

Inspection report for Earlham Early Years Centre

Local authority	Norfolk
Inspection number	383431
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Reporting inspector	Jean-Marie Blakeley

Centre leader	Felicity Thomas
Date of previous inspection	Not applicable
Centre address	Cadge Road Norwich NR5 8DB
Telephone number	01603 454271
Fax number	01603 251341
Email address	head@earlham-nur.norfolk.sch.uk

Linked school if applicable	Earlham Nursery School Larkman Primary School
Linked early years and childcare, if applicable	Earlham Early Years Centre EY285666

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.

An inspection of the maintained nursery 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 senior managers from the centre. Inspectors also met with parents, members of the governing body and representatives from Norfolk Local Authority as well as a number of partners, including those from health, social care, education and the voluntary sector. They observed the centre's work, and looked at a range of relevant documentation.

Information about the centre

Earlham Early Years Centre includes a local authority maintained nursery school, a day nursery and a phase one children's centre. It is located on a large 1930s council estate, on a site shared with Larkman Primary School, in Earlham, on the outskirts of Norwich. The centre is based in two buildings, the main one being the original nursery school, with a community annexe sited in the primary school building.

The local authority has commissioned the governing body of the nursery school to govern and manage the centre. A committee of the governing body comprising professionals, parents and community members forms an advisory board, which guides and supports the work of the centre.

Outreach family support is delivered through the centre's community team. Health visitors, a social worker, a speech therapist and a clinical psychologist are co-located with the community team and deliver some services within the annexe and satellite venues. The centre commissions specialist support for teenage parents, pregnant teenagers and families with at least one child under five years from two charitable

organisations, Embrace and Break-Supporting Young Parents and Home-Start, Norwich.

The majority of local families are of White British heritage and there is a minority ethnic population of around 23%. The area was designated as an asylum seeker area in 2004.

The centre serves a very disadvantaged area with 47% of families living in one of the 10% most deprived areas of the country. Of the other families, 22% live in one of the 20% most disadvantaged and the remainder live in one of the 30% most disadvantaged. The overall unemployment rate for the area is high and many families are second- and third-generation unemployed. Low skills and qualifications, exceptionally large families, domestic violence, mental ill health, high crime rates and antisocial behaviour, high teenage pregnancy rates, a high number of traveller families and parents and children with learning disabilities are all features of the area. Fifty-one children are currently subject to a child protection plan. At 41%, a high percentage of the 1101 children under four-years-old in the area live in workless families. The centre does not have data for the number of children living in families that are in receipt of the childcare element of working tax credit.

Children enter Early Years Foundation Stage provision with skills and abilities that are well 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

3

Capacity for sustained improvement

The centre's capacity for sustained improvement, including the quality of its leadership and management

2

Main findings

The overall effectiveness of Earlham Early Years Centre is satisfactory. Strong leadership results in good quality of provision that significantly influences the improving outcomes for users. Although outcomes overall are satisfactory, the centre is steadily challenging the particularly low aspirations and educational achievement of local families.

Learning opportunities for children who attend the onsite nursery school and day-

care provision, as identified in their concurrent inspections, are outstanding and, as a result, their progress is excellent. Results from the Early Years Foundation Stage Profile for schools in the area, demonstrate that the gap between the highest and lowest-achieving 20% of children is narrowing. This has improved from 34.4% in 2009 to 26.9% in 2011. However, the local authority recognises that, although 179 two-year-olds are eligible to access free day care, the centre currently only has capacity for 20, with plans to increase this to 32.

Safeguarding the health, safety and well-being of children and families is a high priority at the centre. There are clear policies and procedures, which staff consistently apply well. Effective communication with the social worker based at the centre is critical to the timely sharing of information and well-coordinated support. As a result, the safety and progress of the high number of children identified as in need or subject to a child protection plan are good.

The promotion of equality and diversity is good. The centre successfully engages with families with the greatest need of support and intervention. The inclusion of all families and children is central to the vision of the centre and is fully promoted in all aspects of the centre's work. Children with disabilities receive good one-to-one support. The 'International Friendship Group' is successful in increasing the engagement of minority ethnic families.

The quality and delivery of services for existing users is good and for children in nursery provision it is outstanding. However, although numbers are increasing, engagement with families is only satisfactory overall. The centre uses its available resources well to provide good quality services to the families with the greatest need. However, the need for early intervention and support in the area is exceptionally high which limits the centre's ability to provide its good support and services to all those who may benefit from it.

The centre demonstrates good success in lifting the confidence of targeted parents and increasing their parenting skills. Parents have access to a suitable range of services to support them back into employment, and some have become volunteers. However, the centre is restricted in signposting adults to pursue further learning or training because of the reductions in the local authority's adult education provision. Many parents still lack aspiration to pursue further training or job opportunities. The centre finds it difficult to recruit parents to the advisory board in order for them to be involved in making strategic decisions about the centre.

The ambitious, dedicated, highly regarded, head of centre provides effective management to ensure the day-to-day running of the centre is smooth and efficient. Centre staff strive hard to improve the life chances of local families. The committed governing body provides effective governance and strategic direction for the centre. However, there is minimal guidance and support from the local authority, which is reviewing its own systems to improve support for, and the monitoring of the centre's performance.

The centre has a good capacity to improve as evidenced by its concerted actions to improve outcomes. Managers use data well to monitor the centre's performance and target its services to the families in most need of intervention and support. Overall performance has consolidated and improved. Self-evaluation and development planning are good and are used effectively to continuously improve the provision and improve outcomes, particularly for children. The centre provides good value for money. It uses its existing resources efficiently and effectively to provide good quality of provision. However, some partners, particularly the health authority, do not provide the centre with sufficient accurate, local data on the impact of its services on outcomes or take sufficient ownership of the centre's performance indicators for health outcomes.

What does the centre need to do to improve further?

Recommendations for further improvement

- The local authority should ensure that:
 - there are sufficient local resources to support and provide services, including the availability of high-quality day-care provision, for the exceptionally high number of families and children who are vulnerable due to their circumstances
 - key partners, particularly health services, share the responsibility to improve outcomes and provide the centre with local data on the impact of their services
 - it implements its plans to increase support and undertake effective performance management for the centre.
- Provide more opportunities for parents to attend adult-education classes in order to improve the economic well-being of families.
- Increase parents' involvement in making strategic decisions through their greater representation on the advisory board.

How good are outcomes for families?

3

The children's centre provides a safe and secure environment for families. Children who are subject to a child protection plan or the Common Assessment Framework process receive good individual support and, as a result, their progress is good. Successful parenting courses result in parents improving their confidence and parenting skills. Families attending such courses develop a good understanding of how to keep safe and reduce risk. One parent said: 'The centre has helped us a lot. I have learned to keep calm and not to get angry with my children. I use the things I learned on the course to manage their behaviour in a more positive way.'

The centre promotes health and well-being through its range of services and

partnerships with health professionals. Families using the centre are developing healthy lifestyles because of advice and support that promote healthy living. The level of attendance at health clinics is good and immunisation rates are high. However, there is limited impact on reducing childhood obesity rates. The health authority does not provide data on smoking cessation or accurate local information on the number of babies that are breastfed at six-to-eight weeks, although available data indicate it is low at around 27%. The centre's recently introduced early breastfeeding support initiative is showing a positive trend, although it is too soon to fully measure its effectiveness.

Through a range of play and development opportunities, some parents increase their understanding of how to support their children's learning. Those adults identified as most in need of intervention and support improve their personal development and parenting. Attendance at day-care and nursery provision leads to outstanding outcomes for children. These children develop excellent skills for the future and their behaviour is good. However, with a long history of factions and trouble between families on the housing estate, relationships between parents are not always respectful. Local adults demonstrate a mistrust of professionals or those in authority and are reluctant to engage with them. However, parents of children in the nursery and in day care build good relationships with staff and improve their positive contribution. Some parents become volunteers in the centre, improve their skills, and some gain qualifications or employment. However, this is only a small minority of adults.

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	3
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	3
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's clear knowledge and understanding of the community it serves lead to the delivery of good-quality provision. The building is well equipped to provide activities and services for families, a nursery and day care for children. Outreach provision extends opportunities for families. Services of the centre are well used and

engage the majority of families with the greatest need. However, because of the exceptionally high level of need on this estate, this represents a minority of those families that could benefit from the good provision. The centre strives to engage with fathers and some attend the monthly meeting of 'Dads and Co'. One father said: 'Dads and Co is great – there are always lots of activities for the children and I get to play with them and meet other dads.' There are very few high-quality childminders in the area and, although the centre provides a room for childminders to meet in, there is little support to update and develop their skills.

The centre promotes learning highly effectively for children in the outstanding nursery school and day-care provision, which results in their outstanding progress. Staff carefully use information about children's starting points to plan their learning and measure their progress. Parents from key target groups are encouraged to support their children through enjoyable activities such as 'Stay and Play' and 'Baby Massage'. The centre prioritises places for the most vulnerable children and those identified as at risk and there is clear evidence of the impact of their learning.

Family support workers are successful in working with the most vulnerable families, and parents particularly value home visits and individually tailored support. Staff assess needs appropriately, provide sustained, ongoing support and refer users to other services. The highly effective approach to care, guidance and support is demonstrated by the improving outcomes for families who are vulnerable due to their circumstances. Parents comment that the centre has made a big difference to their lives. Typical of parents' comments was: 'My two-year-old has started talking since coming to the centre. The staff have really helped the whole of my family, they have given us so much support we are better parents now.'

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	3
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 head of centre demonstrates a clear vision of inclusion and strong commitment to the success of the centre. High expectations and ambitions are communicated to staff, and drive forward and improve services for families. Accountability arrangements are clear and understood. In recent times, the local authority has not provided sufficient monitoring of the centre's performance and is developing systems to improve this. Despite this, governors are highly supportive and have a strong commitment to the centre and to the ongoing development of its role within the community.

The inclusion of all families and children is promoted in all aspects of the centre's provision, to ensure that their diverse needs are supported and barriers to access are removed. Concerted action to promote greater equality has resulted in sustained and significant improvement in the engagement of those in most need of intervention and support. Gaps between different groups are closing. Services are particularly well targeted to improve outcomes for disabled children and families in minority ethnic groups.

Safeguarding arrangements are good. The centre is effective in helping to ensure children and families stay safe through close attention to child protection and robust vetting and recruitment procedures. The safeguarding of children is given a very high priority in the centre. Focused outreach work is contributing to improved standards of safety in families' homes. To help parents with poor literacy skills, the centre promotes their understanding of the centre's safeguarding protocols by producing clear, straightforward leaflets. Referral routes for parents to report concerns are clearly advertised.

Partnership working contributes to the improving outcomes and extends opportunities for families. For example, the partnership with a charitable organisation provides good one-to-one support for teenage parents. However, some partners do not take sufficient ownership of their contribution to the centre's key performance indicators. For example, the health authority charges the centre for the provision of some local health services and for the attendance of health visitors at some meetings. In order to increase the number of family support workers, the centre has decided not to continue to provide an onsite clinical psychologist, as the charge for this service is very high.

Outcomes are continuously improving and some are good because the centre constantly monitors the quality and impact of services and identifies how they can be improved. The development clearly prioritises its key actions and targets for improvement. The leadership team and the committee of the governing body have an accurate view of the impact of the centre's work on the families and children who use it. Families using the centre state that provision and support are good and make a strong contribution to their families' well-being.

The centre is particularly well focused on ensuring that services are effective and provide good value for money. The good resources at the centre are managed efficiently and effectively to meet the needs of families with the greatest need, leading to good provision and improving outcomes across all outcome areas.

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	3
The effectiveness of evaluation and its use in setting ambitious targets	2

which secure improvement in outcomes	
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	3
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	3

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

Inspectors used information from the concurrent inspections of Earlham Nursery School and the day-care provision at Earlham Early Years Centre, which were both judged as outstanding. Inspectors found that children's learning and development are outstanding with exceptional progress in communication, language, literacy, personal, social and physical development.

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Summary for centre users

We inspected the Earlham Early Years Centre on 20–21 March 2012. We judged the centre as satisfactory overall.

Thank you very much for talking to 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. You talked about how the centre has helped you and your children. You told us how the children's centre has supported you to improve your lives and how you now have more confidence. 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.

It is clear that you feel welcome at the centre when you bring your children to nursery. We found out that some of you have learnt new things and developed new

skills, and a few of you gain qualifications, go on to further training or find work. We have asked the centre to provide more learning and qualification opportunities for you.

Some of you told us how the involvement with the centre is improving your ability to keep your children safe. You know where to go to if you have any concerns. We found that staff have a good understanding of child protection procedures and that they are well trained.

You enjoy the sessions with your children such as 'Stay and Play' and 'Baby Massage'. Those of you with children in nursery value the good care your children receive. We found that children benefit from accessing this provision at the centre and make outstanding progress from their starting points. The centre is successful in engaging with the majority of local families that are in most need of support. However, we have asked the local authority to increase the centre's resources and the availability of high-quality day-care provision in the area. We have also asked them to monitor the centre more closely.

Your children behave well and you learn more about how to stay healthy. We found that health outcomes are satisfactory overall. The level of attendance at health clinics is good and immunisation rates are high. Although the centre does not have complete information on the number of babies that are breastfed at six to eight weeks, it is aware that these numbers are low, as is the impact on reducing childhood obesity rates. We have asked the health authority to take greater responsibility for monitoring and improving health outcomes.

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. However, we have asked the centre to find ways to get more of you represented on the advisory board so that you can be involved in making decisions about your centre.

We found that the centre is keen to promote equality and diversity. Many of the families with the greatest need are enjoying sessions to help them and their children. Families from minority ethnic groups particularly enjoy the 'International Friendship Group' where they can meet and cook a meal together. The centre works well for everyone in the community, irrespective of their background or disability. The centre is continually improving and knows clearly, what it needs to do to improve further.

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