

Inspection of Dunky's Day Nursery (Runcorn)

2 Mather Avenue, Weston Point, Runcorn, Cheshire WA7 4JJ

Inspection date: 17 September 2025

Overall effectiveness	Outstanding
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The quality of education	Outstanding
Behaviour and attitudes	Outstanding
Personal development	Outstanding
Leadership and management	Outstanding
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Outstanding

What is it like to attend this early years setting?

The provision is outstanding

Children flourish and thrive at this exceptional, child-centred nursery. Staff individually greet children as they arrive. They build extremely warm relationships with them in a positive and nurturing manner. Staff are highly effective in responding to every child's unique needs. This enables all children to feel secure, happy and engaged throughout the day. Staff plan a wealth of rich learning experiences, indoors and outdoors. They provide appropriate challenge for children, who in response demonstrate perseverance to achieve new skills. This prepares them for future success and ensures all children make excellent progress in their learning.

Staff recognise the importance of children's communication skills. Interactions all children receive from staff are plentiful and of exceptionally high quality. Babies bounce rhythmically in enjoyment as they join in with familiar songs. Older children seek out friends to share experiences with and immerse themselves in play. They delight in back-and-forth conversations about animals, nature and their favourite books. Staff purposely extend children's vocabulary. They repeat key words to support children to learn and remember more.

Staff have consistently high expectations for children's behaviour. Routines are quickly embedded and transitions are given thoughtful consideration. Staff offer children encouragement and praise, while also giving them the time and space to do things for themselves. Children and staff care for each other and share a deep respect for their environment. They are exceptionally kind and demonstrate a positive understanding of their own and other's differences. Staff provide tailored support, guidance and advice to parents. They communicate regularly with families about their children's learning and develop productive partnerships with parents.

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

- The experienced and dedicated leaders are passionate about creating a high-quality nursery where all children thrive. This ambitious vision is shared by the conscientious staff team members, who work collaboratively to promote the best outcomes for children. Staff deliver sequenced learning and assess what each child is doing with expertise. In response to the rich experiences on offer, children's attitudes to learning are consistently positive. They are highly motivated and sustain concentration for extended periods of time.
- Leaders place an exceptional focus on staff's well-being, ensuring they are supported, mentored and feel valued. All staff have multiple opportunities to develop their professional practice, and leaders draw on the staff's individual strengths to champion specific areas of learning. Staff cascade new knowledge to each other and to staff in other settings in the local authority. They

continuously strive to provide the best opportunities for children. In turn, this enables the children, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, to make the best possible start in life.

- Babies excitedly participate in a variety of well-planned activities. They learn to take turns as they wash their hands and have opportunities to safely observe foods in their whole or raw form. For example, babies hold and explore broccoli and feel real grains of rice during sensory play. This sparks curiosity about where food comes from and the differences in food's various forms. These thought-provoking opportunities help babies experience awe and wonder as they investigate the world around them.
- Children have an abundance of opportunities to develop their physical skills. Staff support babies to crawl, pull themselves up and practise early climbing skills. Older children delight in climbing, negotiating space and sliding. Children have opportunities to develop their small-muscle skills. Toddlers explore dough, rolling and moulding it into shapes. These activities support children's hand-eye coordination and help develop early writing skills.
- Staff skilfully support children to build excellent focus and concentration. Children are consistently enthralled in their play and develop a thirst for learning new things. For example, staff are teaching children about sustainability. Children talk about protecting the environment, conserving resources and reducing waste. Developing this sustained focus and attention on the world around them helps prepare children very well for their future.
- Children enjoy a nutritious diet during relaxed and sociable mealtimes. Staff engage children in meaningful conversations about healthy eating with the cook and staff. Children confidently identify foods that are not good for them as well as the different foods they like that are good for them, including vegetables they have grown. They have a clear understanding of how to live a healthy life.
- Children's emotional development is embedded in staff's practice. Throughout the day, children are encouraged to discuss not only their feelings, but also the impact their actions may have on the feelings of others. This supports children's exemplary behaviour and deepens their understanding of empathy. Over time, this consistent approach helps children to manage their own feelings and recognise emotions in others.
- Families and their uniqueness are at the heart of this nursery. Staff give detailed support and ongoing advice to parents. Leaders recognise and value the fundamental role they play in families' lives and the impact this has on children. Parents say that their children make 'phenomenal progress', particularly in their language development. They highly value the support they receive. They comment that, 'Staff go above and beyond, always there when you need them.'

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

There is an open and positive culture around safeguarding that puts children's interests first.

Setting details

Unique reference number	EY375157
Local authority	Halton
Inspection number	10407743
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 3
Total number of places	93
Number of children on roll	90
Name of registered person	Dunkys Day Nurseries Ltd
Registered person unique reference number	RP903128
Telephone number	01928 563 199
Date of previous inspection	16 January 2020

Information about this early years setting

Dunky's Day Nursery (Runcorn) re-registered in 2008 and is situated in the Weston Point area of Runcorn. The nursery employs 24 members of staff. Of these, 16 staff hold appropriate qualifications at level 3 or above. The nursery opens from Monday to Friday for 52 weeks of the year. Sessions are from 8am until 6pm. The nursery provides funded early education for two-, three- and four-year-old children.

Information about this inspection

Inspector

Sandra Hamilton

Inspection activities

- The inspector viewed the nursery and discussed the safety and suitability of the premises.
- Leaders joined the inspector on a learning walk and spoke to the inspector about how staff support and care for children.
- Children spoke to the inspector about what they enjoy doing while at the setting.
- The inspector talked to staff at appropriate times during the inspection and took account of their views.
- The inspector observed interactions between staff and children during activities.
- The inspector spoke to parents during the inspection and took account of their views.
- The inspector held a meeting with the manager. She reviewed a variety of documents, including evidence of the suitability of staff working in the setting.

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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