

Inspection of Chipmunks Day Nursery

6 HERRINGSTON ROAD, DORCHESTER, DORSET DT1 2BS

Inspection date:

24 September 2025

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

Inadequate

What is it like to attend this early years setting?

The provision requires improvement

Leaders have addressed some of the weaknesses from the last inspection and are committed to making further improvements. For instance, there is now a broad curriculum that is aimed at improving outcomes for all children. However, although children appear settled and happy to attend, they do not benefit from consistent high-quality interactions from staff to extend their learning.

Additionally, staff do not consistently consider the organisation of the environment to ensure that all children can actively engage in activities. For example, children are keen to learn how to use hoops in the playground. They watch staff and are eager to copy. However, the hoops are too big for young children to manage and manipulate. This leads to frustration and children lose interest. Overall, the quality of education that children receive is not yet good.

Children develop positive bonds with staff. They listen to staff and join in with the daily routines. Staff provide a wide range of fun and interesting activities that interest children. For instance, young children laugh and giggle as they practise using their small-hand muscles to thread different shapes. Older children enjoy using pens to draw around their hands.

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

- Leaders have an overview of the curriculum. They know what they want children to achieve. Staff know the children they care for well and plan appropriate next steps in learning. However, staff's interactions often lack purpose, direction or do not extend children's learning. The quality of teaching is variable. Some staff do not have the skills they need to engage children in purposeful play, support their curiosity and encourage children to persevere during tasks. This means that children's experiences are not consistent across the setting.
- Staff assess and monitor children's progress regularly. They act swiftly to identify any gaps in children's learning and put additional support in place. There is effective support for children with special educational needs and/or disabilities. Staff follow advice from other professionals and work with parents and carers to help children to achieve their set goals.
- Staff feel their well-being is considered and supported by leaders. Since the last inspection, there have been regular team meetings, staff supervision sessions and dedicated time for all staff to undertake training. Although leaders recognise different confidence levels in staff, they have not yet sharply focused on staff's continuous improvement. Leaders do not yet have a clear oversight of individual staff's knowledge and skills. This limits leaders' ability to address weaknesses in practice. This means that staff are not fully effective in supporting children's learning outcomes and providing high-quality interactions.

- Parent partnerships are positive. Staff work with parents from the start to gain a clear understanding of children's interests, needs and care routines. This helps children to settle quickly. Staff provide a 'book box' and 'busy bags' for parents to share with their children at home. Parents say they feel their children are happy and safe at the setting. They appreciate staff telling them about daily activities and say they feel involved in their children's learning.
- While staff plan motivating activities for children, they do not consistently consider the organisation of these activities. For instance, at times, rooms become noisy and children are distracted by staff carrying out routine tasks. Sometimes, children clamber over each other to reach toys and resources that spark their interest. This leads to low-level conflicts, which staff must then manage. During these times, children then become less interested, wander off and are not involved in meaningful learning.
- There is an effective key-person system in place. Children form relationships with their key person and seek them out for reassurance, comfort and support. Babies who are new to the setting are beginning to have the confidence to explore the environment if staff are close by. This demonstrates they feel safe and secure.

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

	Due date
ensure that staff focus their interactions on supporting what they plan and intend for children to learn, so all children engage in purposeful learning	14/11/2025
strengthen arrangements for individual staff supervision sessions to support consistently high-quality interactions for all children.	14/11/2025

To further improve the quality of the early years provision, the provider should:

- strengthen the organisation of the environment and activities to fully promote children's engagement in meaningful learning.

Setting details

Unique reference number	EY454946
Local authority	Dorset
Inspection number	10414784
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	121
Name of registered person	Chipmunks Day Nursery Ltd
Registered person unique reference number	RP532064
Telephone number	01305 260002
Date of previous inspection	24 June 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 27 staff who work directly with children. Of these, one member of staff holds a level 6 qualification, two staff hold qualifications at level 4, fifteen staff hold qualifications at level 3, four staff hold qualifications at level 2 and five staff are unqualified. The nursery offers government funded childcare.

Information about this inspection

Inspectors

Mikaela Jauncey
Marie Swindells

Inspection activities

- An inspector viewed the provision and discussed the safety and suitability of the premises with the manager.
- The manager joined an inspector on a learning walk and talked to the inspector about the curriculum and what she wants children to learn.
- Staff talked to the inspectors throughout the inspection and discussed how the curriculum is planned and implemented, and how children's progress is monitored.
- An inspector spoke to parents and took their views into account.
- The manager carried out two joint observations of a mathematics activity and a singing activity with an inspector.
- Children spoke to the inspectors.
- The inspectors observed interactions between staff and children throughout the inspection.

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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