



Gateshead Council

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Report for OSC

EARLY YEARS- SCHOOL READINESS

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Our strengths

- The majority of children starting school have accessed Early Years funded provision. (Maintained nursery school, nursery class in a school, private nursery, playgroup or childminder.)
- 98% of all provision is good, outstanding or MET by Ofsted.
- High take up of three- and four-year-old places. 101% (131 out of borough children).
- Take up of two-year-old places has risen from 77% to 83% and is above national average. (Disadvantaged/ Low Income/ SEND).
- The new entitlement for working parents of two-year-olds (from 1st April 2024) has 75% of codes validated compared to 57% nationally. This is an additional 614 children in Gateshead.

Our strengths cont.

- Termly support visit from our Early Years Inclusion Consultants to all private and voluntary settings. This is available to schools with early years children and also childminders. Termly network meetings with specialist speakers to upskill the sector. 85% of Special Needs Coordinators have received a level 3 SENCO award.
- Safeguarding and Compliance Childcare officers offer targeted support. They deliver bespoke safeguarding training, network meetings and termly newsletters to keep the sector up to date.
- Early years Teaching and Learning Consultants offer a Service Level Agreement of targeted support and training. Through delivery of the DfE Experts and Mentors covid recovery programme they have supported settings in gaining higher Ofsted ratings.
- We hold termly meetings of all the above professionals alongside Portage and the SEND Early Years teachers to reflect and target our support efficiently.
- We lead on the Home Learning Environment element of the Family Hubs offer.

Challenges and Concerns

- The number of disadvantaged two-year-olds who are eligible for funding has decreased because the government has not increased the thresholds in line with inflation or increases in minimum wage. (24% over the last 5 years in Gateshead).
- Recruitment and retention of staff continues to cause difficulties with expansion to meet the demand of the childcare expansion.
- Financial funding incentives of £1000 are available in neighbouring LA's but Gateshead is not in the pilot. (Newcastle and Northumberland)

Next Steps

- Implement the Childcare Expansion.

Sept 24 – 15 hours for working families with under two's

Sept 25 – 30 hours for working families with under two's and two-year-olds

- To address the recruitment issue in the childcare sector we are working with the Family Learning Service, Post -16 and Learning and Skills to develop training pathways and to support networking. The government has introduced childminder grants to encourage new starters.
- Monitor the supply and demand by ward, specifically the availability of places for the most vulnerable children.