

Inspection report for Coxford Sure Start Children's Centre

Local authority	Southampton City Council
Inspection number	383417
Inspection dates	2–3 February 2012
Reporting inspector	Diane Wilkinson

Centre leaders	Team Manager – Sean Holehouse Project Coordinator – Paula Grogan
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected
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Linked school if applicable	Shirley Warren Learning Campus Primary and Nursery School
Linked early years and childcare, if applicable	Co-operative Community Nursery Family Projects, Warren Centre Rainbows Pre-nursery and Parent and Toddler Group

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.

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Introduction

The inspection addresses 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 co-located partner primary and nursery school 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

This inspection was carried out by an additional inspector and an early years inspector. The inspectors held meetings with the team manager and project coordinator as well as members of staff and representatives of the local authority. Discussions were also held with a variety of families who visited the centre during the inspection, members of the locality advisory group and parents' forum, and representatives of the partners who work with the centre. Inspectors observed the centre's work, including some activities taking place at St Jude's Church Hall, Fairisle Infant School, Coxford Community Centre and the Warren Centre. They also visited the Co-operative Community Nursery and looked at a range of relevant documentation.

Information about the centre

Coxford Sure Start Children's Centre is a phase two, full core-purpose centre which opened in July 2009. It serves a 30% disadvantaged locality in the west of Southampton. The main office is housed in the Warren Centre with which the centre works closely, including the National Childminders Association and the Warren Centre's creche. It is adjacent to the Shirley Warren learning campus. A small number of services are offered in activity rooms at the Warren Centre, with the majority being offered at the satellite centre situated in the nearby St Jude's Hall. Other activities are held in a variety of community locations. This centre is open Monday to Friday from 9am until 5pm and some events, including for fathers, are held at the weekend.

Southampton City Council provides governance to the centre. A new locality advisory board group and 'Natterjacks', a parents' forum, have been formed to support the centre's work. Leadership roles have been reorganised over the past year, with the

team manager and project coordinator jointly overseeing the day-to-day running of the centre.

There are 1,240 children under five years of age living in the centre’s reach area, with 69% of their families registered at the centre. The large majority of families are of White British heritage. Since the centre has opened, there has been a 20% increase in families from Black and minority ethnic and Eastern European communities moving into the area, and this is now around 30%. The majority of the latter speak English as an additional language. The percentage of families affected by unemployment and/or in receipt of benefits is above the city average. Children’s skills on entry to the Early Years Foundation Stage are below those expected for their age and very low in some aspects of communication, language and literacy, and 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

Coxford Children’s Centre provides a good service for families. Centre governance and staff work especially well with a wide range of partners to support families, particularly those experiencing significant difficulties, resulting in an excellent level of care, guidance and support. Many families speak of the difference the centre’s work makes to their lives, typically calling it ‘life-changing’. They praise the very friendly and helpful professionals, one family commenting, ‘They are always there for you.’ Safeguarding is excellent, benefiting target groups and families subject to a child protection order or the Common Assessment Framework (CAF) especially well, particularly those families experiencing neglect or domestic violence. The outstanding assessment of need support mechanisms are very quickly put in place, the pre-CAF often pre-empting more serious concerns. Highly individualised support is provided, including in families’ homes. Those families who access universal services also benefit from the strong focus on their needs and are extremely satisfied with centre services and those of partner organisations they are signposted to.

The centre has improved the outcomes of families. The percentage of children

reaching expected levels by the end of early years education has risen year-on-year, with the lowest 20% of children catching up well, partly due to effective support provided by pre-school providers. Parents and carers benefit from the wide range of courses and advice that help them acquire parenting and workplace skills, with a growing number able to return to work. Activities for target groups, for example lone parents, have a positive impact on their lives and their children's development. Centre staff promote a healthy lifestyle well, for example in activities like 'Bumps and Babes' with families' commitment to physical activity very good. Breastfeeding rates are improving strongly, although they are still below average, with the centre identifying the need for more peer support. Childhood obesity, which is slightly above average, has been more difficult to improve, because of the lack of affordable, healthy food in the locality. Addressing this is a major priority for the centre and its partners.

Excellent relationships with staff encourage children and adults to express their views on the centre's work well. Adults and children who use the centre get on exceptionally well together and effective modelling of good behaviour and well-led courses on parenting skills help children to behave well.

Strong governance and a well-developed culture of accountability is considerably supported by the very regular and comprehensive analysis of data, giving centre staff a clear picture of the impact of services. In their short time in post, centre leaders have strengthened the excellent teamwork with partners and shared their determination to enhance services further. Self-evaluation is accurate and the business plan very well targeted at important priorities. This, together with evidence of past improvement, gives the centre a good capacity to improve further.

What does the centre need to do to improve further?

Recommendations for further improvement

- Increase the percentage of breastfeeding mothers through improving the level of peer support available.
- Take steps to decrease childhood obesity by working closely with local community groups and the city council to improve the availability of affordable healthy food in the centre area.

How good are outcomes for families?

2

Good use made of the city's parks and the surrounding countryside with activities such as 'Walk on the Wildside' promotes healthy exercise very well and they are especially popular with fathers. 'Leapfrogs' and 'Creepy Crawlies' enhance children's physical development. A strong focus on emotional health helps families deal, for example, with postnatal depression. The 'Quitters' weekly clinic has helped decrease smoking during pregnancy. Families enjoy healthy snacks at activities, with the 'First Time Parenting Programme' and the cookery courses funded by Family Learning ensuring parents recognise the importance of healthy eating, although not all of

them follow this through at home.

Families feel very safe and secure in all the sites used by the centre. Playworkers model safe play especially well so children quickly learn to assess risks. Adults receive excellent information on how to avoid hazards at home with fewer children attending the hospital with accidental injuries.

Families greatly enjoy centre activities because staff respond well to their needs. 'Stay and Play' does this especially well, also ensuring all learning and development areas are covered. The city-wide initiative to promote oral language has seen excellent progress in this area. These strengths, together with close liaison with childminders and preschool settings, help children to achieve well. Extra support for children at risk of falling behind, including those with a specific need or disability or who speak English as an additional language, in settings such as the Co-operative Community Nursery helps them to catch up well.

Parents praise the many courses offered, including those run by the Warren Centre where the crèche makes a real difference to the number who can attend. A wide range of needs are met, including those of teenage parents. Courses like 'The Incredible Years' have a marked effect on children's behaviour, which is good. Those who learn English or obtain vocational skills are helped to gain employment which has a positive impact on families' future economic well-being, especially those on low incomes. 'I wouldn't be where I am now except for the centre' is a typical comment. Excellent relationships between staff and centre users ensure families provide very good feedback on activities, which is used effectively to adapt them. For example, the Saturday 'Men Behaving Dadly' is increasing father and male carer involvement. The excellent promotion of parents' confidence encourages them to volunteer to help at centre events.

These are the grades for the outcomes for families

The extent to which children, including those from target groups, are physically, mentally and emotionally healthy and families have healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which children are safe and protected, their welfare concerns are identified and appropriate steps taken to address them	1
The extent to which all children and parents, including those from target groups, enjoy and achieve educationally and in their personal and social development	2
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	2
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	2

How good is the provision?

2

Assessment of need based on a clear understanding of the local area and high levels of knowledge of families using the centre is key to its success. All professionals are extremely good at signposting users to services, including those provided by the private and voluntary sector such as 'Quitters'. This ensures parents have very good access to activities supporting parenting skills, including managing behaviour.

Many centre activities encourage families to learn and play together, such as the popular 'Bumps and Babes'. 'They run a fantastic group and help develop skills through play' is a typical comment. The toy library also effectively supports learning at home. There is very good advice on how to support children at home, with visits made to families experiencing difficulties, for example by the community playworker. Excellent partnerships with local nurseries, preschool settings and childminders ensure parents have access to good-quality provision and help to improve children's achievement, notably for those with a significant need. Lone parents, workless households and families affected by a disability benefit considerably from this. Liaison with settings on improving children's communication skills through the city's 'Every Child a Talker' initiative has resulted in excellent progress in this aspect.

Excellent teamworking ensures all who work in or with the centre provide consistent advice, for example on giving up smoking, which has led to a decrease during pregnancy. Partnership working on a CAF or child protection order is outstanding, a major reason why care, support and guidance, and safeguarding are excellent. All professionals work exceptionally well together through the 'Team Around the Child' approach. Parents speak very movingly of the great difference the centre and its partners have made to their lives, especially through offering sensitive support and advice in times of crisis. 'I can't thank them enough' summed up the views of many. There is a good focus on meeting adult training needs; for example, learning to speak English, or apply for a new job or benefit, with the Warren Centre and Jobcentre Plus staff providing excellent advice. The former holds a very good range of courses, including in English and mathematics. Adults also have access to a wide range of vocational training which makes a real difference to families' lives with one previous user gaining the skills to play a key role in centre activities as a member of staff.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The extent to which the range of services, activities and opportunities meet the needs of families, including those in target groups	2
The extent to which the centre promotes purposeful learning, development and enjoyment for all families, including those in target groups	2
The quality of care, guidance and support offered to families, including those in target groups	1

How effective are the leadership and management?

2

Day-to-day running of the centre is very good. Centre managers benefit considerably from the quarterly progress meetings with local authority managers, which support self-evaluation and improvement planning especially well. This ensures that services are continually evolving to meet families' needs so that the centre provides good value for money.

The exceptionally strong focus on meeting families' needs, especially for target groups, has improved outcomes, for example for teenage parents. Very good feedback on activities given by participants indicates high satisfaction and the confidence to request adjustment to meet needs. Families are very well informed during the new advisory board and 'Natterjacks' meetings, although there has been too little time to see the effect of this.

Partnership working with a very wide range of agencies and close liaison with the Shirley Warren and Co-operative nurseries and the Rainbows pre-nursery is a significant strength. All partners spoken to praise centre staff and share their vision of providing the very best they can for families' needs. This means, for example, that services for the most vulnerable families are especially well coordinated and effective, particularly when delivered through the pre-CAF, CAF and child protection orders. This helps ensure safeguarding arrangements are excellent. The vetting of staff and training in paediatric first aid and child protection are fully up to date. Rigorous risk assessments are well monitored by all who work with the centre and families are provided with excellent advice on how to keep safe including when dealing with domestic violence.

There is a strong commitment to preventing discrimination, with diversity celebrated in many activities so that all families, whatever their background, develop confidence and self-esteem. The inclusion of disabled adults or children in activities is a strength. This helps ensure good equality of opportunity.

The large majority of families in the area are registered at the centre, with the excellent exchange of information between partners helping to engage those hard to reach. A very well-established pool of outreach workers, for example family support workers, offer one-to-one support in families' homes. Staff work hard to involve families in their work, valuing their feedback and strengthening services as a result.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The extent to which governance, accountability, professional supervision and day-to-day management arrangements are clear and understood	2
The effectiveness of evaluation and its use in setting ambitious targets which secure improvement in outcomes	2
The extent to which resources are used and managed efficiently and effectively to meet the needs of families, including those in target groups	2

The extent to which equality is promoted and diversity celebrated, illegal or unlawful discrimination is tackled and the centre fulfils its statutory duties	2
The effectiveness of the centre's policy, procedures and work with key agencies in safeguarding children and, where applicable, vulnerable adults	1
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	1
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	2

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

Findings from the concurrent inspection of Shirley Warren Learning Campus Primary and Nursery School and the most recent inspection reports of the Co-operative Community Nursery and Rainbows, the Fairisle School Community Pre-Nursery and Parent and Toddler Group contributed to this inspection's judgements.

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Summary for centre users

We inspected the Coxford Children's Centre on 2–3 February 2012. We judged the centre to be good overall.

We would like to thank those of you who spoke to us during the inspection, including the considerable number who came into the centre especially to do so. Our thanks also go to the many professionals from partner agencies who spoke to us.

We are impressed by how many of you praised the difference that the centre and its partners are making to the lives of your families. You told us that staff give you lots of very good advice and our evidence agrees with you. We judge the level of care, support and guidance you receive to be excellent, especially when you have difficult problems to deal with. In this aspect, staff are exceptionally good at working with other professionals such as health visitors and midwives, the early years support teacher, community workers and Jobcentre Plus staff. A common view voiced by one parent was, 'People are always there to help us with our problems.' We saw lots of examples of how they have helped you, for example to manage your children's behaviour, increase your workplace skills or receive all the benefits you are entitled to. Where families need specialised help, for example with a specific need or disability, staff are very good at putting them in touch with the right professionals to

help them. 'We would have no idea what's out there otherwise,' summed up the opinion of many.

The centre is supported well by Southampton City Council and it is well led and managed. Many of you told us how willingly all who work at the centre and its different venues listen to your views and take them into account. They keep a very close check on whether activities are helpful to you and adjust them if necessary. This way, they have recognised that it would be helpful to those of you who want to breastfeed your babies if you have an experienced mum who can give you advice and support. We have asked the centre to ensure there are always appropriately trained people on hand to support those who need it. Staff have also identified the need to find other ways to encourage you to provide healthy meals for your families such as by ensuring there is cheaper, healthy food readily available to buy. We have asked them to carry on working hard in these areas so that they can improve healthy outcomes further.

We are pleased that children enjoy centre activities like 'Stay and Play' or 'Creepy Crawlies'. These support their development well and help you to learn about activities you can do with them at home. The toy library helps you in this aspect also. Close links with childminders and preschool settings like Rainbows and the Shirley Warren and Co-operative Community nurseries help your children to do well when they move on to school. Children who find new learning difficult are making increasingly good progress. A recent programme to help develop children's communication skills is having a very positive effect. For parents or carers who need support, there are good opportunities to gain parenting skills, especially in managing behaviour. You have good access to training, including learning English and mathematics or vocational skills which make it easier for you to gain work. We are pleased that so many of you provide feedback on the activities and that those of you who feel confident enough volunteer to help at activities.

The full report is available from your centre or on our website: www.ofsted.gov.uk.