

Dean Close Little Trees Christchurch

Unique reference number (URN): 2651879

Address: Airthrie School, 27-29 Christchurch Road, Cheltenham, GL50 2NY

Type: Childcare on non-domestic premises

Registered with Ofsted: 09/09/2021

Registers: EYR

Registered person: Dean Close Nurseries Limited

Inspection report: 23 June 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

Children typically make secure progress across the curriculum, particularly in their communication and language development. They generally develop early vocabulary and confidence in expressing their ideas, for example when responding to staff's prompts during music activities or talking about what they notice in their environment.

Children usually engage well with adults and peers, taking turns in conversations and building the social skills they need for future learning. Those who face barriers to learning, including children with emerging special educational needs and/or disabilities, generally benefit from adaptations that help them participate, such as the use of visual cues or quieter spaces that support their engagement.

Across the setting, children develop increasing independence, early reasoning skills and an awareness of mathematical ideas, for instance when comparing the size of objects, choosing resources to solve simple problems or organising their play materials with growing confidence.

Generally, most children are well prepared for the next stage in their learning. However, occasionally, staff do not extend their learning through spontaneous play. This means that some children do not always make the fullest possible progress.

Behaviour, attitudes and establishing routines

Expected standard

Leaders have established a positive environment where expectations for behaviour are generally well understood and consistently reinforced. Children form warm and trusting relationships with staff, who model respectful interactions and provide reassurance when needed. Staff typically use calm, clear language to guide children, helping them understand what is expected and supporting them to manage their emotions during play and routines. Children usually collaborate well, share resources and show kindness towards one another, demonstrating the social skills they need to learn alongside their peers.

Staff support children to understand daily routines, and children respond confidently to familiar cues such as tidy-up time, mealtimes and transitions between activities. These routines help children feel secure and contribute to their positive attitudes towards learning. Attendance is monitored effectively, with follow-up when patterns of absence emerge, and leaders promote the importance of regular attendance through ongoing communication with families.

Children generally demonstrate curiosity, engagement and a willingness to try new experiences. Staff usually consider children's age, stage of development and individual circumstances when helping them maintain expectations, adapting their approach where needed. However, during busier transitions, staff deployment is not always as effective as it could be, which can lead to brief periods of unsettled behaviour. Leaders recognise this and

are working to strengthen the consistency of staff deployment so that children experience smoother transitions throughout the day.

Children's welfare and wellbeing

Expected standard 

Care practices typically meet children's individual needs well. Staff build secure and responsive relationships with children, offering comfort, reassurance and positive interactions throughout the day. Children generally seek out familiar adults when they need support, showing that they feel safe and emotionally secure. Staff are attentive to children's cues and respond sensitively, helping them settle, regulate their emotions and engage confidently in play.

Babies benefit from consistent key-person attachments and sensitive support during physical care routines. These routines are carried out calmly and respectfully, helping babies feel relaxed and well cared for. Staff promote children's understanding of personal safety and wellbeing through gentle reminders about safe play, handwashing and looking after their bodies. Children are encouraged to make choices that support their independence, such as selecting their own resources or helping to tidy away.

Mealtimes are calm and sociable, with children encouraged to serve themselves, try new foods and make healthy choices. Dietary needs are monitored carefully using visual systems that help staff ensure consistency. Sleeping, feeding and weaning routines are adapted to meet individual needs, and staff communicate with families to maintain continuity between home and the setting.

Children are supported to recognise and express their emotions, and they generally show a secure sense of emotional wellbeing as they explore, play and interact with others. Staff typically consider children's age, stage of development and individual circumstances when offering guidance. However, occasional inconsistencies in staff deployment during transitions can affect how smoothly children move between activities.

Curriculum and teaching

Expected standard 

Leaders have a clear understanding of the curriculum and how it supports children's development across all areas of learning. The curriculum is generally well designed and implemented, with a strong focus on communication, physical development and personal, social and emotional skills.

Staff typically model language effectively, introducing new vocabulary during songs, stories and group activities. For example, children are encouraged to use phrases such as 'clap like me' during music sessions. Mathematical concepts are woven into play, such as when children recognise and order numbers on wooden cars, and staff generally support early problem-solving through puzzles and construction activities.

Staff usually adapt teaching appropriately for children who need additional support, including those with emerging special educational needs and/or disabilities. Assessment is used to check what children know and can do, and staff plan activities that build on children's interests and developmental stages.

Children experience an engaging curriculum that supports their progress and enjoyment. However, opportunities to extend children's spontaneous learning are not always maximised, which limits the depth of learning for some children.

Inclusion

Expected standard 

Leaders generally identify children's individual needs promptly and use assessment information to shape appropriate support. Activities are usually adapted so that all children can access learning in ways that suit them, and smaller groups or tailored resources are used to reduce barriers for those who benefit from quieter spaces or additional adult support. Leaders work with families and external professionals to develop support plans. They monitor children's progress and review support to check its impact, ensuring that most children make progress from their starting points.

Children who speak English as an additional language are supported through key words, visual cues and close partnership with families, helping them feel understood and included. Children learn about diversity through daily interactions in a setting where different cultures, languages and family backgrounds are respected and celebrated. Equal opportunities are promoted through play and shared experiences, helping children understand and appreciate the differences that make each person unique.

Staff receive guidance from special educational needs specialists and access training that strengthens their understanding of the graduated approach and how to implement inclusive strategies in daily practice. Families have reported improvements in communication and support as leadership arrangements have stabilised, although communication is not always consistent when concerns arise. Inclusive practices typically help children feel secure, valued and able to participate fully in the life of the setting.

Leadership and governance

Expected standard 

Leaders reflect on the effectiveness of staffing and management arrangements and continue to review how these contribute to consistent day-to-day practice. They typically have a clear understanding of the setting's strengths and areas for development and take action to address these, including reviewing safeguarding arrangements and reducing reliance on temporary staff to improve continuity for children. Leaders also acknowledge that staff deployment during busy periods, and the consistency with which staff extend children's spontaneous learning, require further refinement. Leaders demonstrate reflective practice and are committed to improving outcomes for children.

Leaders make decisions with children's best interests in mind, particularly those who may need additional support. Staff wellbeing is considered through regular supervision, opportunities for professional development and supportive oversight. Training, peer observations and reflective discussions generally help staff develop their practice. Leaders respond appropriately to concerns raised through internal monitoring processes, reviewing records, staff practice and communication systems to check that procedures are followed.

Overall, leaders and staff maintain purposeful partnership working with families and external professionals. While most families report positive experiences, communication is not always

consistent when concerns arise, which can affect partnership working. Leaders recognise this and are taking steps to strengthen how information is shared.

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

Children typically arrive happily and settle quickly in this nursery because they are greeted by familiar adults who know them well and respond sensitively to their individual needs. This helps children feel secure and ready to engage with the day. Many move confidently into their rooms, showing trust in the staff and familiarity with the routines that support them.

Throughout the day, children generally show enjoyment in their play and learning. They explore confidently, follow their interests with curiosity and demonstrate growing independence as they make choices about where to play and who to play with. Children contribute ideas during shared activities and take pride in being listened to, which helps them feel valued and included. Staff respond positively to children's suggestions, reinforcing their confidence and encouraging them to take an active role in their learning.

Children form positive relationships with adults and peers, collaborating, sharing resources and developing friendships that strengthen their sense of belonging. They show comfort in approaching staff for reassurance or support, and they interact kindly with one another, demonstrating early social skills. Staff usually adapt activities thoughtfully so that all children can take part in ways that suit them, ensuring that children with different needs or preferences feel included and able to participate successfully.

Mealtimes are calm and sociable, with children developing independence as they serve themselves, make healthy choices and manage simple routines such as clearing their plates. These moments contribute to children's confidence and help them feel part of a community. Across the nursery, children demonstrate curiosity, confidence and growing resilience, benefiting from consistent routines and responsive adults who help them feel settled and ready to learn. As a result, they thrive, achieve well from their starting points and are well prepared for the next stage in their learning.

Next steps

- Leaders should strengthen staff use of teachable moments to extend children's learning.
- Leaders should strengthen systems for gathering and responding to parent feedback.

- Leaders should review staff deployment to ensure transitions and routines are consistently well supported.
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About this inspection

The inspector spoke with leaders, staff, the special educational needs coordinator, parents and children 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:

Arianna Saccente

About this setting

Unique reference number (URN): 2651879

Address:

Airthrie School
27-29 Christchurch Road
Cheltenham
GL50 2NY

Type: Childcare on non-domestic premises

Registration date: 09/09/2021

Registered person: Dean Close Nurseries Limited

Register(s): EYR

Operating hours: Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday : 07:30 - 18:00

Local authority: Gloucestershire

Facts and figures used on inspection

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



This data is from 23 June 2026

Children numbers

Age range of children at the time of inspection

0 to 4

Total number of places

56

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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