

Inspection of 'Little Thinkers' at New Horizons Portsmouth

Wymering Road, North End, Portsmouth, Hampshire PO2 7HX

Inspection date:

31 July 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

Children are happy and content at this nursery. They receive warm welcomes from staff as they arrive and are well supported to settle into their rooms. Staff pass on any messages from parents to each other to support children's day effectively. Staff provide a range of activities and experiences that include children's interests. As such, children demonstrate enjoyment as they play and explore.

Leaders have made improvements since their last inspection, which supports children's safety. However, the key-person arrangements in place are not effective. For example, the deployment of staff often means children are not with their key person. In addition, some key people are not present when their key children are attending. Staff responsible for children in their key person's absence do not receive sufficient information to enable them to meet children's individual learning needs. Consequently, some children, including the youngest and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), do not consistently have their learning and development needs met.

Leaders understand the importance of promoting children's good health, providing nutritionally balanced meals and plenty of physical exercise. All staff work hard to build positive relationships with individual families, offering support and guidance surrounding life events and developmental milestones. Children demonstrate good bonds with staff, who are kind and respectful in their interactions with children.

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

- Leaders have worked hard to address weaknesses identified during their last inspection. They have an increased oversight of risk assessment to ensure children's safety and have taken steps to ensure children are always well supervised. However, there are still weaknesses that need to be addressed. Despite this, the leadership team demonstrate a strong determination to continue to improve and ensure the outcomes they offer all children are of high quality.
- The curriculum in place is understood by staff. They know the overall priorities for children to achieve in each room and considerately include children's interests when planning activities. However, weaknesses in the key-person arrangements means staff working with children do not always know their personalised next steps in learning. As a result, children are not individually supported to continually build on skills they already know and can do. This impacts on children's attitudes to learning as although they show enjoyment in activities, their focus is often fleeting as they are not always appropriately challenged to enhance their individual learning. Ultimately, this impacts on the progress children, including those with SEND, can make.

- Children have good opportunities to develop their communication and language skills. Babies have opportunities to hear basic, clearly spoken, repetitive language as they play. Older children enjoy looking at books independently and listen to their favourite stories being read enthusiastically by staff. These opportunities support children's growing vocabulary.
- Children are provided with healthy meals. They sit together at mealtimes and older children confidently help self-serve their food. The older children independently access their own drinks throughout the day from accessible water stations. However, although staff working with babies ensure they have drinks available to them at mealtimes, they do not have access to fresh drinking water at other times of the day. This is a breach of the requirements. Babies cannot communicate their need for a drink and, as a result, babies are not able to keep themselves hydrated throughout the day, which impacts on their well-being.
- The arrangements for children with SEND are generally effective. Staff work with parents and other professionals to give support as required. Referrals are made in accordance with children's needs in a timely manner. Individual plans with targets and strategies are in place to help support individual children. However, due to weaknesses in the key-person approach, children's learning experiences are impacted. Despite this, all staff supporting children with SEND develop good relationships with them and meet their well-being needs effectively.
- Staff are positive role models to children. They have strategies in place to teach children about appropriate rules and boundaries. However, at times, staff do not always provide consistent messages to children. For example, some staff will ask them to stop running, while others allow this. This is confusing for children and does not consistently support them to learn right from wrong.
- Children have lots of opportunities to build on their physical skills. Babies are well supported to develop their core muscles. For instance, the youngest babies are supported to take their early steps and cruise furniture in the environment. Older children enjoy using various trikes and bikes as they eagerly access the outdoors. This helps children to develop skills needed so they can learn to move their bodies in a variety of ways.

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
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improve the key-person arrangements to ensure continuity of care, in particular to ensure all staff are aware of the personal learning and development needs for all children, including those with SEND	29/08/2025
ensure fresh drinking water is available and accessible to all children, at all times.	07/08/2025

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

- support staff to provide consistent messages to children as they learn right from wrong and develop their growing understanding of rules and boundaries.

Setting details

Unique reference number	EY295936
Local authority	Portsmouth
Inspection number	10397374
Type of provision	Childcare on non-domestic premises
Registers	Early Years Register
Day care type	Full day care
Age range of children at time of inspection	1 to 4
Total number of places	84
Number of children on roll	170
Name of registered person	Little Thinkers Pre-School & Nursery
Registered person unique reference number	RP525109
Telephone number	03333602261
Date of previous inspection	11 March 2025

Information about this early years setting

'Little Thinkers' at New Horizons Portsmouth, registered in 2004. The nursery is located on the same site as New Horizons Primary School, Portsmouth. The nursery is open from 7.30am to 6pm, Monday to Friday, all year round. It employs 24 members of staff. Of these, 18 hold appropriate early years qualifications between level 2 and level 6. The nursery receives funding to provide free early education for children aged nine months to four years.

Information about this inspection

Inspectors

Natalie Moir
Kelley Ellis

Inspection activities

- The manager, deputy manager and inspectors completed a learning walk together of all areas of the nursery and discussed the early years curriculum.
- The inspectors talked to staff at appropriate times during the inspection and took account of their views.
- The special educational needs coordinator spoke to the inspector about how they support children with SEND.
- The manager carried out a joint observation of a planned activity with one of the inspectors.
- The inspectors observed the quality of education being provided, indoors and outdoors, and assessed the impact that this was having on children's learning.
- The manager provided the inspectors with a sample of key documentation on request.
- Children communicated with the inspectors during the inspection.
- Parents shared their views of the nursery with one of the inspectors.

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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