

Inspection of an outstanding school: Pennywell Early Years Centre

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

Inspection date:

3 November 2023

Outcome

There has been no change to this school's overall judgement of outstanding as a result of this ungraded (section 8) inspection. However, the evidence gathered suggests that the inspection grade might not be as high if a graded (section 5) inspection were carried out now. The school's next inspection will be a graded inspection.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pennywell Early Years Centre is a caring and welcoming place. Children enjoy coming each day. They delight in the different learning opportunities they have, both indoors and outdoors. Parents recognise the high-quality care and support that their children receive.

Leaders prioritise the well-being of children in the setting. Clear routines and expectations make the school a calm and nurturing place to learn. This helps all children, including children with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), to engage well. Children show high levels of respect for the resources they have and for each other. They work well as a team to look after their learning environment. Leaders and staff know and understand the children well. Children are confident to ask for support from staff when needed.

Leaders have high aspirations for the children. A carefully constructed and purposeful learning space helps to make learning exciting. Children are enthusiastic about their learning. They show focus and enthusiasm. New leaders have recently focused on ensuring that the curriculum is well matched to these aspirations. This is in the early stages of implementation.

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

Leaders, staff and stakeholders are passionate about the importance of the early education of young children. The curriculum focuses on children making a positive start, through high-quality interactions between staff and children. Staff use conversations with children to introduce and embed language. Leaders prioritise the need for children to be able to communicate well. Staff model language effectively. The learning areas are bright, engaging and carefully resourced. Books are plentiful around the classroom. Staff use some of these with impact to bring learning to life. This helps children build up more

vocabulary as they learn. During the inspection, children engaged well where books were used to help them understand seasonal vegetables and develop the skills needed to make a soup.

Leaders have taken swift action to make sure the curriculum builds knowledge and skills over time. The newly designed curriculum is purposeful and highly ambitious. It matches new school values. This builds key knowledge and skills over time. However, the delivery of this curriculum is still in development. There is more to do to ensure that the curriculum is implemented with consistency.

Effective routines are in place. Children understand that each session starts with time together in their key-worker groups. Behaviour expectations are clear. Children benefit from this approach. There is very little disruption to learning. If a child needs support to manage or understand their emotions, they receive caring and skilled support from adults. There is a strong sense of teamwork from children and staff. Children work collectively to look after learning areas. Children and staff tidy the effectively designed outdoor learning spaces well. Children also show empathy to their peers if they are upset. They seek help from adults when needed.

The school is inclusive. There is careful thought to help children with SEND. Advice from professionals, alongside staff knowledge, helps children with SEND learn alongside their peers. Resources to support communication and language development are evident. Some staff use these with great effect.

Leaders have detailed knowledge about the community in which they work. There is a high priority to ensure that children understand the area and town they live in. Strong community links to the local church, for example, are established. Children look after their local environment by carrying out litter picking. Leaders are developing further links to help children understand sustainability. Books celebrate other cultures. Children have opportunities to learn about safety and understand jobs and careers when the fire service visits.

Stakeholders, such as governors, are actively involved in the school. They provide challenge and support to the school. Staff are proud to work here. They understand the positive changes made to strengthen the curriculum. Workload is a high priority for leaders and governors. Staff recognise this.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Some areas of the newly developed curriculum are not fully implemented to match the ambitions that the school has designed for its curriculum. As a result, there is variation in the extent to which children benefit from consistent support from adults that focuses

on the knowledge and skills identified in curriculum planning. The school needs to ensure that the ambitions of the curriculum are implemented consistently and as intended so that all children build knowledge and skills over time.

Background

When we have judged a school to be outstanding, we will then normally go into the school about once every four years to confirm that the school remains outstanding. This is called an ungraded inspection, and it is carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. We do not give graded judgements on an ungraded inspection. However, if we find evidence that a school would now receive a higher or lower grade, then the next inspection will be a graded inspection, which is carried out under section 5 of the Act. Usually this is within one to two years of the date of the ungraded inspection. If we have serious concerns about safeguarding, behaviour or the quality of education, we will deem the ungraded inspection a graded inspection immediately.

This is the second ungraded inspection since we judged the school to be outstanding in November 2014.

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	10297262
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	64
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Margaret Parsons
Headteacher	Ruth Williamson
Website	www.pennywellearlyyears.org.uk
Date of previous inspection	31 October 2018, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- A new headteacher took up post in September 2023.
- 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

- Inspections are a point-in-time judgement about the quality of a school's education provision.
- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Prior to the inspection, inspectors reviewed documents on the school's website, as well as published information about the school's performance and previous Ofsted inspections.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these areas of learning: communication and language, personal, social and emotional development, and understanding the world.

Inspectors discussed the curriculum with leaders, visited provision where they observed children at different times of the day, and spoke to teachers and teaching assistants. Inspectors looked at examples of children’s learning in learning journals.

- To inspect safeguarding, inspectors spoke with leaders, staff and a range of stakeholders, including governors. Safeguarding documentation was scrutinised, including the safeguarding policies, and the single central record of recruitment checks.
- Inspectors gathered the views of parents informally in person and formally through their responses to Ofsted’s online survey, Ofsted Parent View, and free-text responses. The views of staff were considered through meetings with staff.
- Inspectors spoke with representatives from the governing body and the local authority.

Inspection team

Emily Stevens, lead inspector

His Majesty’s Inspector

Andrew James

Ofsted Inspector

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