

# Inspection report for Pennywell & South Hylton Children's Centre

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Local authority	Sunderland
Inspection number	383606
Inspection dates	10 - 11 November 2011
Reporting inspector	Judith Elderfield

Centre leader	Tim Hakim
Date of previous inspection	Not applicable
Centre address	Portsmouth Road Sunderland Tyne and Wear SR4 9AX
Telephone number	0191 5536820
Fax number	Not applicable
Email address	tim.hakim@sunderland.gov.uk

Linked school if applicable	108753 Pennywell Nursery School
Linked early years and childcare, if applicable	EY260693 Pennywell Early Years Centre

The inspection of this Sure Start Children's Centre was carried out under Part 3A of the Childcare Act 2006 as inserted by section 199 of the Apprenticeships, Skills, Children and Learning Act 2009.

## Introduction

The inspection covers the centre's contribution to:

- facilitating access to early childhood services by parents, prospective parents and young children
- maximising the benefit of those services to parents, prospective parents and young children
- improving the well-being of young children.

The report is made to the local authority and a copy is sent to the children's centre. The local authority may send the report to such persons it considers appropriate and must arrange for an action plan to be produced in relation to the findings in this report.

An inspection of the maintained nursery was carried out at the same time as the inspection of the centre under Section 5 of the Education Act 2005. The report of this inspection is available on our website [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)

This inspection was carried out by one additional inspector and one early years inspector.

The inspectors held meetings with centre users, representatives from the local authority, the centre's advisory board, partner organisations, staff and volunteers. They spoke to centre users formally and informally at various groups.

They observed the centre's work, and looked at sessions in operation in the children's centre and in nearby locations. They also looked at a range of relevant documentation, including the centre's self evaluation, action plan, safeguarding procedures, satisfaction survey results, evidence files and case studies.

## Information about the centre

Pennywell and South Hylton Children's Centre is a Phase 1 children's centre delivering the full core offer under the governance of the local authority. The children's centre was designated in 2002 and has evolved from the Early Excellence Centre at Pennywell Early Years Centre, an amalgamation of a local authority nursery school and social services day-care setting.

The centre is located within one of the 30% most deprived areas in the country. There are seven super output areas in the St Anne Ward. The population is 98% White British. The Pennywell Early Years Centre is perceived as the main hub and satellite centres have developed within the community to meet both the needs to expand the services and resources, but also in direct response to local families' wishes.

In the centre reach area a higher than average percentage of children lives in families in receipt of child tax credit, income support or job seekers' allowance and 35% of children are from lone-parent families. In addition, 47.5% of residents have no qualifications. The worklessness rate of people living in the locality is higher than the Sunderland average and the most recent figures indicate that 38% of children under 16 live in poverty, compared with the Sunderland average of 26%. Many families have a family member who is permanently sick or has a long-term illness. More than half of all families in the area do not have their own transport.

There is integrated childcare on site which offers wrap-around day care for 12 babies from birth to 2 years of age and 12 toddlers from 2 to 3 years of age. It provides 16 places in a breakfast club and after-school care for children up to the age of eight and up to 24 places for holiday care for this age group. Children enter the Early Years Foundation Stage with levels of development well below those expected for their age nationally, especially in communication, language and literacy and in personal and social development.

## Inspection judgements

**Grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate**

### Overall effectiveness

**The effectiveness of the children's centre in meeting the needs of and improving outcomes for families**

**2**

### Capacity for sustained improvement

**The centre's capacity for sustained improvement, including the quality of its leadership and management**

**2**

## Main findings

'All staff are very welcoming and they always go that extra mile'. This comment typifies many opinions expressed by parents and carers and helps to explain why Pennywell and South Hylton is a good and improving centre. The good quality of the provision is a result of the passion and drive of the leadership, staff, advisory board, and its professional partners. The local authority has made significant changes across the children's centres which came into effect at the beginning of October this year. However, staff morale has remained high due in no small part to the enthusiasm and focus of the new management team. Staff support each other effectively and show great respect for their leadership team and all users and visitors of the centre. Good partnership work ensures that services are well-integrated and cohesive. Relationships between agencies are highly professional and mutually respectful with an effective transfer of information between key partners ensuring that the needs of users are met. However, some timeliness of data from the local primary care trust to inform the centre of their progress in breastfeeding sustainability, smoking cessation and

obesity levels is out of date. The impact of this is that the centre does not know if the programmes currently being implemented are being successful.

Outcomes for users are good and improving. The centre is particularly effective in keeping users safe and protected and in promoting users' contribution to the decision-making of the centre. Detailed data are being collected by the centre and are used to evaluate the effectiveness of activities. The centre consistently gives the highest priority to safeguarding all children and their families and the quality of care, guidance and support provided is good. As one parent reported, 'The centre has been my family and my rock and without it I would be lost'. The range of provision on offer meets the needs of users well. However, senior leaders are not complacent and recognise the need to look closely at the availability of services throughout the reach area.

There are many opportunities for parents, carers and users to express their views. However, the advisory board does not have parents from the centre attending meetings. Users are encouraged and supported in accessing local training courses, securing benefits and embarking on training for qualifications to return to work. Good links with Jobcentre Plus and Job Linkage outlets exist and parents and carers have the opportunity to learn new skills and gain qualifications in order to further raise families' aspirations.

Considering that many outcomes are improving, together with its other strengths, the centre has a good capacity to improve.

## **What does the centre need to do to improve further?**

### **Recommendations for further improvement**

- Encourage and include parents to participate in decision-making at the centre through membership of the advisory board.
- The local Primary Care Trust should work with the local authority to improve the availability and timeliness of data in relation to breastfeeding, sustainability, smoking cessation and obesity levels to better inform the direction and response of the children's centre work in these key areas.

## **How good are outcomes for families?**

<b>2</b>
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Outcomes are improving in many areas. This is because the centre provides a wide range of activities which are well-developed in partnership with other agencies and professionals. Healthy lifestyles and healthy eating are promoted by all and an early referral intervention ensures that families who may be more vulnerable than others are appropriately supported. The strong integration of this work, based on a clear analysis of need is central to the centre's success. The centre uses electronic social networks to good effect; figures show there is a growing number of parents using this to access information about activities, to

give feedback on activities and to contact each other. Good advice and guidance is given to young parents, which enables them to build and maintain effective and supportive relationships with other users of the services, thereby reducing feelings of isolation. Parents and carers benefit from the wide range of activities on offer and are developing a good awareness of adopting healthy lifestyles. The centre supplies 'The Good Grub' book to all nurseries and schools within the locality. The snacks provided at all the sessions are healthy and the 'Busy Bodies' sessions held at various outreach centres in the reach area are very popular. However, despite the centre's best efforts the obesity rates in the locality are increasing and are above the national and city average.

Children are kept safe in their homes through work such as home safety visits and data show that admission rates to hospital are decreasing year on year. Parents and carers feel safe at the centre and enjoy their time there. Information about safeguarding procedures is available to all users. Case studies demonstrate that effective multi-agency working is having a positive impact on children and families who may need additional support in promoting the families' overall welfare. The centre is proactive in responding to families at times of crisis and case studies show how parents receive effective support and guidance to improve the lives of their families.

Good work by the centre's teacher with the local Early Years provider is slowly raising achievement as demonstrated by the Early Years Foundation Stage profile scores from a low start. Case studies show that parents who access the outreach services are much more confident and more able to manage their children and support their learning and development. Satisfaction rates are high and users report that they enjoy their time at the centre. Good transition-planning and support mean that children are well-prepared and supported when accessing Early Years provision or school.

Parents report that as a result of the 'Positive Parenting' course, they are much better equipped to parent their children. Users who attend courses develop more confidence and most go on to undertake further training. Many become volunteers at the centre. Some have been successful in obtaining paid employment.

The centre staff are committed to engaging parents in the work of the centre. Parents and carers contribute to the work of the centre and as a result of this some further improvements to centre services have been made. Staff will often take forward parents' and carers' views to planning meetings. However, parents from the centre do not take part in advisory board decisions. Children's views are sought and their wishes shape some of the activities at the centre. Their behaviour is good and centre staff have clear expectations of behaviour which are shared with parents.

These are the grades for the outcomes for families:

<b>The extent to which children, including those from target groups, are physically, mentally and emotionally healthy and families have healthy lifestyles</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The extent to which children are safe and protected, their welfare concerns are identified and appropriate steps taken to address them</b>	<b>2</b>

<b>The extent to which all children and parents, including those from target groups, enjoy and achieve educationally and in their personal and social development</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which children engage in positive behaviour and develop positive relationships, and parents, including those from target groups, contribute to decision-making and governance of the centre</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The extent to which children are developing skills for the future and parents, including those from target groups, are developing economic stability and independence including access to training and employment.</b>	<b>2</b>

## **How good is the provision?**

<b>2</b>
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The centre knows its users well and services are adapted to meet the changing needs of the community. A comprehensive range of procedures for assessing the needs of children and families has been developed. Much work has been carried on breastfeeding initiation rates which are now higher than the city average and the six-week sustainability rates are improving. However up-to date data from the local primary care trusts are slow to reach the teams to inform impact of new initiatives. Effective use of the Common Assessment Framework (CAF) ensures that services are provided by the most appropriate agency and are effectively used for families who have been identified as having higher levels of need. Centre staff are also aware of the wide range of partner organisations and there is a clear signposting to other services. Staff will also support parents in making initial contact with these partner organisations. Staff have extensive knowledge of the Early Years Foundation Stage and activities are planned with children's development and learning in mind, resulting in more effective learning opportunities for young children linked to the Early Years principles. As a result data show an improvement over the last four years of children from the most vulnerable groups narrowing the achievement gap.

The centre is warm and welcoming and activities are provided at community venues throughout the area and these are all of a good standard. Transport is provided to take families to venues if required. Parents and children are treated with respect and all are seen as individually important. Staff have a good knowledge of the range of services available in the community which ensures that parents and carers are signposted to the many services which exist. The centre staff, volunteers and partners ensure that services are of a good quality. Staff are aware of the hard-to-reach groups. Good support and guidance is provided for the 'Dads' and kids' group and one father who had recently moved into the area said, 'The sessions helped me make friends'. Fathers were also seen being active within the 'Stay and Play' and 'Busy Body' sessions. A young parent's support group is in place and well-attended. Staff also encourage young parents to attend all activities provided.

The centre helps promote economic stability, for example, by supporting users in attending local training courses, securing benefits and gaining qualifications to return to work. Increasing numbers of parents are taking courses, accredited at Levels 1 and 2 in childcare and education, demonstrating a positive attitude to further training and future employment.

These are the grades for the quality of provision:

<b>The extent to which the range of services, activities and opportunities meet the needs of families, including those in target groups</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which the centre promotes purposeful learning, development and enjoyment for all families, including those in target groups</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The quality of care, guidance and support offered to families, including those in target groups.</b>	<b>2</b>

## **How effective are the leadership and management?**

<b>2</b>
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Leadership and management are good at all levels. Good team-working is clearly evident despite reductions in staffing levels. Staff are passionate about the centre and its community. Senior leaders have a clear vision, communicate high expectations and are determined to ensure that the centre is effective in improving the life chances of all users. Every staff member is fully committed to the centre's work and understands how to contribute to its effectiveness. For example, administrative staff know how important it is to provide a warm welcome and that they are as much a part of the delivery of services as teaching and support staff. The centre has effective partnership arrangements which ensure that all users' needs are met. However, too few parents play an active role on the advisory board. Staff report that professional relationships between themselves and key partnership agencies are good. The centre provides good value for money and focuses on activities that are sustainable, building on existing provision and sharing costs and resources with other agencies, where possible.

The inclusion of all children and families is threaded through all of the centre's work. Staff are effective in ensuring that all children and parents and carers, regardless of background, aptitudes or other differences, have the same access to the range of experiences on offer. All information displayed promotes equality and diversity and there is a varied range of activities to celebrate other cultures. The centre manager is aware of the need to introduce the children, parents and carers to other cultures in this White British community.

Effective safeguarding arrangements are supported by the clear lines of communication and collaboration between agencies to ensure that children are safeguarded. All checks, vetting and recruitment processes meet current guidelines and staff have up-to date training in safeguarding, child protection and first aid. All managers and any staff on interview panels have attended safe recruitment training. Policies and procedures are strong and there are good systems in place to maintain and update these. The centre has completed appropriate risk assessments to ensure the safety of children and their parents and carers.

Staff have a good understanding of the strengths in provision and where further improvements can be made. Self-evaluation is on-going and largely accurate so the centre's priorities for improvement are appropriate, challenging, yet realistic. The centre's data collection is enabling it to measure the success of its provision on outcomes. However a

faster response from the local primary care trusts would enhance progress over time. Action plans are specific, sharply-focused and have clear success criteria.

These are the grades for leadership and management:

<b>The extent to which governance, accountability, professional supervision and day-to-day management arrangements are clear and understood</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness of evaluation and its use in setting ambitious targets which secure improvement in outcomes</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which resources are used and managed efficiently and effectively to meet the needs of families, including those in target groups</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which equality is promoted and diversity celebrated, illegal or unlawful discrimination is tackled and the centre fulfils its statutory duties</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness of the centre's policy, procedures and work with key agencies in safeguarding children and, where applicable, vulnerable adults</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which partnerships with other agencies ensure the integrated delivery of the range of services provided by the centre to meet its core purpose</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which the centre supports and encourages families in the reach area to engage with services and uses their views to develop the range of provision.</b>	<b>3</b>

## **Any other information used to inform the judgements made during this inspection**

An inspection of the Pennywell Nursery School was carried out at the same time as the inspection of the children's centre and relevant findings from that inspection were taken into consideration.

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance *Complaints procedure: raising concerns and making complaints about Ofsted* which is available from our website: [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk). If you would like us to send you a copy of the guidance, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk).



## Summary for centre users

We inspected the Pennywell and South Hylton Children's Centre on 10 - 11 November 2011. We judged the centre as good overall. We met a number of you during our visit. We talked with staff from the centre and from other organisations who work with your centre to provide services and activities. During our visit we were able to observe some sessions and activities.

Those of you we spoke to told us that you enjoy coming to the centre and that you feel happy and safe there. You also told us that your children enjoyed coming too and particularly enjoy activities, such as 'Stay and Play', 'Time for Rhyme', 'Busy Bodies', and that you like being able to meet up with other parents and carers and share ideas. The children's centre provides good support and is very much at the heart of your community.

The advisory board plays a very proactive role in the on-going development of the centre. However, the centre would like parents to become more involved in the decision-making within the centre by becoming active members of the advisory board. The centre staff are continuously reviewing how to manage the demand for popular activities. From our observations, discussions and case studies, we were able to see how much impact the centre is having on your lives. For example, some of you told us that you were able to improve your own health and that of your children after attending particular sessions at the centre, or by receiving guidance and support from some of the well-trained and qualified staff.

Your centre offers a good and varied range of activities and training sessions. You can also get good-quality guidance and support to deal with health problems, parenting and safety in your home. Some of you also told us that you have received help to make your homes safer for your children by having safety equipment installed. The staff at the centre offer you home visits if required and give you personal and individual attention to help you become more confident parents and carers and to help your children succeed in life.

We have suggested that the centre encourages more of you to join the advisory board and we would also like the local Primary Care Trust to work with the local authority, to improve timeliness of data in relation to breastfeeding sustainability, smoking cessation and obesity levels to inform the direction and response of the children's centre work in these key areas.

Thank you very much for taking the time to speak with us during the visit. We very much enjoyed talking with you and we appreciated your willingness to talk with us about some of your personal experiences. We wish you all the best for the future.

The full report is available from your centre or on our website [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk).