

Inspection report for Whitley Bay Children's Centre

Local authority	North Tyneside
Inspection number	383472
Inspection dates	1 - 2 March 2012
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Date of previous inspection	Not applicable
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Linked school if applicable	Appletree Gardens First School 108584
Linked early years and childcare, if applicable	Whitley Bay Children's Centre Creche EY341070
	Grosvenor Community Pre-School EY339272

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 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 one additional inspector and one early years inspector.

The inspectors held meetings with staff and managers from the centre. Inspectors also met with parents and representatives from North Tyneside local authority, as well as a number of partners, including those from health, education and the voluntary sector. They observed the centre's work, and looked at a range of relevant documentation.

Information about the centre

Whitley Bay Children's Centre is a purpose-built phase two centre. It is on a site shared with Appletree Gardens First School in Monkseaton, Whitley Bay. Governance is through North Tyneside Council and an advisory board. The centre is part of the North Tyneside East locality under the leadership of the Head of Children's Centres East. A range of partners, including those from health, social care, employability programmes and adult education work with the centre to deliver services for families.

The centre meets its core purpose and serves a community, which is relatively socio-economically privileged with some small pockets of severe deprivation. The majority of local families are of White British heritage with some minority ethnic families, in particular those from Bangladesh, living in the area. Unemployment levels are in line with the national average and around 78% of adults in the area, have at least a level one qualification. The proportion of children who live in households without paid employment is low at 7%, as is the percentage of children living in families in receipt of income support benefit at 9%.

Children enter Early Years Foundation Stage provision with skills and abilities that are at or slightly below those typically found for their age.

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

Whitley Bay Children's Centre provides a good quality of service for children and families. Good leadership, management and effective partnerships are leading to cohesive provision and good outcomes for families.

The centre gives safeguarding the highest priority, with exemplary policies and procedures in place to ensure the safety and protection of families and children. Staff demonstrate an excellent understanding of child protection policies and procedures. Effective communication with other agencies enables timely sharing of information. As a result, the safety and progress of children identified as in need or those subject to a child protection plan are outstanding.

The promotion of equality and diversity is good. The inclusion of all families and children is central to the vision of the centre and is fully promoted in all aspects of its work. The centre has a good understanding of its key target groups and, as a result, outcomes for those families with circumstances that make them vulnerable are good. Good on-site crèche facilities ensure adults have equality of access to learning while their children are safe.

The centre successfully engages with the majority of its key target groups. In particular, it is highly successful in engaging with the local Bangladeshi community, lone parents, disabled children and workless families. However, engagement with fathers is low. The capacity of the well-used small centre building is full. The centre does not currently use outreach venues, in the town, to increase the offer of courses and sessions.

The enjoyment of children attending the centre is evident from their happiness and results in their good progress. The centre has a good impact on improving educational outcomes and is narrowing the achievement gap between the highest and lowest-achieving children.

This has reduced in the last three years from 25% to 18% and is below the national average of 31%. The majority of adults benefit from well-planned learning, including parenting programmes and literacy and numeracy courses. As a result, their personal development is good. Case studies demonstrate a high number of families are improving their economic well-being by gaining qualifications or progressing to further training, education or employment. One young parent told inspectors, 'My life was in a mess. The centre has put me back on my feet and pushed me in the right direction. I have now gone on to do an apprenticeship.'

Care, guidance and support for families are good. Partnerships with health professionals help ensure that families improve their health and well-being, and health outcomes are good. Participation in healthy cooking sessions targeted at identified families, helps increase parents' and children's knowledge of how to stay healthy. As a result, obesity rates of children in Reception Year are low at 6.7% and below local and national averages.

The local authority and members of the advisory group, with their wide range of professional expertise, provide good support and direction to the centre's work. Families' views are highly valued and help to shape the range of services and activities offered. However, low representation of parents and community members on the advisory board means that families are not always sufficiently involved in making strategic decisions.

The centre demonstrates a good capacity for sustained improvement. Outcomes are good and improving because the centre constantly monitors the quality and impact of services and identifies how it can improve them. However, the centre does not bring together, as a whole, all the outcome data partners provide. Therefore, it is difficult for leaders, managers and the advisory board to monitor the full impact of the centre's work with accuracy and to set precise targets.

The centre provides good value for money. It uses its resources effectively and provides good quality of provision leading to good outcomes for families.

What does the centre need to do to improve further?

Recommendations for further improvement

- Bring together all of the outcome data in order to measure the full impact of the centre's work and set precise improvement targets.
- Increase parent and community involvement in strategic decisions through their greater representation on the advisory board.
- Increase the capacity of the centre to engage with more families, particularly fathers, by providing some services in community and other local venues.

How good are outcomes for families?

The centre is an extremely safe and secure environment. Children who are subject to a child protection plan or the Common Assessment Framework (CAF) process receive highly effective individual support and, as a result, their progress is excellent. Families develop an excellent understanding of how to keep safe and reduce the risk of injury. The centre's successful courses, including 'First Aid' and 'Save a Baby's Life', result in parents improving their confidence and parenting skills. One parent said, 'Going on the course was the best thing I ever did. It meant that because I knew what to do, I literally saved my baby's life when she choked.'

The centre promotes health and well-being effectively through its range of activities and partnerships with health services. Families using the centre are developing a good knowledge of healthy lifestyles because of advice and support which promote healthy living. The level of attendance at health clinics is good and immunisation rates are high. Although numbers are static, the percentage of babies that are breastfed at six to eight weeks is good, as is the impact on reducing childhood obesity and smoking cessation rates.

Through a wide range of play and development opportunities, parents are learning how to support their children's learning. Attendance at crèche provision leads to good outcomes for children and they are developing good skills for the future. Parents and children treat each other with respect. Adult learning courses are improving outcomes for families. Case studies demonstrate that families improve their skills, gain qualifications and progress to further or higher education or employment. In the last two years, 79 parents gained qualifications, 43 progressed to further or higher education and 24 gained jobs. A further 56 qualification successes are expected in the current year. 'I have passed my numeracy level 1 and I am working towards my level 2,' said one parent. 'After I complete my literacy and numeracy qualifications, I want to do a business administration course at college,' said another parent.

The centre routinely listens to and uses the feedback of families to shape and develop its services. Parents and children make a positive contribution to the development of the centre through volunteering. A high number of parents and community members volunteer in the centre, supporting sessions, recruitment and administration. This helps the sustainability of the centre. However, too few families participate in making strategic decisions of the centre, as too few are members of the advisory board.

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

The centre's clear knowledge and understanding of the community it serves lead to the delivery of good-quality provision. The excellent contribution by the training coordinator means that training, courses and progression routes are carefully planned based on the assessment of individual needs. The building is well-equipped to provide activities for families, adult learning courses and a crèche for children. The majority of workless families and lone parents, with children under four-years-old, access services at the centre. However, the limited capacity of the small centre building restricts the offer to families, including fathers and some courses and sessions are full or have waiting lists.

The centre promotes learning effectively for children and adults. Staff use information about children's starting points to plan their learning and recently introduced systems are starting to measure their progress. Parents are encouraged to support their children through enjoyable activities, such as 'Stay and Play' and 'Story Sacks'. The centre celebrates adults' and children's successes through publications, presentation events and displays of work.

Strong partnerships result in effective care, guidance and support for families, including advice on smoking, alcohol and drug misuse and sexual health for adults. Family support workers are successful in working with families with circumstances that make them vulnerable, and families particularly value home visits and individually tailored support. The effective approach to care, guidance and support is demonstrated by the improving outcomes. However, because of recent, short-term, low staffing levels one family had to wait a few weeks before they received individual support. Parents receive good information, advice and guidance for on accessing training, benefits and work. Parents say that the centre has made a big difference to their lives. Typical of parents' comments was, 'The centre saved my life. It really helped me to keep my child. Coming to the crèche has helped him develop and be a happier child. I am now going to college so I can get a job.'

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
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How effective are the leadership and management?

2

The centre staff team demonstrates a clear vision of inclusion and commitment to the success of the centre. Accountability arrangements are clear and understood. Staff and partners share high expectations and ambitions, and they effectively drive forward and improve services for families. Professionals from a range of agencies make an effective commitment to partnership working and to improving the life chances of children and families, which results in good and improving outcomes. Overall, the centre seeks and welcomes the views of all families and uses them well to develop the provision.

The promotion of equality and diversity is good. The centre promotes the inclusion of all families and children in all aspects of its provision, to ensure that their diverse needs are supported and barriers to access are removed. Good individual support is provided for disabled children, which helps their progress. One parent said: 'My child was born with health problems and we were really isolated. The centre has been fantastic. My little boy loves it here and he is doing really well. The staff have given us so much support and always make sure we can get a place for the sessions we want to attend. I don't know where we would be without them.' The centre is effective in engaging with the majority of its key target groups, but only a minority of fathers engage with the centre. There is excellent attendance in sessions specifically provided for families from minority ethnic groups, with 31 of the 45 local Bangladeshi families registered with the centre.

Safeguarding arrangements are outstanding. The centre is highly effective in ensuring children and families stay safe through close attention to child protection processes and robust vetting and recruitment procedures. The safeguarding of children is given the highest priority and the centre consults exceptionally well with families and partners to improve safeguarding arrangements. For example, the centre is working closely with local bed and breakfast owners, the police and the housing department so that they know when families arrive in this seaside resort, and move into temporary accommodation.

Outcomes for families are good because the centre constantly monitors the quality and impact of services and identifies how it can improve them. However, the centre does not bring together all of their partners outcome data in order for leaders, managers and the advisory board to accurately monitor the full impact of its services and set precise improvement targets.

The good resources at the busy centre are managed efficiently to meet the needs of families, leading to good outcomes. Families using the centre state that provision and support are good and make a strong contribution to their families' well-being. The centre, therefore, provides good value for money.

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 secures 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	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

None.

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Summary for centre users

We inspected the Whitley Bay Children's Centre on 1 - 2 March 2012. We judged the centre as good overall.

Thank you very much for talking with us and letting us come into your sessions. The information you gave and the stories you shared with us helped us to make our judgements. Many of you talked about how the centre has helped you and your children. You told us how the centre has supported you to improve your lives and how you now have more confidence. It was clear that you are proud of your achievements. You told us how it has become easier to ask for help and support because of the friendly welcome and the

relationships that you develop with centre staff. You also told us about the friends you have met and the things you have learnt because of your involvement in the centre's activities.

We found out that many of you have learnt new things and developed new skills, and many of you gain qualifications, go on to further training or find work. You told us how the involvement with the centre and courses such as 'Save a Baby's Life' are improving your ability to keep your children safe. We found that staff have an excellent understanding of child protection procedures and that they are well trained.

You enjoy the sessions with your children such as 'Stay and Play' and 'Story Sacks'. Those of you with children in the crèche value the good care your children receive. We found that children benefit from accessing services at the centre and make good progress from their starting points. The centre works particularly well with the adult education service to give you access to courses to help improve your own education and future employment opportunities. The centre is successful at engaging with the majority of local families that need support but the limited space in the centre means that sessions are often already full. Although attendance by lone parents, minority ethnic or workless families' and disabled children is good, few fathers engage with the centre. We have asked the centre to find ways to increase these numbers and to seek access to other venues, in the town, so that more families most in need can benefit from their services.

Your children behave well and you learn more about how to stay healthy. We found that health outcomes are good overall. The level of attendance at health clinics is good and immunisation rates are high. The number of babies that are breastfed at six to eight weeks and the impact on childhood obesity and smoking cessation rates are good.

The centre listens to you and asks you what you think of the services and activities they offer. They change how and when they do some things because of what you say. Everyone seems to get on well together at the centre and there are lots of opportunities to volunteer. However, very few of you are involved in making strategic decisions about your centre through being a member of the advisory board.

We found that all the staff are keen to promote equality and diversity. Many of the families with the greatest needs are enjoying sessions to help them and their children. Families treat each other with respect. The centre works well for everyone in the community, irrespective of their background or disability. The centre has been continually improving and knows what it needs to do to improve further. However, we have asked them to bring together all of their data so they can more carefully monitor the full impact of their services and set targets to improve.

We thoroughly enjoyed spending time at your centre and we wish you and your families all the best for the future.

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