

Pennywell Nursery School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	108753
Local authority	Sunderland
Inspection number	377811
Inspection dates	9–10 November 2011
Reporting inspector	Moira Fitzpatrick

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Type of school	Nursery
School category	Maintained
Age range of pupils	3–5
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	71
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Margaret Parsons
Headteacher	Judith Donnelly
Date of previous school inspection	10 March 2009
School address	Portsmouth Road Pennywell Sunderland SR4 9AX
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Registered childcare provision	Pennywell Early Years Centre
Number of children on roll in the registered childcare provision	40
Date of last inspection of registered childcare provision	March 2007

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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors. The inspectors visited 11 lessons taught by seven teachers and practitioners. They observed the school's work, and looked at documentation relating to safeguarding procedures and policies, teachers' planning, the school's baseline and tracking data, the school improvement plan and photographic evidence of provision for children's learning throughout the year. The responses from 60 questionnaires returned by parents and carers were considered as well as responses from staff.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at a number of key areas.

- The effectiveness of all staff and the governing body in ensuring that the nursery has maintained high standards, continued to improve provision and has a precise and accurate agenda for further improvement.
- The impact of the Family Learning initiative on children's progress and the partnership with parents and carers.
- How well children with special educational needs and/or learning disabilities are supported to make the same progress as that of their peers.

Information about the school

This is a larger than average-sized nursery. Nearly all children are White British. The proportion of children with special educational needs and/or disabilities is high; several children have a statement of special educational needs. The nursery provides childcare throughout the year for children from birth to three years. It also offers extended provision for children up to eight years in a breakfast- and after-school club and through holiday-time provision. This is done in collaboration with the children's centre. The children's centre was inspected separately and its report is published separately on the Ofsted website.

The nursery holds numerous awards, including Early Excellence status and the Teaching Award.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory and 4 is inadequate
Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?

1

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

1

Main findings

Pennywell Nursery is an outstanding school. It combines the highest standards of care with excellence in learning. The headteacher's inspirational and energetic leadership fires all staff with the determination to get the very best for and from all children. She is very well supported by extremely able and committed senior staff, so that the nursery has gone from strength to strength since the previous inspection. The nursery reviews its work rigorously and leaves no stone unturned in its pursuit of excellence. It accurately identifies what needs further improvement. For example, the nursery is fully committed to involving families in their children's learning and development through the Family Learning initiative, so that they have the skills to support them and to recognise their successes. Parents and carers are delighted with these opportunities which make them feel, 'part of the family'. School data show that Family Learning is having a powerful effect on increasing children's rates of progress, notably in speaking and listening. The school is committed to developing and extending this work in order to improve children's communication skills even further. A highly-effective governing body monitors the school well. Members have a very good understanding of provision and children's outcomes and give exceptional support to the school and its parents and carers. The capacity for sustained improvement is outstanding.

Children's achievement is excellent. All children make outstanding progress and the vast majority reach, and sometimes exceed, the expected level in all areas of their learning by the time they transfer to primary school. Children's behaviour and their sense of safety are outstanding. They have total trust in adults to look after them, which gives them the confidence to learn independently, knowing there is always an adult on hand to turn to. They make the nursery a safe and happy place in which to learn by following rules and routines well, and are eager to help at tidy-up time. They enjoy healthy snacks, and dancing energetically when they practise cheerleader skills. By the time they leave, children are exceptionally well prepared for the next stage of learning; their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is excellent.

Outstanding teaching ensures that learning is always interesting, challenging and, most importantly, great fun. The innovative and imaginative curriculum is based on accurate observations of children's development and interests; it meets its aim to delight and enthral the children. Children who have special educational needs and/or disabilities are extremely well supported to join in all activities and learn alongside their friends. Special resources are provided and an intensive programme of speech

development helps them to overcome barriers to their learning quickly, so that they learn at the same rapid rate as others. Childcare arrangements for 'Children in the Baby Nest', the 'Kinder Room', and before- and after-school clubs are of the same excellent quality as those found in the nursery.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve children's communication skills even further by extending the Family Learning programme so that even more children and their families benefit from learning and playing together to develop listening, talking and thinking skills.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of children

1

Children develop excellent attitudes to learning and this is reflected in their eagerness to explore and note what activities are available as they enter the nursery each session. They are confident, independent learners who quickly select areas of interest and then settle to explore and investigate with good concentration and perseverance. For example, two boys constructing trains and tractors explored ways of making them longer and watched each other's efforts to see how this might be done. With the teacher's encouragement they counted how many wheels each vehicle had and kept going until they had a vehicle with 24 wheels. Children work happily alongside each other and sometimes play together, sharing resources and taking turns. They are active learners who relish finding out things for themselves, and many delight in sharing what they learn with adults and other children. An excellent example was of a child who showed the visitor how to complete a puzzle and carefully explained why certain pieces went where. While children are happy to turn to adults for help, they much prefer doing things for themselves because they enjoy becoming absorbed in their tasks and delight in finding success independently.

Children's excellent behaviour and the way they care for each other, following the excellent example set by adults, creates a warm, positive atmosphere for learning and play. They wait patiently for their turn, and have learned to say 'please' and 'thank you' to each other. They put away toys at tidy-up time and enjoy doing this because they know it pleases their teachers. Children adopt healthy eating habits at fruit snack time and take plenty of vigorous exercise both indoors and out. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. Children love learning, show a strong understanding of right and wrong and have excellent social skills. The many opportunities they have to learn about themselves and others develop their understanding and tolerance of differences between people. By the time they leave for their new school, children are exceptionally well prepared for the next stage of learning.

When they join the nursery most children have skills that are well below those typical for their age; this is especially the case in language and communication skills. The outstanding progress of all groups is due to the care that staff take to make sure children feel safe, secure and able to learn at their own best rate throughout the session. Gains in communication, language and literacy skills are especially

noteworthy, and are the result of a relentless focus on listening and speaking by all staff whenever they interact with children.

These are the grades for children's outcomes

Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	1
Children's achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	1
Taking into account:	
Children's attainment	2
The quality of children's learning and their progress	1
The quality of learning for children with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	1
The extent to which children feel safe	1
Children's behaviour	1
The extent to which children adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which children contribute to the school and wider community	1
The extent to which children develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	1
Taking into account:	
Children's attendance	3
The extent of children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1

How effective is the provision?

Excellent teaching is based on first-rate assessment of children's needs, progress and interests. Teachers show a sharp understanding of how young children learn and they are alert to what excites and motivates them. Information from frequent and perceptive observations is used promptly to increase the challenge or add support to the activities children enjoy. This ensures that they are able to reinforce and extend their learning by sustaining concentration and developing their thinking. Teachers ensure that children continually find success so that they gain in confidence and are always willing to tackle new challenges. They understand that children need to lead their learning and are skilled at knowing when to offer help and become involved and when to step back and allow children to discover for themselves. All staff consistently set an excellent example for children of how to listen, talk, take turns and respond to questions. Their storytelling is enthralling and enables children to learn much from the simple stories that children love.

The imaginative, innovative curriculum is highly responsive to children's needs and is adapted with great precision to give the correct levels of support or challenge to enable every child to achieve his or her best. It is fired by the professional enthusiasm of staff who are constantly looking for ways of developing children's interests and talents. This is seen in the frequent trips out of school, the many visitors who share their expertise and enthusiasm, such as the dance teacher, and shared learning experiences with parents and carers. All of these give the children many memorable experiences. For example, a visit to the 'House of Objects' has given children, staff and parents and carers new ways of looking at everyday objects and using them creatively for learning. Parents and carers are increasingly involved in extending the range of learning opportunities through workshops where they learn to create high-quality, imaginative resources with which they can help their children to learn in the nursery and at home. They are rightly very proud of the story boxes and treasure boxes they have produced which are so much enjoyed by the children.

Outstanding care provides the safe cocoon within which children dare to explore and investigate the exciting world of the nursery. Staff know children and their families very well and constantly update their knowledge through careful observations and regular contact with parents and carers. The children's Learning Journeys provide the opportunity for parents and carers to record children's interests and development so that there is a steady flow of information between home and school. Parents and carers think these are, 'a fabulous keepsake.' Support for those children whose circumstances might make them vulnerable is outstanding, as it is for their families. As one parent expressed it, 'The nursery has gone above and beyond with the care of both myself and my child.' The school's work with families, to develop strong links and engage with parents and carers as partners in learning, is highly appreciated by parents and carers, who recognise the 'massive impact' it has on their children's happiness. Supervision is excellent in the nursery and in the childcare provision. Children are nurtured so that they feel safe, secure and are able to thrive. Staff are extremely vigilant and are regularly seen gently supporting or explaining to children how their behaviour might upset another child.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	1
The quality of teaching	1
Taking into account:	
The use of assessment to support learning	1
The extent to which the curriculum meets children's needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	1
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	1

How effective are leadership and management?

The headteacher is highly ambitious for everyone in the school community, including parents and carers, to contribute their knowledge and expertise to 'make a difference' to children's lives. This is evident in leaders' and managers' determination to further improve children's communication skills through even closer partnership with and more training for parents and carers. There is a great sense of pride and belonging in the school. Morale is very high, as all feel empowered to suggest improvements and lead initiatives. There is accurate evaluation of the school's work and a rapid response to areas identified for improvement. Teamwork is excellent and staff are keen to share their expertise both within and beyond the school. Attention to the school's outstanding safeguarding arrangements, is meticulous. All staff on site, including those in the childcare setting, have regular updates in child protection and welfare training and are exceptionally well equipped to spot and deal with any concerns.

The governing body is extremely effective. Members of the governing body are highly responsive to the nursery's changing needs, and are innovative and forward-looking in their strategic development of the school. They are robust in discharging their statutory duties and in ensuring that the views of parents and carers are considered. They ensure that their work with key agencies to support and protect children and their families is exemplary. The promotion of equal opportunities is outstanding, enabling every child to have equal access to exciting learning opportunities. Discrimination is not tolerated. Excellent links with parents and carers

keep them well-informed about and involved in their children’s learning. The school and local community are highly cohesive, through strong links with the children’s centre and other schools and services. The school has a very sharp understanding of and is highly responsive to the community’s needs. It successfully develops children’s understanding of differences between people and their understanding and tolerance of these.

These are the grades for the leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in the Early Years Foundation Stage	1
The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	1
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	1
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	1
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	1
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	1
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	1
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	1

Views of parents and carers

A much higher proportion than usual of parents and carers returned questionnaires. Parents and carers are overwhelmingly positive about the nursery and the way that it cares for their children and ‘brings them on’. They have total trust in staff to care for their children, keep them safe and to report any concerns promptly. Many parents and carers spoke with enthusiasm about being more closely involved in their children’s learning. They felt that the Family Talk project and workshops where they have learned to make story boxes and treasure boxes to stimulate their children’s learning at home, have ‘strengthened the community’ and allowed them to get to know their children better. The inspection identified these strengths, which are contained in the report.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Pennywell Nursery School to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school.

The inspector received 60 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 71 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	48	80	11	18	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	51	85	9	15	0	0	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	45	75	14	23	0	0	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	43	72	16	27	0	0	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	51	85	9	15	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	48	80	12	20	0	0	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	46	77	14	23	0	0	0	0
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	42	70	15	25	1	2	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	51	85	9	15	0	0	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	45	75	14	23	0	0	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	45	75	14	23	0	0	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	47	78	13	22	0	0	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	50	83	10	17	0	0	0	0

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

Overall effectiveness of schools

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	43	47	10	0
Primary schools	6	46	42	6
Secondary schools	14	36	41	9
Sixth forms	15	42	41	3
Special schools	30	48	19	3
Pupil referral units	14	50	31	5
All schools	10	44	39	6

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above is for the period 1 September 2010 to 08 April 2011 and are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see www.ofsted.gov.uk).

The sample of schools inspected during 2010/11 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100. Sixth form figures reflect the judgements made for the overall effectiveness of the sixth form in secondary schools, special schools and pupil referral units.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.■ The quality of teaching.■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships.■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.



11 November 2011

Dear Children

Inspection of Pennywell Nursery School, Sunderland, SR4 9AX

Thank you all for being so kind and sharing with me when I visited the nursery. I had a lovely time watching you find out so many things for yourselves including from stories and your lovely dancing and cheer leading. You are all very friendly and caring with each other and this is what makes the nursery such a happy place. I think the nursery is excellent and that you are brilliant learners, because you spend your time finding about so many exciting things that really interest you. No wonder your families and teachers are so proud of you, especially when they see your lovely work and read the stories in your Learning Journeys.

Your teachers take very great care of you, so you feel safe and happy in school. Your families think so too and are very pleased that you go to such a happy, exciting and safe place to learn. I was amazed by how much you can learn by yourself. This is because your teachers know just what to put out for you to play with and work on, because they watch you so closely to see what you like and how quickly you are getting on. They are very good at helping you to listen and talk. I'm glad about this as I enjoyed many little chats with you during my visit because you are such good listeners and talkers.

All the adults who run the nursery are always looking for ways to make it even better. I have asked them to help more of your families join in the Family Learning activities so that you all have more fun at home and at nursery and would be even better at talking and writing. You can help by sharing well and being good listeners and enjoying everything just as you do now.

My very best wishes to all of you at Pennywell Nursery and Child Care centre for another happy and successful year.

Yours sincerely

Moira Fitzpatrick

Lead inspector

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