'ish' for 'fish', staff repeat the word correctly. Staff expand on what babies are saying. For example, when babies say 'more', staff add a word and repeat, 'more please'.
- Staff develop good relationship with parents. Parents like the regular feedback that they get. Staff use a range of strategies to share information with parents. These include parents' evenings and sharing photos and observations. This helps parents to understand what their children are doing and how they can help them at home.
- Children with special educational needs and/or disabilities are supported well. Staff work closely with parents and other professionals to work on individual focused targets that meet children's additional needs and provide the best possible progress.
- Children have limited opportunities to learn about the wider community in their immediate area, such as trips to the nearby forest or to the library.
- Staff promote individual children's emotional well-being effectively. Each child has a key person to take responsibility for their care and learning. Staff are sensitive to children's emotional needs.
- Managers have established good partnerships with the local authority's early years advisory team and the inclusion team. They seek support from these external professionals to support staff's development and enhance the learning environment.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Managers prioritise the well-being of children. They ensure that all staff have a confident understanding of their responsibility to keep children safe. Staff receive regular training on a wide range of child protection and safeguarding issues. All staff know how to identify and escalate any concerns about children's welfare to the relevant professionals in a timely manner. Secure arrangements for safer recruitment are in place. Managers carry out all required checks on staff and take steps to ensure their ongoing suitability. Procedures for risk assessment have recently been reviewed to ensure they are sufficiently robust, particularly in the garden.

What does the setting need to do to improve?

To meet the requirements of the early years foundation stage, the provider must:

	Due date
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ensure that all staff identify suitable next steps for children's learning and use planning effectively to provide challenge and enjoyable experiences for every child, so that they make good progress in all areas of their development.	30/11/2023
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To further improve the quality of the early years provision, the provider should:

- provide children with opportunities to access their local community and develop their understanding of the world around them
- review organisation of the learning environment and routines, so that children are better able to fully explore resources and activities
- manage daily routines such as lunchtime more effectively to ensure that children are not waiting for extended periods of time.

Setting details

Unique reference number	EY376104
Local authority	London Borough of Waltham Forest
Inspection number	10312620
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 3
Total number of places	50
Number of children on roll	28
Name of registered person	Alpha Steps Nursery School Limited
Registered person unique reference number	RP535172
Telephone number	02085098838
Date of previous inspection	5 June 2019

Information about this early years setting

Alpha Steps Nursery registered in 2008. The nursery is open each weekday from 7.30am to 6.30pm, all year round. The provider employs nine members of staff. Of these, three hold relevant childcare qualifications at level 6 or above, four hold level 3 and two are unqualified. The nursery provides funded early education for two-, three- and four-year-old children.

Information about this inspection

Inspector

Anne Maher

Inspection activities

- This was the first routine inspection the nursery received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. The inspector discussed the impact of the pandemic with the manager and has taken that into account in their evaluation of the nursery.
- We carried out this inspection as a result of a risk assessment, following information we received about the provider.
- The inspector looked at relevant documentation, including staff suitability to work with children.
- Parents spoke to the inspector and shared their views on the nursery.
- The inspector observed the quality of teaching during activities indoors and outdoors, and assessed the impact this had on children's learning.
- The inspector held discussions with the managers about nursery practice and procedures.

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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