

Inspection of Little Meadows Nursery

29b Harmire Enterprise Park, Barnard Castle DL12 8XT

Inspection date: 22 July 2025

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

What is it like to attend this early years setting?

The provision is good

Children are happy and settled in this welcoming nursery. As children arrive at the nursery, they are greeted warmly by kind and caring staff. Staff build positive relationships with children, helping them to separate from their parents with ease and begin their day. Children form attachments to their key person quickly, which helps them to feel safe and secure.

Staff help children to learn about good behaviours, such as sharing and turn-taking. For example, staff encourage toddlers to take turns with equipment. Staff provide various opportunities for children to develop their physical skills. The spacious outdoor area gives children opportunities to run, climb and explore. Staff support children to develop their small-muscle skills as they paint with a variety of brushes, build with blocks and throw hoops. Older children squeeze spray bottles and thread with laces. This helps to develop the skills needed for early writing. Staff nurture children's curiosity. For instance, children explore fruit and flowers in the mud kitchen. Staff extend children's learning by introducing words, such as 'petal' and 'stalk'.

Children's independence is encouraged. For instance, babies learn to feed themselves. Older children serve their own lunch and manage their own personal needs. Staff provide lots of positive feedback and praise to children for their efforts and achievements. This helps to build children's self-esteem and confidence.

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

- Staff provide many experiences to encourage children to expand their mathematical vocabulary. For example, younger children count hoops in the garden. Older children estimate as they pour water into various containers. This helps to develop children's early mathematical skills effectively.
- Leaders ensure that staff are well supported. They proactively evaluate the quality of provision on offer in a variety of ways, such as observing staff's teaching and carrying out audits on different aspects. From this, leaders identify areas for further development. For example, new procedures for assessing what children know and can do have recently been developed. This is starting to help staff to identify any gaps in children's learning and implement plans to address them more effectively. However, these procedures are not yet embedded and, therefore, are yet to impact fully on improving children's achievements.
- Parent partnerships are a key strength. Parents are very happy with the care and support their children receive. Staff regularly share ideas with parents on how they can support children's learning at home. They feel involved in their children's learning and comment on the daily feedback they receive about their child. Parents comment that staff are attentive and communication is excellent.

- Staff interact well with children and play alongside them to support their learning and development. For example, toddlers relish playing with sensory activities, exploring different textures. Staff actively engage them and introduce new vocabulary, such as 'sticky' and 'melting'. Older children relish listening to stories and babies enjoy pointing to pictures and repeating words. However, in some of the rooms, there is background music consistently playing, which interrupts children's concentration and distracts them from learning.
- Staff support children to learn about healthy lifestyles. They ensure children are provided with plenty of time outdoors in the fresh air. Children are provided with nutritious snacks and meals. Staff explain the importance of eating healthily. This helps children to develop an understanding of keeping healthy.
- Leaders and staff expect the best of children. They skilfully model how to behave towards others. They listen, follow instructions and are encouraged to take turns when appropriate. Occasionally, when children have a disagreement, staff quickly intervene and distract children to provide a gentle reminder of what is expected. This helps children understand behavioural expectations.
- Staff work closely with other professionals. They share relevant information and ensure good communication. For instance, transitions to school are well supported, with staff sharing relevant information with teachers. Staff work closely with their local authority. They access a wide range of support, training and development. This helps to keep their knowledge and skills up to date.
- Leaders place a strong emphasis on staff's well-being. They meet regularly with staff and provide supervisions sessions to make sure that all staff are well supported. Staff feel valued as they talk about the support they receive at the nursery. They thoroughly enjoy their roles and feel their views and opinions are listened to and considered by the leadership team.

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

- support staff to fully embed the recently developed assessment procedures to further raise children's achievements
- minimise unnecessary background noise to support children's concentration and prevent them from becoming distracted in their learning.

Setting details

Unique reference number	2721980
Local authority	Durham
Inspection number	10370809
Type of provision	Childcare on non-domestic premises
Registers	Early Years Register, Compulsory Childcare Register
Day care type	Full day care
Age range of children at time of inspection	0 to 4
Total number of places	48
Number of children on roll	34
Name of registered person	Rascals Playtime Childcare Limited
Registered person unique reference number	RP909968
Telephone number	01833 200150
Date of previous inspection	30 September 2024

Information about this early years setting

Little Meadows Nursery registered in 2023 and is situated in Barnard Castle. The nursery employs eight members of childcare staff. Of these, six hold an appropriate qualification at level 3 or above. The nursery opens from Monday to Friday, all year round, other than bank holidays. Sessions are from 7am to 6pm. The nursery offers funded early education places.

Information about this inspection

Inspector

Julie Campbell

Inspection activities

- The area manager and the inspector completed a learning walk together of all areas of the nursery and discussed how staff implement the curriculum.
- The inspector observed the quality of education during activities, indoors and outdoors, and assessed the impact this was having on children's learning.
- Children spoke to the inspector throughout the inspection.
- Parents shared their views of the nursery with the inspector.
- The inspector looked at relevant documentation.
- The inspector carried out a joint observation with the area manager.

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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