

Little Robins Nursery

Unique reference number (URN): 2813369

Address: Sunninghill Preparatory School Ltd, South Court, South Walks Road, Dorchester, DT1 1EB



Type: Childcare on non-domestic premises

Registered with Ofsted: 23/10/2024

Registers: EYR

Registered person: Sunninghill School Limited

Inspection report: 8 December 2025

Exceptional	
Strong standard	
Expected standard	
Needs attention	
Urgent improvement	

Safeguarding standards met

The safeguarding standards are met. This means that leaders and/or those responsible for governance and oversight fulfil their specific responsibilities and have established an open culture in which safeguarding is everyone's responsibility and concerns are actively identified, acted upon and managed. As a result, children are made safer and feel safe.

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.

Strong standard ●

Achievement

Strong standard ●

Children make positive progress from their starting points across all areas of learning. They become confident communicators. Children happily share their ideas, thoughts and feelings. For example, they talk about what they enjoy doing at the nursery. Children show that they feel safe and build secure bonds with staff. Children with special educational needs and/or disabilities thrive due to the individualised interventions that are put in place for them to address any barriers to their learning. Children are very well prepared for the next stage of their education, including those who are known to social care and those who are disadvantaged.

Across the nursery, children demonstrate high levels of confidence and curiosity. They enjoy rich learning opportunities that nurture their interests, including participation in additional sessions, such as drama and music, offered by the school. Children are increasingly independent and show kindness and respect for other children and staff. This secure foundation ensures that children are ready to flourish as they move on to school.

Behaviour, attitudes and establishing routines

Strong standard ●

Routines are extremely well embedded throughout the nursery and contribute to a calm and purposeful environment in which children thrive. From the earliest stages, children know what to expect next and follow routines with confidence. For example, toddlers line up when asked to do so by staff, and children transition smoothly between activities. When additional support is needed, staff provide it sensitively and promptly. Staff use visual aids and signing effectively to support children with special educational needs and/or disabilities, ensuring that all children can participate successfully.

Staff demonstrate genuine care and kindness, modelling positive behaviour and respectful interactions at all times. Their consistent approach helps children to develop strong emotional security and trusting relationships. Children's behaviour across the nursery is excellent. Staff manage minor incidents calmly and effectively. They help children to understand the consequences of their actions and learn how to resolve conflicts for themselves.

Leaders and staff work closely with parents and carers to promote regular and punctual attendance, enabling children to benefit fully from the curriculum and daily routines. As a result, children display positive attitudes, engage enthusiastically in learning and develop high levels of independence and confidence.

Children's welfare and wellbeing

Strong standard 

Children's welfare and wellbeing are given the highest priority across the nursery. Staff and leaders know children extremely well and use this knowledge to ensure that every child feels safe, secure and valued. Children settle quickly and demonstrate a strong sense of belonging.

Staff work closely with families from the start. They continue to adapt their support when children's circumstances or experiences change. This responsive approach ensures that children's individual needs are met effectively and sensitively. Staff promote children's emotional and physical health very well. Children learn how to stay fit and healthy and receive support to communicate their needs from an early age. For example, babies confidently crawl over to their cots when they are tired, showing secure attachments and self-awareness.

Key-person systems are highly effective, helping children to feel understood, supported and happy throughout the day. Strong hygiene procedures and clear teaching about keeping themselves safe further enhance children's wellbeing. Staff support children to recognise and express their emotions appropriately, contributing to their developing skills in regulating their emotions. Children flourish in an environment where their welfare is carefully nurtured and consistently promoted.

Inclusion

Strong standard 

Leaders and staff demonstrate a strong and consistent commitment to inclusion across the nursery. Staff have high expectations for all children. They use assessment skilfully to identify what children already know and can do, and swiftly identify if children are at risk of falling behind. Staff implement timely and targeted support to help close any emerging gaps in children's development.

Children with special educational needs and/or disabilities benefit from dedicated support from staff. Interventions put in place to reduce barriers to learning are appropriate, purposeful and regularly reviewed. For example, staff provide targeted small-group support to help children learn to manage their feelings. Staff assess the impact of these strategies and adjust their approach promptly if progress is not as swift as expected. Leaders use additional funding for disadvantaged children thoughtfully and appropriately to enhance learning opportunities and remove potential barriers. For example, they provide targeted training for staff in how to nurture children's emotional wellbeing.

Leaders establish a coherent and joined-up approach to reducing children's barriers to learning. They work collaboratively with the local authority, health visitors and speech and language therapists. Staff training is sharply focused on developing inclusive practice and

overcoming barriers to learning. As a result, families, staff and children feel valued, respected and experience a genuine sense of belonging in the nursery.

Leadership and governance

Strong standard 

Leaders are passionate and dedicated to their roles, creating a strong and cohesive leadership structure. They have a clear and ambitious vision for the nursery and a precise understanding of its strengths and areas for improvement. This ensures that actions for development are purposeful and consistently lead to positive outcomes for children. Partnerships with parents and carers and the wider community are excellent. For example, the nursery works collaboratively with other early years providers to share good practice. Parents report that they feel very well informed about their children's progress and feel welcome and valued at the nursery.

Training is expertly tailored to enhance staff knowledge and skills and is directly linked to the specific needs of the children who attend. For example, staff attend and put into practice training they have attended to meet the needs of children with special educational needs and/or disabilities. Staff demonstrate high levels of professionalism. They report feeling valued, well supported and genuinely enjoying their work. Morale is high, contributing to the warm, welcoming and inclusive atmosphere that characterises the nursery.

Expected standard

Curriculum and teaching

Expected standard 

Leaders and managers have a secure and accurate understanding of the quality of the curriculum and teaching across the nursery. The curriculum is well planned and ensures that all children, including those who may need additional support, have full access to the breadth of the learning opportunities on offer. Staff use assessment appropriately to quickly identify when children might be at risk of falling behind. Swift, effective action is taken to help close any gaps, in partnership with parents and other professionals.

Babies benefit from calm, reassuring and sensitive care, which supports their emotional security and early communication skills. Staff provide purposeful opportunities for children to develop their language across the nursery. For example, staff repeat back unclear speech to support children's pronunciation. Staff working with older children have a clear understanding of how to adapt their teaching to support children's thinking in the moment. However, at times, some staff working with younger children are less confident in adjusting their interactions to extend children's learning during play. Leaders have already identified this and organised recent training for all staff, but it is not yet fully embedded.

Children enjoy plenty of fresh air and exercise and benefit from a variety of physical play, inside and outside. For example, babies enjoy climbing the steps to the slide and older children climb on outdoor equipment and ride bicycles. Staff introduce mathematical concepts to children from an early age through songs, stories and daily routines. As children

grow, staff build on this early knowledge by teaching shape, number and problem-solving explicitly and effectively.

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

Children experience a warm, nurturing and highly supportive environment from the moment they join the nursery. Staff work closely with parents and carers from the outset. They gather detailed information about each child's interests, routines and developmental starting points. This enables staff to plan meaningful learning for children that nurtures their curiosity and builds on what they already know and can do. Staff create a calm and well-organised environment, where children are encouraged to explore, make choices and engage in meaningful learning opportunities. Staff provide targeted support for children with special educational needs and/or disabilities and those who are known to social care or face disadvantage, working closely with families and external professionals.

Across the nursery, routines are embedded effectively, helping children to feel safe and understand what will happen next. Staff place a secure emphasis on developing children's early communication, social skills and physical development. Staff use signing and pictures to support children who need extra support with their communication to help them to understand when there will be a transition from one activity to another. Staff extend children's vocabulary through high-quality interactions with children. Children develop a love of reading. From an early age, children look at books independently and listen intently as staff read to them. Children's progress is closely monitored, and swift action taken to close any gaps in children's learning. As a result of this, all children flourish, making very positive progress from their starting points.

Children behave well and demonstrate very positive attitudes to learning. They build secure relationships and develop positive attitudes that equip them very well for later learning, including school. Children play cooperatively with their peers and respond well to techniques used by staff to encourage turn taking, such as using timers to indicate when another child can have a turn. Staff are kind and warm in their interactions with other adults and children. Children show respect for others and their environment. For example, they actively tidy up after using resources. Children demonstrate a deep sense of belonging throughout the nursery.

Next steps

- Leaders should continue to embed recent curriculum training to build the confidence of staff working with younger children to adapt and respond to children's thinking further during their play.
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About this inspection

The inspector spoke with parents, leaders, managers, staff and the special educational needs and/or disabilities coordinator during 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.

Inspector:

Lisa Melville

About this setting

Unique reference number (URN): 2813369

Address:

Sunninghill Preparatory School Ltd
South Court, South Walks Road
Dorchester
DT1 1EB

Type: Childcare on non-domestic premises

Registration date: 23/10/2024

Registered person: Sunninghill School Limited

Register(s): EYR

Operating hours: Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday : 08:00 - 18:00

Local authority: Dorset

Facts and figures used on inspection

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

 This data is from 8 December 2025

Children numbers

Age range of children at the time of inspection

0 to 4

Total number of places

15

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 standard expected of them.

Expected standard 

The setting is fulfilling the expected standard of education and/or care. This means they are following the standard 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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Piccadilly Gate

Store Street

Manchester

M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231

Textphone: 0161 618 8524

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