

Inspection of Playology Beach School Souter Lighthouse

National Trust, Souter Lighthouse, Coast Road, Sunderland SR6 7NH

Inspection date: 30 June 2025

Overall effectiveness

Outstanding

The quality of education

Outstanding

Behaviour and attitudes

Outstanding

Personal development

Outstanding

Leadership and management

Outstanding

Overall effectiveness at previous
inspection

Not applicable

What is it like to attend this early years setting?

The provision is outstanding

Children thrive in this nurturing provision. The ethos is to develop confidence, resilience and independence. Parents comment on how much their children's confidence has grown. They say children thrive. Children develop excellent relationships with staff. This is evident as children play with staff. They make pretend bus and car journeys together. Other children enjoy a cosy time with staff as they talk about their recent holidays. Managers have thought extremely carefully about how they can keep children safe. Children form a line to walk to the beach school or forest school site. Staff teach children the procedures for emergency drills and evacuations. This helps children to respond quickly should a loose dog enter the site accessed by children.

The curriculum is ambitious. Children experience a range of rich, motivational experiences. For example, they are fascinated when they find eggshells on the ground. Staff share the excitement with children, pointing out a nest in the trees above. When children find a butterfly, staff work alongside them looking at an identification chart to identify the butterfly.

Staff manage children's behaviour exceptionally well. They seize opportunities to help children to understand how others feel. They take time to explain to children the importance of asking for things. When minor disagreements occur, staff explain to children that they can only take it if their friend agrees.

What does the early years setting do well and what does it need to do better?

- Leaders plan carefully for the day based on children's interests and learning needs, as well as the expected weather and tide conditions. For example, during the inspection, children spent the day in the forest school area to keep them out of the extreme heat. Staff teach children about the importance of reapplying suntan lotion regularly. During the inspection, children find staff to remind them that they need more suntan lotion on.
- Children are incredibly independent. They thoroughly enjoy helping with activities, such as putting up the toilet tent. When children encounter challenges and ask for help, staff support them effectively, asking them how they could solve this problem. As a result, children are incredibly skilled as they unscrew the lid on squirty bottles to refill them.
- Staff support children's communication exceptionally well. They use a range of excellent strategies to help children make the best possible progress. These include highly effective questioning to encourage children to think deeply. Staff take time to listen to children. Even when they are busy, they hold children's hands and tell them to wait because they really want to hear them. Children are incredibly confident communicators.

- Children develop excellent attitudes to their learning. They are highly motivated as they look at books with staff. Other children play with mud and water. They are incredibly engaged as they use water as oil, or milk and mud as flour. They use bark as sprinkles and concentrate for extended periods, ensuring the consistency is just right.
- Children develop excellent relationships with each other. Older children work together as they help to move crates around at snack time. They take turns as part of a group as they play on the rope swing. Parents believe that the staff have made a positive difference to their children. They say their children cannot wait to tell staff things they have been doing.
- Managers provide excellent support to their staff team. Staff comment how happy they are. They appreciate the regular meetings to check how everything is going. Professional development is precisely focused on helping children to make the best possible progress. All staff are highly trained in outdoor learning philosophies. Any training that staff attend has a positive impact on practice.
- All children make excellent progress. They receive exceptionally high levels of support from managers and staff. Staff know children extremely well and plan for children's individual needs. Where children need additional support, they act swiftly to provide children with the support they need. They work tirelessly with the local schools to ensure that children's move to Reception classes, when the time comes, is well planned and smooth.
- Staff have an excellent relationship with parents. There is a clear partnership approach to supporting children's learning. For example, they talk together about what children are doing and what they need to learn next. Parents value the wealth of information that they receive about the curriculum and learning and other information, including detailed contingency plans for extreme weather.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

There is an open and positive culture towards safeguarding that puts children's interests first.

Setting details

Unique reference number	2752716
Local authority	South Tyneside
Inspection number	10405883
Type of provision	Childcare on non-domestic premises
Registers	Early Years Register, Compulsory Childcare Register, Voluntary Childcare Register
Day care type	Sessional day care
Age range of children at time of inspection	2 to 4
Total number of places	16
Number of children on roll	14
Name of registered person	Playology Limited
Registered person unique reference number	2590460
Telephone number	07545181069
Date of previous inspection	Not applicable

Information about this early years setting

Playology Beach School Souter Lighthouse registered in 2023 and is based within a National Trust building in Whitburn. The provision operates Monday to Thursday, during school term times. Sessions are from 8.30am to 4pm. There are four staff employed, of whom three hold an appropriate early years qualification at level 3 or above, including one with qualified teacher status. The provision provides government-funded childcare.

Information about this inspection

Inspector

Elizabeth Fish

Inspection activities

- The manager showed the inspector around the parts of the site accessed by children and explained how they organise the provision.
- The inspector observed children playing and learning.
- The manager and inspector evaluated an activity.
- The inspector talked to children and staff at appropriate times during the inspection.
- The manager showed the inspector a range of documents, including those relating to staff suitability.
- Parents spoke to the inspector to express their views on the provision.
- The manager explained how she manages the provision and keeps children safe.

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.

If you are not happy with the inspection or the report, you can [complain to Ofsted](#).

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, further education and skills, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for looked after children, safeguarding and child protection.

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 2025