

Inspection report for West Exe Children's Centre

Local authority	Devon
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Reporting inspector	Mark Lindfield HMI

Centre leader	Sarah Baker
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected
Centre address	Cowick Street, Exeter EX4 1HL
Telephone number	01392 279361
Fax number	
Email address	sarah.baker@devon.gov.uk

Linked school if applicable	West Exe Children's Centre Nursery School
Linked early years and childcare, if applicable	Little Ones Daycare

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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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.ofsted.gov.uk

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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.

This inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and an early years inspector.

The inspectors held meetings with the centre manager, the centre's senior management team, representatives of the local authority, the advisory board, partnership agencies, members of staff and families using the centre.

They observed the centre's work, and looked at a range of relevant documentation.

Information about the centre

In 2007 West Exe became a phase 1 children's centre alongside the mainstream nursery school on site. The centre draws families from the city of Exeter and surrounding areas in the wards of Exwick, St Thomas, Redhills, Alphington and Ide.

West Exe Children's Centre Nursery School has places for 100 children, with the majority of children attending either for the morning or afternoon. The centre is accountable to the local authority and is governed directly by an advisory board formed from the school's governing body. Children's levels on entry to early years education are variable and a significant proportion have weak speaking and listening skills.

Little Ones Daycare is an independently registered childcare setting located within the children's centre site. Little Ones has been registered since 2006 and is open during the week from 7.45am to 6.00pm for 50 weeks of the year. A maximum of 38 children may attend the setting at any one time.

The centre serves a large geographical area. Within this area, two lower super output areas are in the 5% most disadvantaged areas in the country and three other areas are in the top 20% of most deprived areas nationally. An average proportion of families in the West Exe areas and an above-average proportion of families in Exwick

are dependant on workless benefits. The very large majority of the community served by the centre is from a White British heritage. A small but increasing proportion of users are from minority ethnic families. A small but rising proportion of families speak English as an additional language.

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

West Exe children's centre provides good support for the children and families in the area and is having a positive impact on outcomes. The centre has built on its own programme of activities and has successfully increased registration and participation rates and improved the engagement of those groups that are harder to reach.

Services with health and social care are very closely integrated and they have a positive impact on improving most outcomes for families. Partnerships with health and social care provide comprehensive packages for the majority of vulnerable families within the centre's area. These services are based on regular meetings and good sharing of information between these key partners. The centre provides support appropriate to families' needs and maintains contact with families over time to sustain improvements. Senior leaders and the advisory board demonstrate a good understanding of the local area and have adapted services well to suit local needs. Overall, capacity for sustained improvement is good.

Strong partnership working in the locality enables centre staff and health professionals to provide a range of activities. This ensures a good balance between open access and targeted support to those families who need it. For example, the centre provides universal health clinics alongside 'Hey Let's Play' sessions which encourage a wide range of parents and their children to attend. Specialist staff are well deployed so that they attend these popular sessions and are on hand to offer advice and support and signpost parents to targeted sessions where appropriate. As a result, breastfeeding outcomes have improved over the past three years following increased one-to-one support and the setting up of specific 'Baby Café' sessions. However, while the proportion of parents sustaining breastfeeding is in line with local authority figures, it is consistently below the local authority average in the Exwick

area. Outcomes for users in the Exwick area are lower than in other local areas. Senior leaders and the advisory board are actively working to find suitable accommodation to improve the access of vulnerable groups of users in this area.

Safe practice is a high priority through all aspects of the centre's work and parents report feeling safe and welcome. The centre maintains a high profile within the local community through popular and well-attended open days, which make good use of its excellent outdoor area. Staff celebrate its work well through informative newsletters, and throughout the centre there are attractive displays of photographs and children's work. The centre is developing more effective links with other partners to improve families' economic well-being, although this is at a relatively early stage.

Regular, formal evaluations of programmes and surveys of users, informal conversations and case studies provide convincing evidence of high levels of users' satisfaction and appreciation of the centre's work. The centre has employed a consultant to develop its interrogation of data and has identified specific areas within the centre's reach to target its work. As yet this information does not provide clear information on the levels of engagement of different groups of users attending activities and services. This prevents the inclusion within the centre's plan for improvement of clear and measurable targets to increase levels of engagement. Targets to improve obesity levels and reduce the numbers of emergency hospital admissions caused by unintentional and deliberate injuries to children and young people across the centre's reach area are not specifically defined in relation to the children's centre plan for improvement.

Parents and their children make good progress in their achievement and personal development. Adults are provided with courses to improve their qualifications and basic skills. Children within the nursery school make good progress in their learning and development. However, the proportion of children across the centre's reach area working at expected levels at the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage is in line with local authority levels, and below the national average.

What does the centre need to do to improve further?

Recommendations for further improvement

- Improve families' economic well-being by developing partnership arrangements with professionals to provide increased financial guidance and employment advice.
- Further develop systems to track and monitor the take-up of services and activities by different groups of users and evidence impact.
- In partnership with the local authority, improve early learning outcomes so that the percentage of children achieving 78 points or more increases.
- Ensure that the centre continues to seek suitable accommodation to extend its provision to meet the needs of vulnerable users within the Exwick area of the centre's reach.

How good are outcomes for families?

2

Outcomes for children within the Nursery school and Little Ones Daycare are good. Children adopt healthy lifestyles, demonstrate that they enjoy their learning and behave well. The good quality of the provision takes account of the interests and includes opportunities for Nursery children to have good access to outdoor activities at all times.

The vast majority of pregnant women in the locality register and receive antenatal care within the centre or at neighbouring sites. Parents have good access to a range of health professionals who provide good levels of support, advice and guidance. This has had a clear impact, for example in raising breastfeeding rates, although these vary across the reach area, and in maintaining high immunisation rates. Health trainers funded by the centre, provide advice and support to improve the healthy lifestyles of parents and children, and their support is well received at the centre and in other community localities. Strong support for fathers has helped to develop their involvement in their children's learning. The young parents' group is supported by a midwife, maternity care worker, family support worker and health visitor, encouraging high rates of attendance, including parents from the reach areas of other children's centres. Counselling sessions provide strong support for parents with low self-esteem, feelings of isolation and with post-natal depression and the centre is able to provide clear evidence of the success of this support in helping adults to overcome these significant issues.

The number of emergency hospital admissions caused by unintentional and deliberate injuries to children and young people is higher than local authority averages. However, adults and children say that they feel safe when using the centre, which provides a warm and welcoming environment. Systems to identify and share safeguarding concerns are well established. Relationships are strong and users say that they feel confident in expressing any concerns that they may have. A wide range of evaluations show that sessions have boosted users' self-esteem as well as improving adults' skills in safety and behaviour management. Paediatric resuscitation sessions are provided regularly for parents, who report that sessions are 'really clear and concise information well delivered in a way that is easy to understand'.

Parents report that the sessions and activities provided have helped to improve their management of children's behaviour. Inspectors observed thoughtful and sensitive support for families facing challenging circumstances. There is evidence that a good proportion of families where there are child protection concerns are improving their parenting skills and outcomes for children.

There are good links between the centre and the nursery school. The senior teacher has high expectations and is part of the leadership team. Training is used well to develop staff's expertise and has resulted in a consistent approach to developing children's early communication skills. Assessment and tracking show the majority of children in the nursery school make good progress as a result of high quality

education and care. The centre has developed links with other settings to ensure that children's transition to local schools is a positive experience. However, Early Years Foundation Stage data for the reach area shows that children's achievement is variable and the gap in achievement between children of different abilities remains wider than average.

The centre has been successful in helping some parents and carers into further learning and training. Achievements of adults gaining Level 1 and 2 qualifications are well monitored and some have continued courses at the local further education college. Young parents receive direct support to encourage them to return to further education, employment or training. The centre provides childcare alongside a number of courses, allowing parents the opportunity to access training. The centre is working with a range of other agencies to develop adults' employment prospects and financial stability and to find suitable housing for the high numbers of families on workless benefits in the area.

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	2
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	3

How good is the provision?

2

The centre demonstrates a good knowledge of the families and area it serves and shows a clear commitment to adapting provision to meet their needs. Regular meetings with centre staff, including health and social care professionals, assess users' changing needs and provide appropriate support for families facing challenging circumstances. For example, the centre organises joint visits with health visitors and family support workers to sensitively prepare families and encourage their engagement in the centre's activities.

Partnerships to develop families' economic well-being are satisfactory and the centre works with adult education professionals to provide appropriate courses in basic skills. However, partnerships to develop families' financial stability and to improve their careers and readiness for employment are less well developed. The centre

recognises this weakness and has developed links with YMCA and is starting to work with Credit Union to help families in debt and to improve users' economic well-being. It plans to provide specific presentations about benefits and housing advice and information at future Parent Voice sessions.

The centre's varied programme provides lots of opportunities for parents to develop their personal and parenting skills. Good quality provision for children in the nursery school promotes purposeful learning and development across a wide range of areas. Good use is made of the outdoor environment to allow children in the Nursery school to develop their independence and learning, although children in Little Ones Daycare have more limited access to outdoor areas. The centre has helped to provide appropriate resource boxes to support private and voluntary pre-school providers within the reach area.

Parents have regular access to basic English, maths and information and communication and technology courses at the centre. The provision of childcare for a range of activities and sessions encourages users' attendance, especially by young and lone parents. Adults are signposted to continue their studies at Exeter College and the centre provides childcare to ensure good take-up by lone parents. The centre is beginning to track users' uptake and the impact of adult education. The centre provides clear and helpful guidance and advice through leaflets, posters and displays of job vacancies. The centre is successful in engaging families who face challenges or crises, with positive effects. For example, young parents have been encouraged to return to college and gain qualifications.

The centre positively seeks to engage views of non-users and has clear strategies to engage with families in the more deprived areas within the reach area. These have had positive impact on take-up of activities by vulnerable groups, especially fathers, young parents and lone parents. Within the locality there is an awareness of other vulnerable groups, including those of ethnic minority heritages, and the centre is actively looking for ways to meet their needs.

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	2

How effective are the leadership and management?

2

The children's centre manager provides strong leadership and a clear direction. The advisory board has a shared vision about its role in improving services and understands the strengths of the centre's work in providing for families in the

community. Senior leaders demonstrate a good knowledge of the families and area it serves and a commitment to adapting provision to meet the needs of vulnerable groups of users. Senior staff share enthusiasm and commitment to doing the best for children and their families. Parents regularly contribute to the governance of the centre. All hold high expectations for the centre and ensure improving outcomes for users. As a result, the centre provides good value for money.

Safeguarding is high priority and all agencies understand the implications of the wider safeguarding agenda. Staff demonstrate good understanding of child protection procedures and work closely with a range of agencies to identify and act upon concerns at an early stage. Observations during the inspection, comments from parents and case studies demonstrate the centre's good levels of personalised care for families in crisis.

The centre promotes equality and diversity well. It works on the principle of a balance of universal services and targeted sessions for vulnerable groups of users. Good strategies are in place to increase participation of target groups, including fathers, disabled children and those with special educational needs, young parents and families of minority ethnic heritages. The centre has developed a clear understanding of the needs of the local area. It has obtained detailed data and information but these are not used consistently to evaluate the participation rates of all vulnerable groups of users and to set clear targets for improvement.

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	3
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	2
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	2
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

The inspection team took account of the judgements made in 2009 in the separate inspections of West Exe Children's Centre Nursery School, the West Exe Play Scheme and Little Ones Daycare.

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Summary for centre users

We inspected the West Exe Centre on 23–24 February 2012. We judged the centre as good overall.

Thank you to those of you who contributed to the inspection by sharing your experiences and telling us about the part the centre plays in your lives. We heard the difference the centre is making to you and your families. The centre provides good support and help for you and your children. In particular, staff from health and social care teams work closely with staff at the centre to provide you with a good range of services and sessions. Staff work closely with each other to assess your needs and to provide support that helps you to make good progress and improve your lives. Staff take a good deal of care and trouble to make you feel welcome and to provide appropriate support. This helps you to feel safe and helps a number of families to improve their children's safety.

The centre works closely with local health workers to help you to develop a good understanding of healthy lifestyles. Children in the nursery school are helped to develop healthy eating and make good progress in a wide range of areas. The centre has helped to ensure that your children all receive immunisations, and an increasing number of mothers breastfeed their children. However, there are still places within the local area where breastfeeding rates are lower than average.

The centre provides good quality activities that attract a high number of you to attend. Several sessions are popular, including sessions for fathers and for young parents, with people coming from beyond the local area to attend. Children in the nursery school make good progress in their learning and development. However, the proportion of children reaching expected levels at the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage varies across the centre's area and we have asked the local authority to work with settings to improve this. The centre has started to put in place activities and events to help you to find financial advice, support and guidance and develop routes into employment. We have asked the centre to help more of you to improve your financial stability.

The centre manager, senior leaders, staff and members of the Parent Voice and advisory board all have the same desire to make this centre the best it can be and to ensure that you all make improvements in your lives. They work well together and are a close and supportive team. Senior leaders have a good understanding of the local area. They use a range of data and information to decide where to target their work at those families most in need. This helps to make sure that they provide sessions which help those of you who are most in need with support. We have asked them to use their data information to analyse which sessions attract different groups of families and to set targets to improve the attendance of any groups that are under-represented.

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