



**Information pack**

**2026**



**“When life gives you  
a rainy day, play in  
puddles”**

**Winnie the pooh**

**“Children learn as they  
play. More importantly, in play  
children learn how to  
learn.”**

**Fred Donaldson**



**“Childhood means  
simplicity. Look at the  
world with a child’s eye -  
it is very beautiful.”**

**Kailash Satyarthi**

# **Stepping Stones**

## **A Curiosity Approach based nursery**



**Jump! .... And don't be afraid to fall**

**The crunch of leaves is more than a fun activity, it also helps a child hone their listening skills**

### **Where curiosity is the order of the day.**

A warm, friendly and fun place for all your child's emotional, developmental and learning needs. We offer a Child Centred approach and hold dear a philosophy of playful learning.

Our children are encouraged to develop their creativity, individuality and self-confidence. We aim to ensure that all children in our care feel happy, relaxed and safe. They will develop good and trusting relationships with our team and we value the relationships we develop with your children. The rapport we have with our children makes them feel special and loved.

### **Our approach**

Here at Stepping Stones Nursery, we have embarked on an incredible new approach which inspires children's curiosity, awe and wonder. Through The Curiosity Approach, children learn through the use of authentic resources, recycled materials and loose parts. Our mindful and passionate team will look to create amazing play spaces for children, where they have the opportunity to become inquisitive capable learners. The Curiosity Approach is a modern-day approach to Early Childhood. It's a beautiful recipe book of wonderful ingredients carefully, mixed together with experience, passion and a love of early childhood. Its aim is to create thinkers and doers by putting the child at the centre of their own development and education.

### **Authentic materials**

Instead of using plastic pretend child-sized toys, we use the real thing. Resources which value children's play. By giving children 'real' authentic resources to play with, it opens up a wealth of opportunities for learning. These resources offer a range of texture to explore and investigate. In comparison, plastic toys look and feel the same; by providing an eclectic collection of resources and loose parts, children are given a wider range of experiences, opportunities for critical thinking, exploration and discovery.

## What are loose parts?

Loose parts are items that can be used in multiple ways with no pre-determined outcome. Children decide how to use them, developing opportunities for creativity, critical thinking and problem solving. They provide wealth of opportunities to experience a range of textures, size, shape and variable weights. All these help children to develop mathematical concepts, opening opportunities for conversation and questioning.

Loose parts can be used holistically across all areas of the setting and are stored so that children can access and select them independently. Loose parts have no fixed outcomes, which means there is no right all wrong way to play or use these items; which in turn ensures learning is not restricted with adult determined outcomes. Children take ownership of their play and it opens up endless possibilities for learning and development. Loose parts ensure children are taught HOW to think, not WHAT to think!



## How does a child learn using curiosity?

Curiosity helps children to be more observant and to use their problem-solving skills. When children explore their curiosity, they expand their vocabulary as they use language to describe what they're thinking, seeing, hearing or experiencing. We help children grow by supporting this curiosity. The children essentially go back to basics and have to use their imagination to figure out what to use each item for and how to use it; rather than be given a toy with a fixed identity which shapes how a child will play with it. The Curiosity Approach gives a child control to shape their play, rather than the toy shaping and limiting their play.



## Our Nursery is a calm and tranquil space.

Through the Curiosity Approach, we aim to provide a home from home environment within a calming tranquil space, neutral colours, natural materials, cosy places for children to rest and look at books or engage in deep learning. We aim to provide excellent learning opportunities without impacting on your child's happiness and wellbeing.

Curiosity Approach nurseries believe that replicating a child's home is crucial, rather than trying to be a watered-down version of a school. This 'home from home' experience is central to the Curiosity Approach ideology. We are fully play based and each child is led by their own curiosity. As early years educators, we are constantly reflecting on our own environments. We aim to think outside the box and view play spaces through the eyes of the children. At Stepping Stones our team work tirelessly to improve the experiences and learning opportunities for our children, to try to ensure that children never feel anxious or over stimulated, to provide a place where children feel safe and secure, enabling them to be motivated to play, explore and investigate.

## Developing Creativity and Curiosity Outdoors

Here at Stepping Stones, we seize the rich opportunities offered by our outdoor environments to cultivate and encourage the creative skills of the young children in our care. Developing creativity and curiosity builds on theories of creative learning and development and offers a wealth of learning experiences in an outside environment.

We are situated in the middle of a national park surrounded by the vibrant Cliffe area of Lewes, one of the most culturally rich and beautiful towns in East Sussex. We make good use of all the local amenities, parks and nature areas around us. Engagement in the natural world extends children's creative development, encouraging them to speak, listen, move more freely, play and learn.



We also believe that children should have the opportunity to engage with the outdoor environment on a daily basis, you will find us out and about outside exploring, no matter the season or weather (as long as it's safe).

For adventures further afield, we have two dedicated nursery minibuses, which allow us to take the children on exciting outings and opens up a world of learning opportunities! These experiences help the children to learn about the world around them, build confidence and make lasting memories with their friends.

Our team ensures that every outing is safe, well-organised and tailored to the children's interests. We take pride in providing enriching experiences that extend learning beyond the nursery walls - inspiring curiosity, independence and a love of discovery.

Look out for us walking through town or with one of our wagons on our way to the gardens, playground, the railway land or going further afield in one of our minibuses.



## Taking risks in a Curiosity play environment

At Stepping Stones, we recognise that play is crucial to child development. It is in play that we test our beliefs of how the world is made up and how we fit and function within it. As part of this testing process, we need to take risks in order to discover the limitations of ourselves and of the world around us, without this how would we develop?

For this reason, Stepping Stones believe that there is a balance to be struck between ensuring children's safety yet enabling stimulating and effective play opportunities which will include an element of risk. We are supported in this belief by the Local Authority, OFSTED and the Health & Safety Executive.

As stated in our Benefits of Risky Play policy we seek to create opportunities that allow children to explore the outdoor environment, to explore their world through the medium of play. This is done through allowing the children to take acceptable risks; these are freely undertaken actions and involve themselves in situations that push against the boundaries of their own capabilities. This can be from anything such as climbing down a step for the youngest child to climbing a tree

for an older child. This allows the child to learn what can't be taught, to find things out for themselves.

Play is great for children's well-being and development. When planning and providing play opportunities, the goal is not to eliminate risks but to weigh up the risks and benefits. No child will learn about risk if they are wrapped in cotton wool.

## How we work

Our nursery benefits from having three distinct spaces; downstairs we have our pre-schoolers, whilst upstairs we have our toddlers and babies. Upstairs the children have the chance to move between these adjoining rooms as they develop their confidence.

### Our rooms are as follows:

**Baby Steps** is a calm, nurturing environment designed to support their very first stages of growth and development. Welcoming babies from 3 months up to around 18 months, we provide a safe, homely space where every child is cared for.

Our experienced team focus on creating strong, loving bonds with each child, helping them to feel secure and happy whilst away from home. Our team strives to provide a personal experience, following each baby's routine as closely as possible to maintain consistency and comfort.

Our baby room is equipped with age-appropriate toys and sensory activities to encourage exploration, early communication and physical development. Cozy sleep areas and quiet corners ensure that every child has plenty of opportunities to rest and recharge throughout the day.



**First Steps** is designed for curious little explorers who are ready to take their next big steps. Welcoming children from around 18 months to 2½ years, this room provides a safe, stimulating environment where independence, creativity and social skills can flourish.

At this age, toddlers are discovering the joy of movement, language and play. Our dedicated team creates a balance of structured activities and free play to encourage confidence, communication and problem-solving skills. From messy play and music to story time and outdoor adventures, each day is full of opportunities to learn through exploration and fun.

First Steps is equipped with a variety of age-appropriate resources that support early learning and development, from building physical coordination to encouraging first friendships. This is a

place where growing personalities shine and little learners begin to take their next steps towards independence.

**Big Steps** is an engaging space where children build the skills and confidence they need for their next big adventure - starting school! Welcoming children from around 2 and a half until they leave for Reception, this room is designed to encourage independence, curiosity and a love of learning.

At this stage, children are full of energy, imagination and questions. Our experienced team plan a variety of stimulating activities that nurture creativity, problem-solving and social development. From early literacy and numeracy experiences to role play, science exploration and outdoor learning, everyday offers exciting opportunities to learn through play.



We place a strong emphasis on developing communication, cooperation and self-care skills, helping children to become confident learners and kind friends. The Big Steps team support each child's unique learning journey and prepares them for a smooth transition to school where they feel supported, valued and loved.

None of these definitions are set in stone, we believe our youngest children benefit from the opportunity to mix with the oldest – and vice versa. We do have babies with older siblings here and they love to visit each other in their individual rooms therefore, flow between these spaces is encouraged once we are confident your child is ready. We also encourage “whole group” activities which will encompass all our children.

## Wellbeing

We look after the insides of our children too, we provide a varied, healthy diet provided by Zebedee's. Children receive a healthy breakfast, a hot lunch with dessert and a healthy snack in the morning and afternoon as well as a light tea in the evening. We are able to provide for your child's individual medical, cultural or preferred dietary needs. This is all included within our enhanced provision fee.

## Communication

We want to involve you in your child's experiences at the nursery and make you aware of what your child has experienced with us; therefore, we hold open days, parents' evenings and meetings, stay and play sessions. We also value face to face communication with you at the beginning and end of your child's day. We can arrange a specific time for you to meet with your child's key person or the nursery manager if required.

We use a secure online communication system called baby's days and you will have individual access to this. As well as giving you access to policies and procedures, fees, invoices and general nursery information. This system allows us to follow your child's needs, upload photographs and have a two-way conversation with you. We very much value the relationship

we have with our parents as you as parents know your child best and can share with us what really makes your child happy, comfortable and interested.

## **Additional Information for Decision-Making:**

We have provided information to assist you in deciding whether to opt out of our meals and consumables service. Additionally, you will find relevant links at the end of this booklet for further assistance.

### **Charging for enhanced provisions**

Why we need to charge for provisions over basic EYFS for sessions during a child's free hours.

The funding rates provided by the government are only intended to cover basic EYFS requirements as described by the education department. At Stepping Stones, we provide enhanced care and education provisions.

Enhanced provision in the Early Years Foundation Stages (EYFS) refers to the additional, resource's, activities and support provided to enrich children's learning experiences beyond the basic requirements.

An example of some of these enhancements provided:

#### **Diverse learning materials.**



- A variety of toys, books and educational resources that cater to different learning styles and interests.
- Introduction of a variety of learning opportunities, including cooking, science experiments, arts and crafts as well as parties. This is in addition to the outdoor learning ranging from nature walks in our local community to trips further afield to farms and nature reserves as well and other cultural experiences to broaden children's horizons.

#### **Tailored learning experiences**

- Providing information individualised support and challenges based on each child's individual needs, interests and development stages of each child
- Plan regular visits to nearby parks. Use these trips for physical activities like playing on playground equipment, participating in group games, or exploring nature trails. Parks provide an excellent setting for children to develop gross motor skills while enjoying the outdoors.
  - We take the children on guided nature walks along local trails. Encouraging them to observe plants, insects and wildlife. We enhance the experience with activities such as scavenger hunts and collecting natural resources.



- We align trips with seasonal themes, such as visiting a pumpkin patch in the Autumn and gardens in Spring. This connection with the seasons can enrich children's understanding of the natural world.
- By integrating these trips into our nursery's schedule, we are providing valuable learning opportunities that promote exploration, curiosity and a love of nature, all of which are essential components of early childhood education.

These are just an example of the enhanced provisions we provide at our nursery. Further examples can be found later in this document.

The government insists that we cannot ask for mandatory fees during funded sessions for these activities. If parents decide not opt into the Voluntary Charge, the nursery would be unable to provide some of these opportunities to all children as the nursery would not have the finances to cover the costs involved.

Children entitled to Early Years Pupils Premium, or deprivation funding will be exempt from any additional charges during their free funding provision.

## **Nursery Meals**

The Food Standards Agency emphasises several benefits of children eating meals provided by nurseries. Here are some key points highlighting the advantages:

### **Nutritional Quality:**

Nursery meals are designed to meet specific nutritional guidelines, ensuring that children receive a balanced diet. This can help support their growth and development. Meals provided by nurseries are portioned appropriately for young children, helping to prevent overeating and promoting healthy weight management. By providing nutritious meals during formative years, nurseries play a crucial role in helping establish healthy eating habits that can last a lifetime, contributing to overall well-being.



### **Variety of Foods:**

We offer a diverse range of foods, introducing children to different flavours, textures and food groups. This variety can help develop a more adventurous palate and encourage healthier eating habits.

### **Food Safety Standards:**

Nurseries are required to follow strict food safety regulations, which reduces the risk of food-borne illnesses. This ensures that meals are prepared and served in a safe and hygienic environment.

### **Support for Dietary Needs:**

We can accommodate special dietary requirements, allergies and preferences, providing meals that are safe and suitable for all.

### **Education on Food Choices:**

Meals at nursery can serve as an educational opportunity, teaching children about the importance of nutrition, the origins of their food and the benefits of various food groups.

By offering meals that adhere to these principles, nurseries contribute significantly to the health, safety and well-being of children, setting them on a positive path toward healthy eating and lifestyle choices.



### **Social Skills:**

Sharing meals allows children to interact with their peers, fostering friendships and social bonds. This interaction is crucial for developing communication skills and learning how to engage with others.

Mealtimes provide opportunities for children to practice sharing and taking turns. These experiences can help them develop important social skills that are essential for group dynamics.

Children often learn by observing their peers. When they see others trying new foods or enjoying healthy options, they may be more inclined to do the same, promoting a positive attitude toward food.

Sharing the same meals fosters a sense of belonging and community among children. It creates a warm and inclusive environment where they feel valued and connected to one another.

### **Opening hours**

We are open Monday to Friday 8am to 6pm all year round but close on bank holidays and the week between Christmas and New Year. Fees are calculated by taking the annual cost of providing a place for your child throughout the year and dividing by 12 to equalise your monthly payments.

Fees are payable monthly in advance. Fees are invoiced from the 1st to the last day of the month, and you will receive an invoice setting out what is due. Our current fee structure can be found in our **Fees document**.

### **Admissions**

Priority will be given as follows:

Children participating in full day sessions

Children whose sibling are already attending the nursery

Date of registration

### **Early years funding**

Early years funding is Government support that helps families access early education and childcare for children aged 9 months to 4 years, depending on eligibility. The funding covers a set number of hours each week and is paid directly to your childcare provider.

According to government and local authority guidance, families may receive 15 or 30 hours of funded childcare over 38 weeks, depending on their child's age and family circumstances.

At Stepping Stones the **15** or **30** hour funding is stretched over **51** weeks. This equals **11.18** or **22.36** hours per week depending on the number of hours entitlement.

Fees are based on **51** weeks per year, paid monthly in advance.

The government funding covers early education hours only. For each funded session a child attends, parents are asked to contribute towards optional additional services that are not included within the government-funded entitlement. These may include meals, snacks, consumable resources and any extra activities or services you choose to access.

The exact contribution will depend on the sessions your child attends and the optional services you select. All funded hours can be taken without these extras if preferred. Please refer to the Policy Terms document for information on the different services provided.

For families not receiving funding, the Non-Funded Rates are inclusive of the Voluntary Charge.

## **Available Sessions:**

Session	Start	End	Hours
Short Morning Session	9am	1pm	4
Long Morning Session	8am	1pm	5
Afternoon	1pm	6pm	5
8 Hour Day	8am/9am	4pm/5pm	8
9 Hour Day	8am/9am	5pm/6pm	9
10 Hour Day	8am	6pm	10

Please note that we require a minimum booking pattern of two sessions per week to support consistency and wellbeing for the children in our care.

Parents may choose any combination of the above within their funded hours. You may also purchase additional sessions at our standard rate of fees.

**Standard Hourly Rate (Inclusive of Voluntary Charge) is priced at £10 per hour**

## **Deposit and Fees**

If a place is offered and accepted, a deposit of £200 will be required to secure your child's place. This will be refunded from your first month's invoice.

The deposit is non-refundable, should the place not be taken up following acceptance.

A non-refundable registration fee of £50 will also be required to cover administrative costs and your child's settling sessions. **Exception:** The registration fee is not payable if your child is only accessing stand-alone funded hours. Stepping Stones do not allow parents to split funding between providers unless this had already been agreed before 01 April 2025.

The only circumstance in which a deposit will be refunded is if we are unable to offer the place. However, if you have confirmed your acceptance of your child's space, we will be unable to return your deposit.

## **Notice Period for funded places.**

Parents must commit to a minimum placement of a whole term. The Nursery Manager will consider any exceptional circumstances, should you wish to give notice inside the funding period, for example should you move out of the area.

Notice for withdrawal for the following term must be given two weeks before the end of your current term should you no longer require your place.

Stepping Stones Nursery seeks to support families by offering various funding options and encourages discussions between parents and staff for optimal childcare solutions. Parents must sign a contract, a funding agreement and also provide necessary documentation before your child's start date.

If you have any specific questions or need further information on our funding offer, please contact us.

### **Self-Provided Food:**

If parents choose to provide their own food, it must cover the entire session and they must agree to the nursery's food policy. It should be noted that we are unable to provide refrigeration for foods brought from home due to lack of provision and space for additional facilities.

### **Term Time Only Sessions:**

We also offer a limited number of term-time only sessions. Please contact the office for more information.

Please note that the school term consists of 39 weeks per year. Our private fees will be payable if you wish for your child to attend during the additional week outside the funded period.

### **Extended Session Hours :**

Stepping Stones do not provide childcare services that can be booked by the hour.

If needed, you can extend the hours of your child's session temporarily. This is subject to availability and requires a request from the parent or guardian with 24 hours notice. Any extended hours will be charged at our private hourly rate.

### **Absence and Holidays:**

Any absences due to sickness or holidays are charged at our standard hourly rate, including during funded hours. Unused hours cannot be carried over or used at another time. However, they can be included in the headcount and funded entitlement claim.

### **All Year Round Fees:**

Our annual childcare costs, taking bank holidays and our closure over Christmas into account, are divided into 12 equal payments for consistent monthly billing.

If you wish to change your days or sessions of attendance, we require one month's notice in writing. We will do our best to accommodate your request but cannot guarantee availability.

One calendar month's (to include the 1st to the last day of the month) written notice is required if you wish to withdraw your child's place. The notice period for those receiving funding differs

please find this information contained in our funding criteria below. Fees will be charged if the statutory notice period has not been adhered to.

## **Non-Funded Rates:**

Session	Start	End	Hours	Cost
Short Morning Session	9am	1pm	4	£40.00
Long Morning Session	8am	1pm	5	£50.00
Afternoon	1pm	6pm	5	£50.00
8 Hour Day	8am/9am	4pm/5pm	8	£80.00
9 Hour Day	8am/9am	5pm/6pm	9	£90.00
10 Hour Day	8am	6pm	10	£100.00

**Standard Hourly Rate (Inclusive of Voluntary Charge) is priced at £10 per hour**

## **Additional Information:**

For more details regarding non funded fees and the terms and conditions of your services, parents can refer to the Nursery Booklet.

In addition to funding hours parents may be eligible for further help with their nursery costs. In the UK, there are several forms of assistance available to help with childcare costs beyond free hours. Here are some options you might consider:

## **Tax-Free Childcare:**

This government scheme allows eligible families to receive up to £2,000 per child per year (or £4,000 for a disabled child) to help cover childcare costs. For every £8 you pay into your childcare account, the government adds £2.

## **Childcare Vouchers:**

Although this scheme has been closed to new applicants since October 2018, some employers still offer childcare vouchers to existing members. These vouchers can be used to pay for registered childcare and can save you money by using pre-tax income.

## **Universal Credit:**

If you are on a low income or out of work, you may be eligible for Universal Credit, which can cover a portion of your childcare costs. You can claim up to 85% of your childcare costs, subject to certain limits.

## **Working Tax Credit:**

If you are working a certain number of hours and are on a low income, you may be eligible for Working Tax Credit, which can provide help with childcare costs.

## **Local Authority:**

Support Some local councils offer additional support or funding for families in need, including grants for childcare costs or subsidised services. Check with your local council for available programs.

## **Additional policies and information**

### **Providing food from home policy:**

If a parent wishes to supply their own food for their child, this policy outlines the essential guidelines for parents and guardians to ensure a safe and healthy environment for all children. We prioritise the health, safety and well being of all children and kindly ask that parents and guardians follow the guidelines below when preparing food to bring in from home.

#### No Nuts or Seeds

To ensure the safety of children with allergies, we strictly prohibit any nuts, nut-based products and seeds-based products to protect children with allergies.

Examples of this includes:

- Peanut butter
- Nutella
- Sesame or sunflower seeds.

Even small traces of these items can trigger severe allergic reactions in some children.

For health and safety reasons, we regret to inform you that we cannot heat food that is brought in from home for your child. This policy is in place to ensure the well-being of all children in our care, as we prioritise maintaining a safe and hygienic environment.

Heating food can present several risks, including the potential for cross-contamination and difficulties in monitoring the appropriate heating times and temperatures. Therefore, we encourage parents to provide meals that can be served cold or at room temperature. Our staff are committed to ensuring that your child enjoys a nutritious meal while adhering to safety guidelines. Thank you for your understanding and cooperation in this matter.

## **Healthy and Nutritious Foods:**

Foods provided should support children's growth and development by being balance and nutritious. We ask that you avoid packing foods high in sugar and saturated fats.

Such as,

- Sweets and chocolate
- Fizzy drinks or sugary beverages (we have a water only policy)
- Crisps, chips or other fried snacks

Consuming these types of foods in excess can contribute to tooth decay, energy imbalances, and long-term health issues.

Instead, we encourage wholesome options such as:

- fresh fruits and vegetables (e.g. carrot sticks, cucumber slices, apple wedges)
- whole grain bread, pasta or rice
- Protein sources, such as lean meat, eggs, beans or cheese

### **Avoid Choking Hazards:**

To ensure the safety of all children, please do not include food that could cause choking.

For example:

- Grapes must be cut into quarters
- Cherry tomatoes must be cut into half or quarters
- Hard or sticky sweets or popcorn

### **Hydration:**

We only provide children with water to drink throughout the day – please provide your child with a bottle of water. We provide milk at snack times but are unable to refrigerate milk supplied from home.

### **Policy terms for:**

Opting In/Out of additional charges During Funded Hours.

- This policy outlines the term and conditions for parents who wish to opt in or out of paying non mandatory charges during their child's funded hours at our settling.

### **Opting in**

**Parents who choose to opt in to the non-mandatory charges will enjoy benefits that enhance their child's experience during the funded hours:**

- Comprehensive Meal Provision: All meals for each session will be provided, ensuring that children receive nutritious and balanced meals throughout the day. Additionally, we will supply nappies and wipes as needed, allowing for a seamless and convenient experience for parents.
- Access to Enhanced Provision: By opting in, parents will gain access to our full range of enhanced services during their child's sessions. This includes specialised activities and resources designed to support their child's development and well-being, ensuring a rich and engaging learning environment. In addition to our daily outings into our local community as well as trips on the train, bus or in one of our minibuses.

**These benefits are designed to provide peace of mind for parents while ensuring that their children receive the highest quality care and support during their time with us.**

## **Opting out**

Parents who choose to opt out of the additional charges must adhere to the following Guidelines.

- Parents will be responsible for providing their own food, nappies and wipes for their child on a daily basis.
- Children must attend during our designated session from 1.30 pm to 5.30 pm where availability permits.

## **Important Notes - funded**

- Parents must inform us in writing/by email of their decision to opt in or out at least one month prior to the start of a new term
- Changes to a child's attendance can only be made before the start of new term.

By adhering to these terms, we aim to provide clarity and ensure a smooth experience for all our families.

You will be charged according to meals provided and a daily hourly rate for our enhanced provision during your child's funded sessions only.

We hope we have given you some insight to how things work at Stepping Stones. If you would like to have a look around our nursery please give us a call on 01273 477 777 or send us an email.

email: [info@steppingstonesnurserylewes.co.uk](mailto:info@steppingstonesnurserylewes.co.uk)

Useful links

<https://www.childcarechoices.gov.uk>

<https://www.milliesmark.com>