

Monkey Puzzle Bishops Stortford

Unique reference number (URN): 2747806

Address: Monkey Puzzle Day Nursery Bishops Stortford, Hazelend Road, Bishop's Stortford, CM23 2FN

Type: Childcare on non-domestic premises

Registered with Ofsted: 15/10/2023

Registers: EYR

Registered person: Stortford Daycare Limited

Inspection report: 8 April 2026

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.

Expected standard

Achievement

Expected standard

Children settle well across the setting. Babies form secure attachments and feel safe, helping them to separate from their families and begin their learning. Smooth transitions, supported by home visits, help children to feel confident as they move into nursery and between rooms. Children make steady progress from their starting points. They develop communication and language skills, becoming more confident in expressing their needs, sharing ideas and using new vocabulary in their play. Most children, including those with barriers to learning, receive support to take part and make progress over time.

Children gain independence and confidence as they move through the setting. They manage daily experiences, make choices in their play and develop the skills needed for their next stage. Transitions between age groups and on to school are well supported, helping children to feel prepared.

Children's gaps in learning are beginning to narrow as they build on their knowledge and skills. However, due to some minor weaknesses in practice, some children with barriers to learning, particularly around their behaviour and regulating their emotions, do not consistently sustain engagement or access learning as fully.

Behaviour, attitudes and establishing routines

Expected standard

Leaders have created a generally positive environment, where children are content and understand expectations. Children follow instructions well and engage in a range of experiences. They show positive attitudes towards their learning, particularly outdoors, where they spend long periods of time being creative and imaginative. Children make 'potions' in the mud kitchen, pour water through guttering and build sandcastles using their own ideas. They explore natural resources, dig in soil and make sandy handprints, showing curiosity and engagement.

Relationships between staff and children are warm. Staff use eye contact and simple language to support communication, particularly with younger children. Babies begin to develop social skills, smiling, clapping and interacting alongside their peers. Older children collaborate, take turns and play together, showing developing social understanding.

Children enjoy group times and listen attentively to stories. Staff read in an engaging way, encouraging children to join in with familiar lines, such as saying 'pop', which promotes a love of reading and supports their engagement. Staff follow children's interests and guide play, supporting their enjoyment and participation. However, children's behaviour expectations and routines are not consistently embedded across the setting. This means children are not always able to follow expectations or fully engage in and make the most of the experiences provided.

Children's welfare and wellbeing

Expected standard 

Care practices meet children's individual needs. Staff know children well and provide warm, nurturing care, particularly during hygiene practices. Children receive comfort and reassurance when needed, helping them to feel safe and settled. Staff demonstrate secure knowledge of safer sleep procedures. They complete regular checks, logs and temperature monitoring to ensure children's safety.

Children receive support to develop their independence through everyday experiences. They choose their own water bottles, begin to serve themselves at mealtimes and use cutlery with increasing confidence. Mealtimes are well organised and sociable. Children benefit from home-cooked and healthy meals and a varied diet. Staff encourage them to try new foods. They model positive manners and support conversations, creating positive learning opportunities.

Children's physical development is supported through regular outdoor play and opportunities to climb, balance and move in different ways. They enjoy longer walks and active play, helping to build strength and coordination. Staff also support children to express their emotions and begin to understand their feelings. However, opportunities to consistently promote children's understanding of their emotional wellbeing are not fully developed across the setting.

Curriculum and teaching

Expected standard 

Leaders have an ambitious vision for the curriculum, designing experiences around real-life opportunities that broaden children's interests and understanding of the world. Children develop knowledge and skills through purposeful activities. For example, they engage in woodwork, where they learn to saw, chop and hammer safely. Children work collaboratively, begin to assess risk and understand how to keep themselves safe. Trips and visitors are a key part of the curriculum. Children enjoy regular walks to the local park and nature trails, sports sessions and visits from people in the community, such as the dentist.

Staff interactions are warm and supportive. They model language throughout the day, helping children to develop confidence and learn new vocabulary. As a result, children are becoming more confident communicators. Outdoor learning is a strength, with children benefiting from regular access to a well-planned environment that supports their physical development and engagement.

Staff adapt experiences to include all children, including those with individual education plans, so they can access activities and take part. However, not all interactions are consistently effective. Staff do not always have a clear understanding of the intent of activities. This means children do not always remain engaged or use language to extend their ideas, or deepen their learning and development.

Inclusion

Expected standard 

Leaders demonstrate an understanding of inclusive practice and are developing this across the setting. They identify and assess children's needs. Staff respond by putting strategies in

place to support and reduce barriers to children's learning. Staff know children well and provide additional support, including sharing favourite books to support children to regulate their emotions and behaviour.

Leaders use additional funding effectively to support disadvantaged children. This is used to provide meaningful experiences and to ensure children and families receive appropriate support and access to all of their early years education. Staff work closely with parents and carers. They hold regular meetings, reviewing individual education plans and sharing strategies to support children's learning at home. They also signpost families to external agencies where additional support is needed.

Children with special educational needs and/or disabilities and those facing barriers receive some support in the setting. They benefit from a timely referral process that ensures they receive suitable plans for their progress and development. Staff seek advice from professionals and follow guidance in practice. Leaders prioritise preparing children for their next stage of learning and put systems in place to ensure smooth transitions to school. Overall, practice is developing. However, routines are not implemented consistently across the setting, particularly after lunch, where staff do not always provide clear structure or purposeful activities. As a result, children are less engaged and they do not consistently maintain their positive behaviour.

Leadership and governance

Expected standard 

Leaders and managers are reflective and dedicated. They have a clear understanding of the setting's strengths and areas for development and take action to bring about improvements that support children's learning and wellbeing. They have identified priorities, including strengthening routines and the consistency of teaching. Leaders are beginning to implement changes to address these.

Leaders make decisions in the best interests of all children, including those who are disadvantaged or with special educational needs and/or disabilities. They work closely with families and external professionals to ensure children receive appropriate support. Leaders prioritise partnerships with parents and carers, with clear communication and opportunities for parents to share their views, which leaders use to inform improvements. Parents speak highly of the trusting relationships that they have and the daily updates they receive.

Leaders consider staff's wellbeing and workload. They have made changes to how children's learning is tracked and observed, which is helping staff to focus on more meaningful next steps. Staff speak positively about the support they receive through supervision and daily guidance.

Staff receive professional development, including training and peer observations, to support their practice. However, this is not yet consistently embedded across the team, and improvements are still developing. Leaders have a clear vision for the setting and are working towards embedding this more consistently in practice.

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

Children arrive happily and are welcomed into a warm and nurturing environment, where they feel safe and secure. They form close relationships with staff, seeking them out for reassurance and cuddles and to share their ideas. This helps children to settle quickly and develop a sense of belonging. Staff know the children well and take the time to understand their home lives. They work closely with families to support children's needs. Children who find it more difficult to regulate their emotions or manage transitions typically receive extra support, such as small-group time and targeted activities. This helps these children to feel included and make progress.

Children enjoy a range of engaging experiences and benefit from a wonderful outdoor space. They talk enthusiastically about activities such as cooking, which they share with their families at home. Children take part in extra opportunities, such as counting sessions and sports activities. They show curiosity and creativity as they explore, play and learn alongside their peers. Children build warm friendships and learn to cooperate. They receive support to understand their feelings through stories, games and resources that help them to regulate their emotions.

Children develop confidence and independence over time. They make progress from their starting points, including in their communication and language. Children begin to use more appropriate language in their interactions. They develop healthy habits, including being active and making positive choices to drink water, be outdoors and eat a healthy snack. Children are content and engaged and develop the skills they need for their next stage of learning.

Next steps

- Leaders should support staff even more to implement clear and consistent routines across the setting, particularly during transitions, so that these better meet children's individual needs and improve engagement and behaviour.
 - Leaders should strengthen professional development so staff develop a clearer understanding of the intent of activities and ensure experiences are developmentally appropriate, enabling children to make the most of learning opportunities and progress even further.
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About this inspection

The inspector spoke to parents and carers, children, leaders, the special educational needs coordinator and staff 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:

Sara Vincent

About this setting

Unique reference number (URN): 2747806

Address:

Monkey Puzzle Day Nursery Bishops Stortford
Hazelend Road
Bishop's Stortford
CM23 2FN

Type: Childcare on non-domestic premises

Registration date: 15/10/2023

Registered person: Stortford Daycare Limited

Register(s): EYR

Operating hours: Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday : 07:30 - 18:30

Local authority: Hertfordshire

Facts and figures used on inspection

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

 This data is from 8 April 2026

Children numbers

Age range of children at the time of inspection

0 to 4

Total number of places

63

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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