

Inspection of Stepping Stones, Lewes Community Nursery Ltd

Southcourt House, Morris Road, Lewes, East Sussex BN7 2AT

Inspection date: 29 February 2024

Overall effectiveness	Good
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The quality of education	Good
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Behaviour and attitudes	Good
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Personal development	Good
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Leadership and management	Good
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Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Good
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What is it like to attend this early years setting?

The provision is good

Children are safe and happy in this friendly and welcoming nursery. They settle very well and transitions between each room are very well managed. For instance, children's key persons move with the children. As a result, children develop a deep sense of security and staff know them very well. Children know what is expected of them. They are polite to visitors and behave extremely well.

Leaders and staff implement an exciting curriculum for all children. They effectively use children's interests to provide stimulating learning experiences. For instance, an interest from older children in den building results in a purposeful outing to the woods. Attentive staff encourage children to talk about their ideas and help them to problem-solve, such as how to tie ropes to tree trunks.

Babies and toddlers are well cared for. Staff are very focused on their needs and help them to understand how to behave towards each other. Children's independence is encouraged from an early age. For example, toddlers use cutlery with confidence. They clear their plates away after meals and snacks. Older children use real porcelain crockery and glasses. This helps them to understand how to look after items and provides them with a sense of responsibility.

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

- The manager is passionate and committed to the nursery's continuous development. She shares her enthusiasm with the staff and is well supported by the experienced provider. Leaders prioritise staff's well-being and they have regular supervision meetings to discuss training needs and children's welfare. Staff speak highly about the manager and value the support that they receive.
- Staff make good use of the local environment to help children to learn about the world around them and how to keep safe outdoors. They take children on outings every day and wear appropriate clothes for the weather. On the way to the woods, children have great fun splashing in puddles. Other outings include trips to nearby parks and visits to the market, where children buy fruit for their snack.
- Staff caring for younger children help them to build on their skills. For example, they sing songs and nursery rhymes to help support children's emerging language. Babies enjoy discovering the sounds that musical instruments make and learn how to balance when using the physical play equipment. Staff help toddlers to find hidden items in the sand. They provide a running commentary during their play and children attempt to copy the words that they hear. This helps to support their emerging language.
- Children's interests and ideas are highly valued. They are inquisitive and eager to learn. For example, older children work together to mix chalk, stones, sand

and water to make 'cement'. Staff ask probing questions to help support their ideas and to problem-solve. As a result, enthusiastic children discover how they can use a ramp to transfer their mixture from one container to another.

- On the whole, staff plan activities very well and funding for children is effectively used. However, at times, staff do not always notice when quieter children need more support to join in with activities. As a result, learning opportunities for them to share their thoughts are sometimes lost.
- Staff encourage children to learn about what food keeps them healthy. For example, older children help to cut up vegetables that are used by staff to make soup. During mealtimes, children enjoy serving themselves.
- Staff successfully help children to develop good independence skills. For instance, children take off their raincoats and wellingtons with ease. This supports their readiness for school. Children know to wash their hands and they talk about the reasons why they do this.
- Parents speak highly about the staff at the nursery. They say that the staff are like family and that they receive good communications about their children. New parents say that their children have settled very well.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

There is an open and positive culture around safeguarding that puts children's interests first.

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 develop a more consistent approach to helping children join in with activities, particularly those who are quieter, so that their voices are heard.

Setting details

Unique reference number	EY459301
Local authority	East Sussex
Inspection number	10311821
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	38
Number of children on roll	69
Name of registered person	Stepping Stones, Lewes Community Nursery Ltd
Registered person unique reference number	RP532382
Telephone number	01273479699
Date of previous inspection	11 April 2018

Information about this early years setting

Stepping Stones, Lewes Community Nursery Ltd registered in 2013. The nursery employs 20 members of childcare staff, of whom 12 hold appropriate early years qualifications at level 2 or above. The nursery is open Monday to Friday from 8am to 6pm, throughout the year. The nursery provides funded early education for two-, three- and four-year-old children.

Information about this inspection

Inspector

Maura Pigram

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 provider and has taken that into account in their evaluation of the provider.
- The manager joined the inspector on a learning walk and talked about their curriculum and what they want their children to learn.
- The inspector went on a walk to the woods with some of the children and staff.
- The inspector observed staff interactions with children during activities, indoors and outdoors, and assessed the impact these have on children's learning.
- Meetings were held between the inspector, the manager and the provider. The inspector looked at relevant documentation and saw evidence of the suitability of staff.
- At appropriate times, the inspector had discussions with staff and children. She spoke to several parents and took account of their views.
- The inspector carried out a joint observation of an activity with the manager. They shared their views of the children's experience.

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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