

Inspection of Pennywell Early Years Centre

Portsmouth Road, Pennywell, Sunderland, Tyne and Wear SR4 9AX

Inspection dates:	17 and 18 June 2025
The quality of education	Outstanding
Behaviour and attitudes	Outstanding
Personal development	Outstanding
Leadership and management	Outstanding
Previous inspection grade	Outstanding

What is it like to attend this school?

Children love attending this school. They skip into the nursery. They are greeted with welcoming smiles from the staff. Children see and feel kindness all around them.

The school has high expectations for behaviour and achievement. Adults teach, model, support and reinforce behaviour expectations to enable children to play safely and respectfully. For example, adults praise using simple phrases, such as 'good listening'. This is consistently heard across the setting. Children stop immediately when the gong sounds to signal changeover time. This demonstrates how well children understand the school's routines and expectations.

Children have excellent attitudes to learning. They persist and cooperate well. They engage in teamwork, such as tidying up assigned areas. This begins to provide children with leadership opportunities.

The nursery has an outstanding curriculum. It ensures that children are well prepared for the next stage in their learning.

Children are highly independent. They collect the resources and equipment they need from the accessible storage to complete self-directed tasks.

The school has excellent relationships with parents and carers. The 'family talk' and 'stay and play' events are well attended. The different topics discussed help the school and parents to truly support the development of the whole child.

What does the school do well and what does it need to do better?

The school has high expectations for the children in this setting. Children leave the nursery ready to transition to primary schools with skills for life. The school deliberately selects experiences and visitors to reinforce children's learning. For example, the school cares for some ducks in its outdoor environment. This supports children to learn about life cycles, personal hygiene, empathy and responsibility.

Since the last inspection, the school has reviewed its curriculum. There is a highly ambitious and creative approach to the early years curriculum structure. The school has identified the knowledge, skills and vocabulary that pupils should learn, and how this knowledge should build in complexity over time. For example, staff carefully consider children's starting points and physical ability in relation to teaching them about how to develop their scissor skills.

Staff check what children know and remember during reflective discussions. This informs the children's next steps. Staff share these steps with parents with ideas to support further practice at home. The school identifies as many opportunities as possible to provide pupils with the chance to move their learning forward.

The school incorporates children's interests into their learning journeys. Children's journals demonstrate the exceptional progress each child makes over a short period of time. For example, they clearly show progress in learning about other cultures and the world around them.

The school supports children's communication and language development well. It focuses on improving children's language using various communication approaches such as signs, gestures and communication boards. Staff use this approach consistently and effectively and children strengthen their communication skills.

The school has a comprehensive early identification process for children with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Staff observe and monitor children before evaluating any barriers to learning. The school works proactively with external agencies. Children access the right support swiftly.

The school researches extensively its local context to ensure its values align with children's personal development needs. The values are the backbone of all the school does. For example, linked to the value 'we prioritise our well-being', the school teaches hand washing, self-care and dental hygiene. This helps children learn to be physically and mentally healthy.

The school provides children with a rich set of enrichment activities. For example, children visit the beach, pick litter in the community and collect food for charities. This enhances the curriculum, enabling pupils to be active citizens.

The staff have a strong understanding of child development. The school provides many professional development opportunities that supports them to work effectively.

The leadership team have made courageous decisions to improve the quality of the curriculum. They are experts in their field. There is overwhelming consistency in how staff model and support children. The governors know the school well and provide the right challenge and support.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

How can I feed back my views?

You can use [Ofsted Parent View](#) to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school, or to find out what other parents and carers think. We use information from Ofsted Parent View when deciding which schools to inspect, when to inspect them and as part of their inspection.

The Department for Education has further [guidance](#) on how to complain about a school.

Further information

You can search for [published performance information](#) about the school.

In the report, '[disadvantaged pupils](#)' is used to mean pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND); pupils who meet the [definition of children in need of help and protection](#); pupils receiving statutory local authority support from a social worker; and pupils who otherwise meet the criteria used for deciding the school's [pupil premium funding](#) (this includes pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years, looked after children (children in local authority care) and/or children who left care through adoption or another formal route).

School details

Unique reference number	108753
Local authority	Sunderland
Inspection number	10346270
Type of school	Nursery
School category	Maintained
Age range of pupils	2 to 5
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	102
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Margaret Parsons
Headteacher	Ruth Williamson
Website	www.pennywellearlyyears.org.uk
Date of previous inspection	3 November 2023, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school does not use any alternative providers.
- The school uses the same site as a registered childcare provider. The childcare provider offers breakfast club and afternoon wraparound care to children attending the nursery.

Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this graded inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005. During a graded inspection, we grade the school for each of our key judgements (quality of education; behaviour and attitudes; personal development; and leadership and management) and for any relevant provision judgement (early years and/or sixth form provision). Schools receiving a graded inspection from September 2024, will not be given an overall effectiveness grade.

- Inspections are a point-in-time evaluation about the quality of a school's education provision.

- This was the second routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed any continued impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors met with the headteacher and other leaders in the school.
- The lead inspector met with members of the governing body. They also spoke by telephone to a representative from the local authority.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these areas of learning: communication and language, understanding the world and personal, social and emotional development. For each deep dive, inspectors held discussions about the curriculum, visited the provision, spoke to practitioners and spoke to some children about their learning. Inspectors also looked at other areas of learning from the early years curriculum.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, inspectors: reviewed the single central record; took account of the views of leaders, staff and children; and considered the extent to which the school has created an open and positive culture around safeguarding that puts children's interests first.
- The views of parents and staff were considered through meetings and their responses to Ofsted's questionnaires.

Inspection team

Alison Stephenson, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Deborah Ashcroft

Ofsted Inspector

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