

Inspection of The Sunshine Day Nursery @ Seascape Children's Centre

Ellison Road, Peterlee, Co Durham SR8 5NJ

Inspection date: 29 September 2025

Overall effectiveness	Good
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The quality of education	Good
Behaviour and attitudes	Good
Personal development	Good
Leadership and management	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Outstanding

What is it like to attend this early years setting?

The provision is good

Staff prioritise children's emotional well-being. They respond quickly and sensitively to their needs, offering reassurance and guidance to help them understand and manage their feelings. Children form close bonds with familiar staff in their nursery 'key families' and show a secure sense of belonging in their care. They grow in confidence and are happy in nursery. Leaders actively look for ways to extend support for families beyond the nursery walls. They have introduced projects such as food and clothing sharing schemes to help meet the wider needs of families and reduce barriers to well-being.

The curriculum has a clear impact across all areas of development. It is centred on children's interests and shaped by staff who know them very well. This motivates children and, overall, they are very keen to play and learn. Staff weave new skills and knowledge into play, with purposeful enhancements indoors and out, including sensory spaces and collections of curious objects for children to explore. Children with special educational needs and/or disabilities make strong progress, which is supported well by tailored teaching and partnerships with outside agencies. Speech and language is a particular strength, with focused professional development that contributes to staff's confidence in teaching this area. Staff support learning successfully and celebrate the ongoing progress that all children make.

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

- Leaders are deeply committed. They maintain detailed knowledge of every child's needs, interests and developmental profile. They work directly with children and staff in the nursery, sharing their expertise, modelling high-quality interactions and embedding inclusive strategies. This hands-on approach strengthens staff's skills and confidence. It helps to assure consistently strong practice and contributes to the capacity to sustain and extend the already high standards of care and learning.
- The broad and engaging curriculum helps all children to learn and remember more. For example, children enjoy being 'nature detectives', during which they explore all areas of learning through outdoor investigation. They measure worms, learn new words related to autumn and discover the natural world. This helps to build their curiosity, confidence and communication skills. Mathematics is a particular strength. Staff build on this through play, encouraging children to notice and explore quantities in meaningful ways. Children understand and use number language confidently.
- The quality of education is strong overall, with instances of particularly skilled teaching practice that deepens children's learning. Assessment is accurate and used effectively. Staff know children well and use shared observations to shape the next steps in each child's learning. Staff vary their approach according to

children's abilities and needs. This helps to ensure that all children are supported to achieve well across the curriculum.

- The nursery is inclusive and nurturing. Staff tune into children's emotional needs and create a familiar and supportive environment that puts them at ease. Children benefit from warm interactions and responsive care. Staff explain that they give children the 'loudest cheers' to raise their self-esteem and celebrate every small step of progress. Children feel valued and show pride in what they can do.
- Staff recognise the importance of movement and physical activity during play on children's well-being and their learning. Children explore new and interesting ways to move, for example using the stretchy fabric swings that hang from the trees and climbing the willow structure with growing confidence and control. Staff supervise these activities closely and teach children to identify danger and keep themselves safe.
- Children behave well. Staff model respectful behaviour and help children to resolve minor disagreements. However, staff's expectations are not always clear and consistent. For example, children receive mixed responses to climbing on furniture in the garden, or at times when they should stop playing to listen to the staff. This leaves children unsure of boundaries. It limits their ability to feel secure and develop a shared understanding of how they should behave.
- Routines such as mealtimes offer valuable opportunities for children to make choices and develop independence. For example, they wash their hands and select the filling for their wrap. However, staff sometimes step in too quickly to help with tasks children could manage themselves, putting on coats for children or solving simple problems like how to get sequins to stick to paper. This reduces opportunities for children to think things through and build further on their independence.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

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

What does the setting need to do to improve?

To further improve the quality of the early years provision, the provider should:

- support staff to embed clear and consistent expectations that help children to feel even more secure, confident and ready to learn
- give children plenty of time and opportunities to try things for themselves and build further on their independence and problem-solving skills.

Setting details

Unique reference number	EY386626
Local authority	Durham
Inspection number	10408042
Type of provision	Childcare on non-domestic premises
Registers	Early Years Register, Compulsory Childcare Register
Day care type	Full day care
Age range of children at time of inspection	1 to 4
Total number of places	30
Number of children on roll	39
Name of registered person	Katherine Hardman & Anne Arrowsmith Partnership
Registered person unique reference number	RP909680
Telephone number	07931293675
Date of previous inspection	23 January 2020

Information about this early years setting

The Sunshine Day Nursery @ Seascap Children's Centre registered in 2008 and is located within the Seascap Family Hub in Peterlee, County Durham. The nursery employs 12 members of staff. Of these, nine hold appropriate early years qualifications at level 3 or above. The nursery operates Monday to Friday during term time only. Opening hours are from 8.30am until 3.45pm. The nursery offers government funded childcare and receives additional funding for disadvantaged children.

Information about this inspection

Inspector
Clare Wilkins

Inspection activities

- The inspector viewed the provision and discussed the safety and suitability of the premises.
- The manager joined the inspector on a learning walk and talked to the inspector about their curriculum and what they want the children to learn.
- The inspector observed the quality of education being provided, indoors and outdoors, and assessed the impact that this was having on children's learning.
- The manager and the inspector carried out a joint observation of a creative activity.
- The inspector spoke to children and staff at appropriate times during the inspection.
- The manager met with the inspector to discuss leadership and management of the nursery.
- The inspector looked at relevant documents, including evidence of the suitability checks carried out on staff.
- A number of parents spoke to the inspector during the inspection, and others shared their views through written feedback.

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.

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