

Inspection of Chipmunks Day Nursery

6 HERRINGSTON ROAD, DORCHESTER, DORSET DT1 2BS

Inspection date: 24 June 2025

Overall effectiveness	Inadequate
------------------------------	-------------------

The quality of education	Inadequate
--------------------------	-------------------

Behaviour and attitudes	Inadequate
-------------------------	-------------------

Personal development	Inadequate
----------------------	-------------------

Leadership and management	Inadequate
---------------------------	-------------------

Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Inadequate
--	------------

What is it like to attend this early years setting?

The provision is inadequate

Children's health and well-being are not assured. Weak hygiene practices put children at risk of infectious diseases. For example, children's cups and cutlery are washed up by staff and left to dry on the floor in the toilet area. This presents a risk of bacteria contaminating these items and transferring to children. Toileting and nappy changing facilities in some parts of the nursery are not suitable. For example, the location of the changing area for older babies and the toileting arrangements for toddlers do not afford them with the privacy and dignity they require. Processes for recording children's accidents and injuries are not consistently followed by staff. This significantly hinders staff in identifying patterns of injuries to inform risk assessments or help identify safeguarding concerns.

Staff supervision processes are ineffective. The provider does not have a good oversight of the quality of care and learning provided by staff. They do not ensure that staff have the knowledge and skills they need to fulfil their duties. This negatively impacts children's learning and development. An effective key-person system is not in place. While some staff know their key children well, many others lack the necessary information to meet children's individual needs. Therefore, they are not able to tailor children's care and learning. Timely referrals are not made to external agencies when there are concerns about children's development to help close the gaps. The needs of children with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are not being met.

The curriculum is poorly designed and implemented. Staff organise learning activities that fail to inspire or engage children. As a result, children lose interest and wander away. The baby room for the youngest children is sparse, with a limited selection of toys available to encourage their learning. As a result of these weaknesses, children do not make good progress from their starting points and are not well prepared for school.

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

- Unhygienic practices compromise children's health. For example, staff leave dirty plates and cups in a washing-up bowl on a shelf where children play, which attracts flies. This risks the transmission of bacteria and disease. Although staff support children in washing their hands before mealtimes, they then place bibs on the floor before attaching them to the children's necks, which further risks the spread of germs.
- While staff are aware of the process for recording accidents and injuries, they do not always follow it in practice. Accidents, including those resulting in significant injuries, sometimes go unrecorded. This compromises the provider's ability to identify patterns and maintain accurate records for parental communication.

- Although staff supervision takes place, it is ineffective in raising standards. The provider does not monitor staff practice closely enough to identify the key areas of improvement required. Weaknesses in staff interactions with children persist and no action has been taken to support staff to meet children's individual needs. Staff do not receive the support, coaching or training they need to fulfil their roles and responsibilities. This negatively impacts upon children's learning and development.
- The provider does not ensure that staff have the necessary knowledge and skills to promote the development of children with SEND. Learning intentions are not clearly defined, and staff interactions are not focused enough to ensure children make good progress. Children who need additional support do not receive the targeted help they need in their learning.
- Many staff have recently been allocated to new rooms within the nursery. However, the provider has not ensured that staff have the necessary information about their new key children to support their learning and development. For example, some staff are unaware of who their key children are or what the next steps in their development are. Parents have not been informed of recent changes to their children's key person and report that they do not receive feedback about the development of their older children. Key persons do not build effective relationships with parents to help ensure continuity of care and to support children's learning at home.
- Children are encouraged to use the toilet and potty in full view of all other children and staff in the room, which does not help them develop their understanding of privacy. Toilet facilities for older babies approaching two years of age are not easily available, which does not encourage their personal development or promote self-care for this age group.
- The provider's curriculum is weak and poorly sequenced. Learning opportunities organised by staff do not meet children's needs or support them to make the progress of which they are capable. For example, staff repeatedly ask toddlers the same questions, which they already know the answers to. Staff do not extend children's learning effectively or provide activities that motivate them to learn. As a result, children become disengaged and do not have positive attitudes to learning.
- Staff do not develop children's language well. For example, staff sometimes use slang, such as 'ta', and speak quickly using language young children cannot understand. Staff rarely engage in meaningful back-and-forth conversations with children that extend their vocabulary and communication skills.
- Children's independence is not well promoted in preparation for school. For example, staff put children's shoes on for them, do not encourage them to help tidy up, and do not teach children how to use cutlery appropriately. Most staff do not support children to learn to make decisions for themselves. As a result, children often passively play with whatever staff give to them.
- Staff show genuine care for the children at the nursery and treat them with respect. They are warm and gentle and model kindness in their interactions with others. Children behave well and staff manage any disagreements between children appropriately.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are not effective.

There is not an open and positive culture around safeguarding that puts children's interests first.

What does the setting need to do to improve?

The provision is inadequate and Ofsted intends to take enforcement action.

We will issue a Welfare Requirements Notice requiring the provider to:

	Due date
ensure that staff follow good hygiene practices to help maintain children's good health	25/06/2025
ensure that systems to record accidents and injuries are robust and that all staff follow the correct processes	25/06/2025
improve the monitoring of staff practice and provide staff with the support they need to improve the quality of care and learning	08/07/2025
ensure staff have the necessary skills and knowledge to meet the needs of children with SEND	08/07/2025
implement an effective key-person system to ensure that children's care and learning are tailored to meet their individual needs	08/07/2025
ensure that there are suitable nappy changing areas provided for babies and that adequate privacy is given to children using toilets.	08/07/2025

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

	Due date
--	----------

devise and implement a well-sequenced and appropriately challenging curriculum to help ensure that all children make good progress in their development.	02/09/2025
--	------------

Setting details

Unique reference number	EY454946
Local authority	Dorset
Inspection number	10393072
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	0 to 4
Total number of places	153
Number of children on roll	144
Name of registered person	Chipmunks Day Nursery Ltd
Registered person unique reference number	RP532064
Telephone number	01305 260002
Date of previous inspection	31 January 2025

Information about this early years setting

Chipmunks Day Nursery registered in 2012. It operates in Dorchester and is one of two nurseries registered by the same provider. The nursery opens each weekday from 7.45am until 6pm, for 51 weeks of the year. There are 24 staff who work directly with children. Of these, sixteen hold relevant level 3 qualifications, four hold level 2 qualifications and four are unqualified. The nursery offers government funded spaces.

Information about this inspection

Inspectors

Lisa Melville
Tracey Cook

Inspection activities

- The manager and inspectors completed a learning walk together and discussed the early years curriculum.
- The inspectors observed the quality of education being provided, indoors and outdoors, and assessed the impact that this was having on children's learning.
- Children communicated with the inspectors during the inspection.
- An inspector spoke to several parents during the inspection and took account of their views.
- Staff spoke to the inspectors during the inspection.
- The inspectors observed the interactions between staff and children.
- The manager showed an inspector documentation to demonstrate the suitability of staff.

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.

If you are not happy with the inspection or the report, you can [complain to Ofsted](#).

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, further education and skills, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for looked after children, safeguarding and child protection.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may reuse this information (not including logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence. To view this licence, visit www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/, write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk

This publication is available at <https://reports.ofsted.gov.uk/>.

Interested in our work? You can subscribe to our monthly newsletter for more information and updates: <http://eepurl.com/iTrDn>.

Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.gov.uk/ofsted

© Crown copyright 2025