

Munchkins Nursery

Unique reference number (URN): 317389

Address: Unit 1, Canal Court Business Centre, CARLISLE, Cumbria, CA2 7AN

Type: Childcare on non-domestic premises

Registered with Ofsted: 19/09/1996

Registers: EYR

Registered person: Munchkins (Carlisle) Ltd

Inspection report: 18 November 2025

Exceptional	
Strong standard	
Expected standard	
Needs attention	
Urgent improvement	

Safeguarding standards not met

Leaders have not ensured that there is an open and positive culture around safeguarding. This puts children at significant harm. The designated safeguarding leads (DSLs) do not implement safeguarding policies or take appropriate action when they have any concerns about the welfare of children. Leaders have not ensured that the DSLs maintain the knowledge and skills from safeguarding training. This compromises the children's safety.

How we evaluate safeguarding

When we inspect settings for safeguarding, they can have the following outcomes:

- Met: The setting has an open and positive culture of safeguarding.
- Not met: The setting has not created an open and positive culture of safeguarding. Not all legal requirements are met.

Expected standard

Behaviour, attitudes and establishing routines

Expected standard 

Staff employ consistent routines to provide emotional support for children, fostering the development of strong attachments and boosting their confidence. For example, babies seek reassurance from trusted adults when they are unsure. Older children show perseverance and confidence in tackling challenges to master new tasks. For instance, they complete puzzles, have a go at matching quantities to numerals and draw self-portraits. Children display secure levels of self-esteem and a feeling of belonging, which generally helps them to build positive attitudes to learning. However, staff do not consistently help all children to develop attention and focus skills that promote positive attitudes to their learning.

Staff model polite, respectful communication and consistently praise positive behaviour. This helps children to develop their social skills, such as cooperation, sharing and friendship. Staff support families and children to ensure that they access their full entitlement. The setting's positive relationships with parents ensure that families feel welcomed and valued. This inclusive approach supports children's regular attendance and ensures that there is robust collaboration between families and staff to enhance outcomes for children both in the setting and through their home experiences.

Children's welfare and well-being

Expected standard 

The key-person system is effective. Children form strong bonds with staff who know them well. Staff provide a nurturing environment where care is tailored to each child's age and stage of development. Children enjoy healthy snacks and freshly cooked meals. Staff carefully adapt food for babies, preparing a variety of blends and textures. This thoughtful approach ensures that babies are introduced to new tastes and textures safely. Staff supervise children effectively throughout the day, including during sleep times. Nurturing staff sensitively support babies and children to settle through embedded familiar routines. This helps children respond to changes positively and display secure levels of wellbeing.

Children learn how to keep physically healthy. Children learn how to stay safe as they explore their physical capabilities in play. Staff talk to children about safety. For example, they remind babies to hold tight as they pull to stand and prepare to take their first steps. Children strengthen their large muscles when using climbing equipment, running, and during walks and visits to the park. Staff provide children with resources and opportunities to

strengthen their small muscles, such as using blocks, turning book pages and handling small objects. Staff assess risks and address each child's health needs with support from health professionals. Staff help children to play cooperatively together. Children learn about their emotions and how to express them.

Inclusion

Expected standard 

There is a whole-setting approach to supporting children with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Staff receive training to quickly identify children's needs through ongoing assessment and positive relationships with parents and wider professionals. This tailored support helps children to make secure progress. When gaps are identified, staff act promptly to ensure that children receive the targeted support they need to achieve and close gaps in learning. For instance, staff use effective communication strategies for children needing speech and language support. They break down learning into manageable parts during play. In addition, staff incorporate and use gestures, stories and songs that children enjoy. As a result, children become confident communicators using various methods.

Leaders are proactive in seeking support for children with SEND. They establish positive relationships with families and professionals. Leaders support families to access any additional funding their child is entitled to. They work closely with families to identify how such funding is used to improve their child's outcomes. Leaders identify ways to support families to further improve children's experiences. For example, they support families with school and employment applications. They work with social workers and adoption agencies to provide children with continuity that supports their emotional wellbeing, particularly at times of change.

Needs attention

Achievement

Needs attention 

Younger children do not make consistent progress in their learning. They do not always engage in meaningful play. Younger children often repeat play but without support to extend their learning and help them to make secure progress.

Generally, older children make progress in their learning and development, specifically children with special educational needs and/or disabilities and those needing additional support. Staff adopt creative and flexible approaches tailored to each child's learning style, promoting small, achievable steps. For example, children gain confidence and participate in a singing group, using their favourite songs to boost communication and social skills.

Children make some progress with their communication and language development. Babies and older children look at books independently and read with adults. They look closely at the illustrations, while others join puppet stories in a group. They display good listening skills, showing an understanding of what is being read to them through their facial expressions. Most children foster a love for books, which prepares them well for future learning.

Although leaders and managers have a clear vision for children's learning, not all staff have the skills needed to deliver an ambitious curriculum consistently. Younger children do not always benefit from high-quality interactions that help them build on their existing knowledge and skills. This weakens their engagement in learning. For example, group activities become disrupted and noisy when children are disengaged. Some children briefly engage in play but struggle to focus without appropriate support from staff.

Children make healthy food choices by picking nutritious fruits and trying new flavours. They learn about the wider world through regular walks and engagement within their local community. Most staff foster children's independence well by promoting skills such as dressing and toileting and encouraging independent activities that support school readiness through daily routines and play. However, the implementation of this approach is not consistent across all staff members. Notably, some children who are developmentally ready still use baby bottles instead of transitioning to cups. This reduces opportunities for children to develop their independence.

Staff prioritise communication and language development. They sing to babies during nappy changing to build vocabulary, and they encourage older children to listen to stories to improve their language skills. Older children confidently use words to describe emotions and explain their feelings as they develop social skills and empathy. These practices help children to become effective communicators.

Urgent improvement

Leadership and governance

Urgent improvement

The provider has not ensured that staff implement safeguarding policies and procedures. They have not notified Ofsted of significant changes as required. Leaders have not accurately identified weaknesses in the quality of teaching for younger children and that some staff lack a clear understanding of child development and how to sequence children's learning. They do not monitor staff's practice effectively to identify how to help staff develop their teaching skills.

Leaders are committed to improving the learning experiences for all children. They have made progress on recommendations made at their last Ofsted inspection. For example, they have enhanced parental involvement, using direct discussions, consultations and communication systems. This has enhanced the learning experiences and strengthened progress for some children. However, there is still work to be done to improve the quality of teaching.

Staff feel well supported and share that they find the workload manageable. Leaders and staff attend and participate in network meetings to share good practice and target professional development to enhance staff's practice. For instance, staff have attended specialist baby training, which has resulted in babies receiving enhanced nurturing care.

Leaders and staff have a clear vision for children with special educational needs and/or disabilities and those facing barriers to learning. They collaborate with other agencies to provide support, resulting in typical progress from each child's starting point. Staff have regular supervision sessions to identify training needs and discuss areas for improvement.

What it's like to be a child at this setting

Children's safety and welfare is compromised. This is due to significant weaknesses in the leadership and governance. Leaders do not follow robust safeguarding procedures to act on potential concerns when they arise proactively. In addition, the provider has not notified Ofsted of any changes that may affect the suitability of the registered person or anyone connected to the registration.

Some children do not receive consistently high-quality teaching and support. Overall, staff can explain what they want children to learn, but this is not always carried out effectively, particularly in the room for two-year-old children. Sometimes, interactions between staff and children are weak. Staff do not spend enough time engaging with children during play, supporting them to build on their existing knowledge and skills, and helping them make the best possible progress.

Older children generally show positive attitudes towards learning. They pursue their own interests during play. For example, they use construction toys to build, create and design, bringing their imaginative ideas to life. Children feel pride in their achievements, especially when they overcome challenges such as connecting 'tricky' pieces of a train track or balancing 'wobbly' blocks to build towers. As a result, children develop increasing confidence, resilience and self-esteem, which provide a solid foundation for future learning and personal growth.

Children are warmly greeted and provided with support as needed, with transitions throughout the day being handled flexibly to reflect individual care routines. This approach fosters a sense of security and belonging for every child. Staff are warm and welcoming. The manager and staff demonstrate a strong commitment to prioritising children's wellbeing, taking care to ensure that each child feels valued from the moment they arrive. Parents consistently express their appreciation for the inclusive environment and the dedication shown by staff. Children develop meaningful relationships with both peers and adults, contributing to their enjoyment of nursery life.

Next steps

To meet the requirements of the Early years foundation stage the provider must take the following actions by the assigned date:

Action	Completion Date
Ensure that the designated safeguarding leads attend appropriate training for their role and are equipped with the knowledge and skills they need to understand and carry out their safeguarding responsibilities fully.	03/12/2025
Ensure that the designated safeguarding leads understand and follow the correct procedures for responding to disclosures made by children, and take necessary steps to ensure that children are kept safe.	03/12/2025
Provide effective supervision, training and support to leaders, managers and staff to help them identify areas for improvement and raise the quality of the curriculum and teaching to the highest level.	03/12/2025

About this inspection

The inspector spoke with the manager, staff, designated safeguarding leads and the special educational needs coordinator during the inspection. Children communicated with the inspector during the inspection. Parents shared their views of the nursery with the inspector.

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.

Inspector:

Karen James

About this setting

Unique reference number (URN): 317389

Address:

Unit 1
Canal Court Business Centre
CARLISLE
Cumbria
CA2 7AN

Type: Childcare on non-domestic premises

Registration date: 19/09/1996

Registered person: Munchkins (Carlisle) Ltd

Register(s): EYR

Operating hours: Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday : 07:00 - 18:00

Local authority: Cumberland

Facts and figures used on inspection

This data was available to the inspector at the time of the inspection.

 This data is from 18 November 2025

Children numbers

Age range of children at the time of inspection

1 to 4

Total number of places

71

Our grades explained

Exceptional

Practice is exceptional: of the highest standard nationally. Other settings can learn from it.

Strong standard

The setting reaches a strong standard. Leaders are working above the standards expected of them.

Expected standard

The setting is fulfilling the expected standard of education and/or care. This means they are following the standards set out in statutory and non-statutory legislation and the professional standards expected of them.

Needs attention

The expected standards are not met but leaders are likely able to make the necessary improvements.

Urgent improvement

The setting needs to make urgent improvements to provide the expected standard of education and/or care.

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