Little Ducks Pre-school Limited

Unique reference number (URN): 2802564

Address: Scout Association, Scout Hall, Wash Road, Hutton, Brentwood, CM13 1DJ

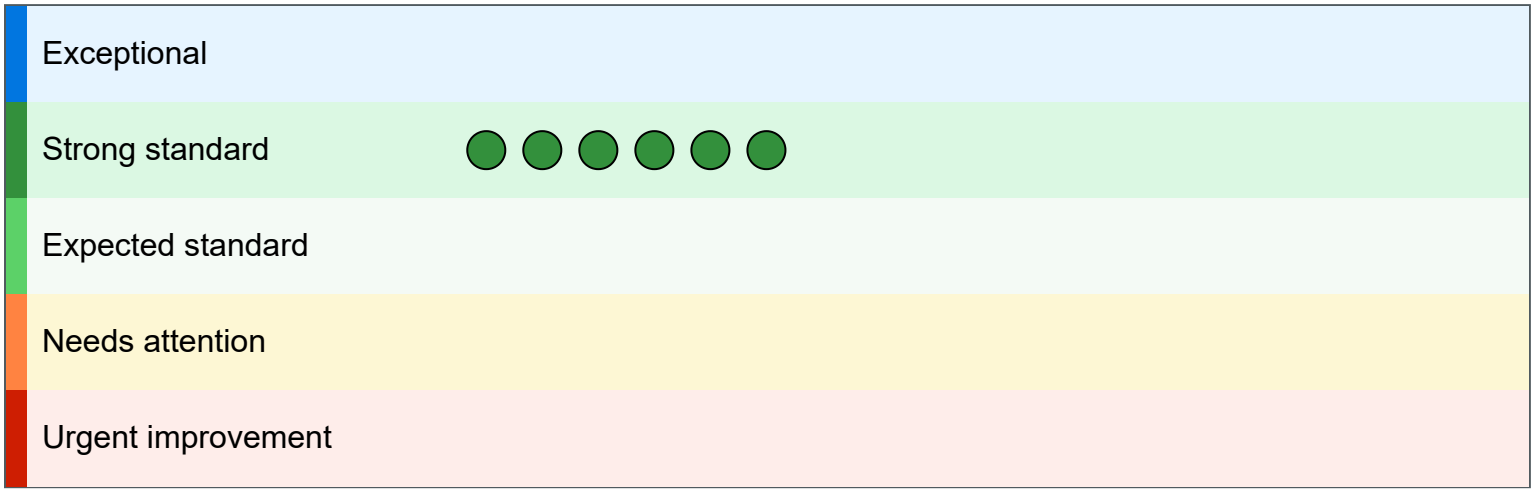
Type: Childcare on non-domestic premises

Registered with Ofsted: 02/09/2024

Registers: EYR

Registered person: Little Ducks Pre-school Ltd

Inspection report: 6 October 2026



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 secure and sustained progress. They show skills across all seven areas of learning. Children confidently count cups at snack time, pour water and butter their toast. They choose which shape to cut their toast, such as rectangles or squares. Children with allergens explain what food they cannot have, which strengthens personal safety.

Children are confident communicators. They talk about feelings at the craft table and use rich language during their play. Children enjoy reciting familiar lines from stories and predict what will happen next. They identify telescopes, cranes and submarines in books. Children use rhyming words such as 'jeep' and 'sheep', showing their growing awareness of literacy.

Children with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) make sustained progress from their start points. They engage deeply in activities tailored to their individual needs and interests. Children show developing social interactions and enjoy special friendships with peers. Older children show growing mastery in mathematical skills such as sorting, matching and sequencing.

Children are confident, independent and resilient. They make choices and use their knowledge in play. They are very well prepared for the next stage in their learning.

Behaviour, attitudes and establishing routines

Strong standard

Children behave very well and respond positively to clear expectations that leaders have set out. Staff consistently use explicit praise that helps children understand what is expected. They show kindness and collaborate with peers during a range of tasks. Children follow routines confidently and transition smoothly across the day. They follow visual routines and remove pictures as they complete tasks. This helps them to develop an understanding of the daily routines.

Children show excellent focus and attention. They sit on individual mats at circle time and respond to the bell that signals group time. Children show positive attitudes to learning. They choose books at story time and vote for their favourite. They spot telescopes and pretend to use them, fully immersing themselves in the experience. Younger children enjoy looking at books with adults to help them settle into the larger group activity.

Children learn about emotions and begin to manage their behaviour. Staff explain feelings clearly and use the language in real-life experiences to help children develop a secure awareness of a range of emotions. This includes children with special educational needs and/or disabilities who find it difficult to manage emotions independently.

Behaviour is consistently positive. Children are kind, happy and very settled. They show joy, confidence and sustained engagement throughout the day. Children attend regularly, and leaders discuss absences with parents to ensure they are minimal and do not impact children's learning and development.

Children's welfare and wellbeing

Strong standard

Children's welfare is prioritised through robust policies and procedures that are fully understood and practised by staff. This includes making sure that mealtimes are safe. Staff help children to recognise the foods that may harm them, which supports them in managing their own needs with growing confidence.

Staff offer warm cuddles and responsive care. Children show secure attachments and seek familiar adults for reassurance. They return to play quickly, which shows emotional security. Children with special educational needs and/or disabilities show that they feel safe and secure. This is because staff know them incredibly well and match social and emotional support precisely to individual children. As a result, children thrive.

Healthy lifestyles are embedded. Children learn about oral health through dentist visits and parent workshops extend this learning into the home environment. Children handle and discuss a range of real vegetables with staff. This helps them to develop an awareness of nutrition through their play. Cooking and gardening further support healthy lifestyles and help children develop a positive interest in food.

Children learn about staying safe online through books that teach them how to use the internet safely. Hygiene routines promote independence. Children wash hands, sanitise and follow visual prompts. This helps them develop robust personal hygiene skills for the future.

Leaders understand family needs deeply. They signpost families to food banks, early help and health visitor support. Leaders adapt provision rather than expecting universal routines to work for all families. Children show confidence, joy and positive engagement. Their welfare is a priority, and leaders continually refine what they offer.

Curriculum and teaching

Strong standard

The curriculum is sharply focused on what matters most for children. Leaders prioritise prime areas because this is a gap in the current cohort. Staff begin teaching from what children already know and can do. They adapt activities for differing ages and stages. Teaching is sequenced so children build on prior learning.

Mathematics is taught consistently well. For instance, at the mathematics tray, children weigh, scoop, pour and match. They follow patterns and use scales. Staff use language such as "How much does it weigh?" and "How many?" Children show they know colours and quantities. Staff teach initially and then allow exploration. This builds confidence, curiosity, and early problem-solving.

Teaching is precise and responsive. It adapts to support children who have barriers to learning and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities. Staff narrate alongside children and support communication and new vocabulary. For example, at the craft table, children make puppets and discuss feelings. Staff use mirrors, books and questioning to develop children's understanding of emotions and vocabulary. At the dough table, staff introduce shapes, colours and mathematical language, extending children's learning through purposeful interactions.

Outdoor teaching is rich and purposeful. Children complete obstacle courses with staff, throw balls into hoops and solve problems such as how to roll conkers down chutes when they get stuck. Staff help them to weigh real vegetables in the outdoor play kitchen. Staff teach children about oral health through activities as well as organised visits to the setting by a dentist. Teaching is consistently high quality and has a positive impact on children's learning.

Inclusion

Strong standard

Inclusion is precise and referrals are swift. Staff know children deeply and adapt routines with precision. Early identification begins at baseline when children join. Staff understand what children can do and what support they need. Individual support plans are in place and reviewed regularly. Some children have communication books to strengthen home links and keep parents fully informed about their children.

Children with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) receive personalised support to removes barriers. Children who are pre-verbal are fully supported to join activities because staff include them by adapting routines and teaching to meet their learning needs. Children with SEND lead their own learning with the utmost confidence, such as filling buckets and watering cans outside. Staff recognise children's current limitations and build on these through their known interests and unique learning styles. As a result, children with SEND thrive.

Staff understand children's cues and support them to manage their emotions with increasing skill. They engage deeply in strategically planned intervention activities and show familiarity with their routines.

Leaders are fiercely ambitious for children. They secure professional involvement from external agencies such as speech and language, signpost families to early help and support attendance through flexible sessions. They work with schools, health visitors and educational psychologists. Leaders ensure education health care plans are applied for in good time for children who need them in readiness for starting school.

Inclusion is embedded in every decision. Staff show professional love, and children seek them out for comfort. Adaptations are meaningful and precise, not universal. Children catching up with their peers is prioritised through the early identification and swift referrals. Partnership working is high quality and positively impacts children's progress.

Leadership and governance

Strong standard

Leadership is reflective, ambitious and sharply focused on children's needs. Leaders understand the setting's context very well and use it to shape the curriculum and policies. They prioritise prime areas because this is a gap in the current cohort. They ensure no child is left behind.

Training is high quality and linked to identified needs. Staff attend maths training, learn how to use language screening programmes and benefit from courses in special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Leaders apply for available funding and regularly measure its impact on children's progress. They draw in all available resources such as local

authorities, health visitors and educational psychologists. Leaders secure education and health care plans swiftly and ensure school readiness is fully supported.

Leaders maintain oversight through peer observations, daily walk-arounds and progress reviews. They use observations to identify areas for development. Staff report high levels of wellbeing and feel supported. Leaders adapt workload and offer reassurance when staff experience challenges outside of the setting. Many staff have worked at the setting for several years and feel truly valued. This positively benefits their contributions to the setting and makes a difference for children who attend.

Leaders always ask what more they can do for children. Partnership working is pivotal to successful outcomes for children. Leaders engage parents in all aspects of the setting, including open events that develop parents' awareness of important topics such as early literacy and oral hygiene. Leaders challenge practice when needed and celebrate progress. They are fiercely ambitious for children with SEND and ensure support is precise and timely. Leadership is responsive, reflective and deeply child-centered.

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

Children arrive happily and settle into warm, predictable routines. Staff greet them with genuine affection, helping them feel secure from the moment they enter. Children sanitise their hands, place their names on the board and move confidently into play. This smooth start builds independence and a secure sense of belonging.

Children engage deeply in sensory experiences. They explore dough using sticks and tools, showing intense concentration as they press, roll and cut. At the craft table, children make puppets from tubes and talk about feelings as they add facial features. They choose sequins, tape and pens and proudly place their creations on the table. Staff offer three examples to inspire ideas, but children lead their own designs. This builds creativity, confidence and emotional literacy.

Circle time is purposeful and joyful. Children say and sign good morning. They count their friends and match numerals to the number of children. Staff use language such as 'small number' and 'big number'.

Children follow visual routines and remove pictures as tasks are completed. They sing the days of the week and talk about what comes next. Staff explain that the craft table will focus on emotions today. Staff use respectful questions such as "Can I wipe your nose?" to support children in understanding the importance of consent. Praise is explicit and helps

children understand expectations. This is supported by consistent role-modelling by calm and caring staff.

Outdoors, children throw balls into hoops, showing great skill and determination. They complete obstacle courses showing their wide range of physical skills. Children make marks on gates with water and rollers and use their imagination as they play with the fairy house.

Children show confidence, curiosity and joy. They benefit from warm relationships, consistent routines and rich learning experiences that help prepare them for the next stage in their learning. Children with special educational needs and/or disabilities benefit from precise, responsive care and education delivered consistently. Staff consistently seek ways to remove barriers for children, and as a result, they flourish and thrive in this setting.

Next steps

- Leaders should further deepen the precision of curriculum evaluation so teaching adaptations are consistently evidence led, enabling every child, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities to experience transformational progress across all areas of learning.

About this inspection

The inspector spoke with leaders, practitioners, special educational needs coordinator and parents 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:
Clare Ford

About this setting

Unique reference number (URN): 2802564

Address:
Scout Association
Scout Hall, Wash Road, Hutton

Brentwood
CM13 1DJ

Type: Childcare on non-domestic premises

Registration date: 02/09/2024

Registered person: Little Ducks Pre-school Ltd

Register(s): EYR

Operating hours: Monday,Tuesday,Wednesday,Thursday,Friday : 09:00 - 15:00

Local authority: Essex

Facts and figures used on inspection

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

This data is from 6 October 2026

Children numbers

Age range of children at the time of inspection

2 to 4

Total number of places

30

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.

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) inspects services providing education and skills for children and learners of all ages, and inspects and regulates services that care for children and young people.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may reuse this information (not including logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence. To view this licence, visit www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence, write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk.

This publication is available at https://reports.ofsted.gov.uk.

Interested in our work? You can subscribe to our monthly newsletter for more information and updates: http://eepurl.com/iTrDn.

Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.gov.uk/ofsted
© Crown copyright 2026

© Crown copyright