

The Dell@Abel Smith

Unique reference number (URN): EY423158

Address: Abel Smith J M I School, Churchfields, HERTFORD, SG13 8AE

Type: Childcare on non-domestic premises

Registered with Ofsted: 28/01/2011

Registers: EYR, CCR, VCR

Registered person: The Committee of The Dell Out of School Club.

Inspection report: 14 January 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.

Strong standard ●

Inclusion

Strong standard ●

Leaders and staff provide consistently high levels of care and support for children with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) and those who may have barriers to their learning. Their highly inclusive practices, adaptations and in-depth knowledge of children means that all children, regardless of barriers, become immersed in all aspects of club life. Staff anticipate potential situations that may trigger behaviours exceedingly well and swiftly act, such as engaging children as they arrive with their favourite dinosaur.

Partnerships with professionals are highly effective at supporting children's individual needs. Leaders liaise closely with medical staff to ensure children's ongoing safety while at the club. Equally strong partnerships with the host school, mean that children with SEND are supported well across both settings, with the consistent sharing of observations and assessments to fully support children's progression. For example, these children have the same named key person at the club as they do in school. This provides them with consistency of care and high levels of emotional support.

Staff undertake highly appropriate training to ensure all children are able to participate fully in all aspects of club life. For example, key persons have completed comprehensive British Sign Language training. They identify the immense impact this has on the engagement and wellbeing of specific children, and are introducing this strategy to all children and staff.

Expected standard ●

Behaviour, attitudes and establishing routines

Expected standard ●

Close relationships between staff and children support all children to feel safe, happy and settle well in the club. When young children arrive, they are excited to chat to staff about their day at school as they relax into the vibrant club environment. Older children delight at the praise staff offer for their efforts during craft activities and regularly invite them to join in their games.

Children work as a team to achieve common goals. Staff encourage this collaborative relationship in age-appropriate ways. For example, young children enthusiastically create a

collage together based on their favourite story, 'Shark in the Park'. Older children construct intricate models together using various construction materials. This focus on planning around children's interests means that children become deeply absorbed in play on arrival. However, at points during the sessions, staff do not always identify children's changing interests and adapt the environment to fully promote their ongoing engagement.

Robust behaviour management processes mean that children generally behave well in the club. For example, staff encourage children to recall expected behaviours at key points, such as snack time and during busy activities. Staff adapt these processes well when supporting children with special educational needs and/or disabilities. They provide clear choices and mirror strategies that children respond well to at school. This level of consistency means that children are beginning to resolve conflict in play independently.

There are clear procedures to support children's attendance and to ensure that they are safely collected from their classrooms and ready to engage in the club's activities. Parents understand the importance of informing the staff if their child will not be attending when they are normally expected and to collect promptly.

Children's welfare and wellbeing

Expected standard 

Young children form close attachments with nurturing key persons, who have a secure understanding of their individual needs. Leaders carefully consider staff and children's attendance patterns when allocating support for the youngest children who attend. This ensures consistency in the care they receive, and the close bonds they form support children's emotional wellbeing.

Children are aware of the boundaries that staff set and how these promote their safety and wellbeing. They understand how to use play equipment safely and know which areas are out of bounds and why. All children follow safety and hygiene processes, such as washing their hands before snacks and remaining seated while eating. Furthermore, they understand that they must not share food as some ingredients may not be safe for their friends. Staff consider this when creating menus and always provide appropriate alternatives for children with allergies so that they feel included in the setting's sociable snack time. Ongoing evaluation and changes to mealtime routines and healthy eating, such as adjusting portion sizes, are beginning to have a positive effect on how well children engage in this routine.

Leadership and governance

Expected standard 

Staff complete all mandatory training around first aid and safeguarding within the required time scales. In addition, leaders encourage staff to access highly pertinent training programmes that support the specific needs of children who attend the club. For example, staff working with the youngest children who attend are completing early years qualifications, and key persons have recognised British Sign Language accreditation.

Morale is high in the club, with both staff and leaders commenting on the support they receive from the provider, who plays an active role in the club's organisation. Leaders conduct regular supervisions, where they monitor staff practice and wellbeing. However, leaders should embrace opportunities to provide additional coaching and support for staff

during sessions. This will provide staff with the knowledge and skills to promote their practice to an even higher level.

Parent partnerships are strong and assist with the smooth running of the club. Several parents are active members of the governing committee, and all parents comment on how staff and leaders consider their views when striving to provide safe and enjoyable care for children. Leaders work with parents, carers and children to evaluate the quality of provision and ensure it meets the ongoing needs of families. Parents and carers speak highly of leaders and staff, and the high-quality care and communication they provide. Relationships with the host school's leaders are professional and all parties comment on the collaborative and supportive relationship they have.

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

All children are happy and cheerful to arrive and settle swiftly into the routines of this vibrant club. Young children rush to hang up their coats and bags while chatting enthusiastically to staff about sports competitions they participated in over the weekend. Children enjoy exploring the wide range of age-appropriate resources that staff carefully plan around their interests. All activities and routines are organised in a manner that is inclusive for all children. Staff use sign language during song time so that all children can participate fully, for example, in a game of 'Simon Says'. This level of support is becoming embedded in routines as all children are now using signs and join in with their friends.

Staff are observant of children's emotions and work with school staff and parents daily to identify where children may need additional support or adaptations to activities. For example, staff create a large cosy area for young children to relax in. They understand that they may be tired after a particularly busy day at their forest school. Children develop strong friendships with their peers and enjoy a wealth of group activities. Young children work together, creating models out of clay. They admire one another's work and cooperate well, offering one another ideas and suggestions. Older children plan chess tournaments with their friends and organise sports matches outdoors and in the sports hall. All children demonstrate a sense of pride in their club and are eager to take on roles of responsibility. Young children delight at taking on the roles of 'snack' helpers, where they pass out plates, and ensure their friends are all sat at the table.

Next steps

- Leaders should continuously evaluate the organisation of the environment to ensure it continues to meet the changing interests and choices of children during play.
- Leaders should provide further coaching for staff during sessions to promote their practice, knowledge and skills to the highest level.

About this inspection

The inspector spoke with leaders, staff, 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:

Antonia Campbell

About this setting

Unique reference number (URN): EY423158

Address:

Abel Smith J M I School

Churchfields

HERTFORD

SG13 8AE

Type: Childcare on non-domestic premises

Registration date: 28/01/2011

Registered person: The Committee of The Dell Out of School Club.

Register(s): EYR, CCR, VCR

Operating hours: Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday : 07:30 - 08:45, Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday : 15:15 - 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 14 January 2026

Children numbers

Age range of children at the time of inspection

3 to 10

Total number of places

52

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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