

Willowbrook Nursery

Unique reference number (URN): 2782593

Address: 115 Dixons Hill Road, Welham Green, North Mymms, Hatfield, AL9 7EE

Type: Childcare on non-domestic premises

Registered with Ofsted: 16/02/2024

Registers: EYR, CCR, VCR

Registered person: Little Wonderland Ltd

Inspection report: 13 May 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

Babies are well supported to make progress. Staff provide appropriate experiences, including daily outdoor access through local visits, that promote communication, physical development, and personal, social and emotional development, enabling babies to build secure foundations for future learning.

Children in the pre-school room are developing key skills in readiness for their transition to school. They access opportunities to embed early literacy and mathematical understanding, which supports their future learning.

Staff support children appropriately to practise these skills. However, there are occasions where opportunities to extend children's learning across both the toddler and pre-school rooms could be strengthened further to ensure consistently high levels of achievement and help children achieve their full potential.

Behaviour, attitudes and establishing routines

Expected standard

Children generally behave well across the setting and demonstrate kindness and consideration towards their peers and the adults.

In the pre-school room, children take pride in the responsibility of the role of 'happy helper'. They are given opportunities to nominate their peers for this role and can explain their reasons, promoting a sense of fairness and respect. Children respond positively to this responsibility. Children in the pre-school room demonstrate positive levels of engagement. They listen attentively during circle time, confidently contribute and ask questions to extend their understanding.

In the toddler room, staff support children effectively to manage minor conflicts. They use positive reinforcement and clear explanations to help children understand expectations and resolve disputes. When disagreements occur, staff intervene promptly, encouraging children to apologise and guiding them towards appropriate solutions, such as finding alternative resources. This helps children to begin to develop an understanding of sharing and turn-taking.

When children with special educational needs and/or disabilities require adjustments to established routines. Staff manage this appropriately, ensuring that these children are able to access the daily routine while minimising disruption to others.

Leaders recognise the importance of regular attendance and have appropriate procedures in place to monitor patterns and follow up any concerns, helping to support children's continuity of learning.

Children's welfare and wellbeing

Expected standard 

Children's wellbeing and welfare are managed effectively within the setting. Children are settled, engaged in their play and demonstrate positive relationships with their peers. Older children collaborate well, for example when working together to build vehicles using construction resources, showing cooperation and shared thinking.

Leaders and staff develop close, supportive relationships with children and their families. This helps to promote continuity of care, particularly for the youngest babies, who benefit from consistent and nurturing interactions. Staff attend to babies' hygiene needs carefully, ensuring their comfort and wellbeing at all times. Older children are provided with some opportunities to develop independence in their self-care and hygiene routines, although these could be extended further.

Mealtimes are social and inclusive, with children from the toddler and pre-school rooms coming together for snack and lunch. This supports children's sense of community and belonging. While there are opportunities for children to develop independence and learn about healthy lifestyles, these are not always fully maximised. At times, interactions between staff and children during mealtimes are limited, reducing opportunities to extend learning and promote children's understanding of healthy choices.

Curriculum and teaching

Expected standard 

Leaders have developed a clear, age-appropriate curriculum for each room, with an overarching weekly theme that runs throughout the setting to provide continuity in children's learning. In the baby room, staff know the children well and use their knowledge to plan effectively for individual next steps. This supports babies to make secure progress, particularly in their communication and language, personal and emotional development and physical skills. Babies form strong attachments and are supported sensitively when they are both physically and emotionally ready to transition into the toddler room.

In the toddler room, the curriculum builds appropriately on children's prior learning and supports the next stage of development. There are opportunities for children to access activities that promote learning, including age-appropriate maths and literacy as well as continued development of their communication and personal and social skills. Staff provide a suitable range of resources to support children's growing independence and curiosity.

In the pre-school room, the curriculum is sequenced to build on what children already know and can do, with an increasing focus on preparing them for school. Activities are designed to support and embed early literacy and mathematical skills.

Although leaders have clear expectations for children's learning, staff do not always identify and make the most of key teaching opportunities. As a result, children are not consistently supported to make the progress they are capable of.

Inclusion

Expected standard 

Leaders have a secure understanding of how to promote inclusion for all children, regardless of their starting points or any special educational needs and/or disabilities. They have effective systems in place to identify and assess emerging needs at an early stage. Leaders ensure that they make effective use of regular observation and assessment to ensure that children who require additional help make progress from their individual starting points.

Leaders show a clear commitment to working in partnership with external agencies. They are knowledgeable about the processes involved in securing additional support, including the process for education, health and care plans, and provide appropriate guidance to families as they navigate these. Leaders speak confidently about the support they have provided to children and families, particularly in relation to emotional wellbeing and pastoral care.

Staff are well supported by leaders to implement individual education plans effectively. They work collaboratively with local authority professionals and other specialists to ensure that strategies are applied. As a result, children with additional needs are supported appropriately and are generally able to access the curriculum alongside their peers.

Leadership and governance

Expected standard 

Leaders have a secure understanding of their roles and responsibilities, particularly in relation to safeguarding and inclusion. They can confidently articulate how procedures are implemented in practice and are confident in providing examples of how they would look in practise. Leaders ensure that a culture of safeguarding is embedded effectively in the day-to-day running of the setting.

Leaders are passionate about supporting children to achieve their full potential and ensure that they are provided with opportunities to learn, develop and make progress. Leaders are reflective about the curriculum and considers ways to make links across each room to consolidate learning.

Staff speak positively about the leadership, describing the leader as supportive and appreciative. They report feeling valued in their roles, which contributes to high levels of staff retention. Staff understand the ethos of the setting and share the leaders' high expectations. In most cases, these expectations are met, although there is scope to ensure greater consistency across all areas of practice.

Parents speak highly of the setting and its leadership. Strong partnerships are established, supporting effective communication and continuity of care. Leaders have implemented a clear transition process between rooms, ensuring that children are supported as they move through the setting. They also work in partnership with local schools to support older children in their transition to the next stage of their education.

Compulsory Childcare Register requirements

This setting has met the requirements of the compulsory part of the Childcare Register.

How we check if a provider meets the requirements of the Compulsory Childcare Register

When we check if settings meet the Compulsory Childcare Register requirements, they can have the following outcomes:

- Met
 - Not met
-

Voluntary Childcare Register requirements

This setting has met the requirements of the voluntary part of Childcare Register.

How we check if a provider meets the requirements of the Voluntary Childcare Register

When we check if settings meet the Voluntary Childcare Register requirements, they can have the following outcomes:

- Met
 - Not met
-

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

Children are happy on arrival at the setting and greet leaders with enthusiasm. Once inside, older children place their shoes in named pockets and wear slippers, giving them a sense of belonging from the outset. They behave well and have good relationships with staff who greet them warmly as they arrive into their allocated rooms.

Babies form secure attachments with their key person and other familiar staff, who respond to their needs. The baby room provides a safe, cosy and suitably resourced environment where they are able to practise their emerging skills, such as walking and early

communication. Staff have a secure understanding of child development and support this through warm interactions using singing, talk and eye contact effectively. Staff are attentive to children's individual needs and generally support their next steps appropriately, enabling babies to make steady progress.

In the toddler room, children are developing their personal, social and emotional skills and are beginning to build relationships with their peers. Staff support them effectively in building confidence and extending their learning across all 7 areas of development. Activities and resources are generally age-appropriate, allowing children to progress at a pace that suits their individual needs.

Children in the pre-school room are developing the skills they need for the next stage of their educational journey. They are provided with opportunities to practise key skills that will support their transition to school, including early literacy and mathematical development. Staff create opportunities for children to embed these skills through a range of planned and purposeful activities.

Next steps

- Leaders should strengthen staff's understanding of the intended learning outcomes within the curriculum so that teaching consistently enables children to make the best possible progress and achieve highly.
 - Staff should make better use of everyday routines, including mealtimes and self-care opportunities, to promote children's independence. This includes providing consistent opportunities for children to practise and refine skills, such as handwashing and cutting and serving food.
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About this inspection

The inspector spoke with leaders and practitioners during the inspection.

We carried out this inspection under section 49 and 50 of the Childcare Act 2006 on the quality and standards of the 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:

Tracy Rowe

About this setting

Unique reference number (URN): 2782593

Address:

115 Dixons Hill Road
Welham Green, North Mymms
Hatfield
AL9 7EE

Type: Childcare on non-domestic premises

Registration date: 16/02/2024

Registered person: Little Wonderland Ltd

Register(s): EYR, CCR, VCR

Operating hours: Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday : 08:00 - 18:00

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 13 May 2026

Children numbers

Age range of children at the time of inspection

1 to 4

Total number of places

40

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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