

# Inspection report for Falmouth and Penryn Children's Centre

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<b>Local authority</b>	Cornwall
<b>Inspection number</b>	386980
<b>Inspection dates</b>	28–29 March 2012
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Robert Pyner HMI

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<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	Not previously inspected
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<b>Linked school if applicable</b>	Not applicable
<b>Linked early years and childcare, if applicable</b>	Not applicable

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.

Ready for sign off

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**Report published:** April 2012



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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 visited a range of provision at the centre and outreach facilities. They held meetings with the manager and staff from the centre, the chairperson of the advisory board and partners including health and early years providers. Inspectors spoke to parents using services provided by the centre or its outreach facilities and with senior managers from the local authority responsible for early years, childcare and safeguarding services in the area. Inspectors observed the centre's work and looked at a wide range of relevant data and documentation.

## Information about the centre

Falmouth and Penryn Children's Centre is managed by Cornwall Council. Originally two separate centres, but with the same manager, they federated in September 2011 and currently provide services from five buildings, two in Falmouth and three in Penryn. The Falmouth centre has delivered the full core provision since its designation in March 2006 as a phase one children's centre, serving an area judged to be within the 30% most disadvantaged in the country. The centre generally serves an urban area but also a number of outlying villages, particularly in the Penryn area, some of which are quite isolated. Both Falmouth and Penryn have significant areas of disadvantage.

The socio-economic background of the whole reach area is mixed. The main employers in the area are hotels, restaurants and retail outlets with Falmouth Docks and Exeter University, Tremough Campus, being the most significant employers. The unemployment rate is broadly in line with the average figure for Cornwall. However, a feature of employment is the low wage rates paid. Benefit payments to families and lone parents are above the national and Cornwall averages. The Index of Multiple Deprivation and Income Deprivation Affecting Children Index data for the area show higher levels of poverty than the local authority average. Super Output Profile data show that two wards within the children's centre reach area are among

the 20% most deprived areas within England. Most families in the reach area are of White British heritage.

The centre is based in a range of buildings within Falmouth and Penryn. It is managed by an advisory board representing the range of partners working in the centre and wider reach area, including parents. A new board was formed following the federation of the two centres in September 2011. Formal monitoring and evaluation are through the local authority locality management structure.

Data from the centre indicate that children’s levels of achievement on entry to Early Years Foundation Stage provision are below expectations for children of that age, with significant weaknesses relating to personal, social and emotional development and communication and language skills.

## 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**

**3**

## Main findings

Falmouth and Penryn Children’s Centre provides satisfactory support to the children and families in the reach area. The individual care, guidance and support offered to families, the promotion of equality and diversity and the links with partners are strengths of the centre. This reflects the hard work of the staff in developing appropriate services and the stability provided by the manager during the federation of the two centres, and the wider changes within local authority. The provision has a strong focus on safety for families and this is appreciated by parents. Together with this, effective application of local authority procedures ensures that vulnerable children and their families have appropriate multi-agency support.

The manager and staff in the centre have a broad range of outcome data available from the local authority and health partners, as well as local knowledge, in order to develop provision which meets the changing needs of families. Planning does focus on target groups and key performance indicators with some evidence of success, for example, providing support for disabled children, but in other areas this is less clear. In particular, data on health are not used effectively to make decisions on priorities, set targets and measure improvements made. An example of this is the lack of a

specific target for reducing teenage pregnancies which are above the local authority average in the reach area. Furthermore, although the centre has worked with health partners, early years providers and parents on a range of aspects relating to healthy living, the impact of this is yet to be seen and the percentage of children in the Reception Year classified as overweight and obese in the area currently remains above average. Additionally, although the centre has strong relationships with Early Years Foundation Stage providers in the reach area, this has not shown impact on the measures for achievement at the end of the Reception Year, with centre data showing some stark variations within the reach area.

The advisory board was reformed following the federation of the two centres and has good representation from partner organisations. However, it is still developing the balance between supporting the work of the centre and providing appropriate challenge for outcomes. There is clear evidence of strong parental support through the evaluation of courses and the centre is re-launching a parents' forum, although this is at an early stage. The local authority provides clear support and challenge for the centre through a monitoring programme leading to the annual conversation which is broadly based on outcome data.

The centre is housed in appropriate accommodation with some good resources in a safe environment. Parents who spoke to inspectors appreciated the open and welcoming nature of the centre and the easy access to advice and guidance, especially at times of crisis.

Overall, given the outcomes together with the developing provision and committed leadership, the centre's overall effectiveness is satisfactory. This, together with staff commitment and team work, good partnerships and the developing use of data in planning and self-evaluation, indicates that the centre has satisfactory capacity for further improvement.

## **What does the centre need to do to improve further?**

### **Recommendations for further improvement**

- Develop links with health colleagues to improve systems for needs analysis, target setting and outcome monitoring and use this information to provide services which will ensure that the following outcomes are at least in line with local authority averages:
  - the incidence of teenage pregnancies
  - the proportion of children in the Reception Year judged as obese or overweight.
- Focus appropriate support and challenge for settings within the children's centre reach area to improve the proportion of children who achieve at least 78 points across the Early Years Foundation Stage Profile in the Reception Year, with at least 6 points in personal, social and emotional development and communication, language and literacy.
- Develop the role of the advisory board to ensure that it is more involved in

reviewing outcomes for the children's centre and providing appropriate challenge for improvement.

## How good are outcomes for families?

3

The centre plays a clear role in the provision of health-related courses and activities, with a range of services developed from the regular links with health visitors which provide information on need. Generally, parents appreciate the support available. An example of this is the Bump to Breast group to support breastfeeding where one mother said the group gave her 'good tips such as how to hold my baby when feeding'. Another well-received offering is the child development course, 'Here's looking at you little one', for parents of children aged one to two years. This course supports understanding of child development. One father attending the course noted that it helped his child make new friends and a mother said, 'The course helped me understand what stage my child should be at and how I can help her develop. I got lots of ideas of things to do with her and have fun.'

However, not all health-related support currently shows clear indications of impact. Specifically, although it is a priority in the centre's action plan, the percentage of Reception children classified as overweight or obese remains higher than the average for the local authority and nationally. Additionally, despite the centre providing a base for the family nurse programme which helps young parents during pregnancy and up to a child's second birthday, the young parents' WILD group and educational opportunities, there is insufficient focus on services to support a reduction in the rate of teenage pregnancies which is above the local authority average in the reach area.

Procedures for ensuring children are safe and their welfare concerns addressed are effective. Centre workers are trained to use the Common Assessment Framework and this is used well to ensure integrated support. Local authority locality arrangements support safeguarding procedures effectively. There are good processes for safeguarding in recruitment for employed staff and volunteers. Assessment and recording procedures are comprehensive and secure, including those for children on a protection plan, using the local authority system. Rates for domestic violence are reducing in the area, supported by provision at the centre such as the SUSIE project. One member of this group said, 'This is a very safe and friendly group. I can say anything and know it will not go any further because we are all in the same situation.'

The centre has worked with early years settings to develop children's communication and language skills. However, although the latest data show a narrowing in the achievement gap for the lowest achievers and the rest, the percentage of children achieving the overall national benchmark in the Early Years Foundation Stage Profile remains below the national and local authority averages. Local authority data also indicate some significant variation in the quality of provision across the reach area.

Parents using the centre express their views and contribute to decision making whilst undertaking activities through appropriate opportunities for informal evaluations and surveys. Currently, the centre has a focus on developing the role of a parents' forum to support the flow of information about provision, although this is at an early stage. The centre has a clear partnership with Jobcentre Plus which provides valuable individual advice to parents and is involved in the 'Cornwall works with families' project to support families who are long-term unemployed. However, this project has only just started in the reach area.

*These are the grades for the outcomes for families*

<b>The extent to which children, including those from target groups, are physically, mentally and emotionally healthy and families have healthy lifestyles</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The extent to which children are safe and protected, their welfare concerns are identified and appropriate steps taken to address them</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which all children and parents, including those from target groups, enjoy and achieve educationally and in their personal and social development</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>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</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>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</b>	<b>3</b>

### **How good is the provision?**

**3**

The centre has a developing approach to the assessment and review of families' health, welfare, learning development and support needs, based on local knowledge with an increasing use of local authority outcome data. Figures show over half of the children aged up to five years within the reach area have benefited from planned provision in some form; this is in line with the local authority average. The centre has a range of data relating to target groups. This shows some effective engagement with fathers, young parents in terms of developing educational achievement and parenting and families with disabled children, but this is not yet used systematically to plan improvements and assess the effectiveness of specific provision.

Discussions with parents and evaluations from the centre show that parents, including those from target groups, feel that the learning provision generally meets their needs and helps them to increase their knowledge, understanding and skills through a range of opportunities. Activities are broadly based on the needs and interests of families including parenting, child development and health-related courses. Overall, the centre is successful in promoting purposeful learning and development for those families who access provision. A particularly successful grouping is the 'Young mums will achieve group' which supports access to courses

leading to literacy and numeracy qualifications. As one young mother said, 'Doing the course has encouraged me to get a job and learn to drive.'

An effective range of care, guidance and support is offered by the centre. Accommodation is welcoming with a range of information displayed and shared with parents by centre staff, particularly family support workers. A real strength is the local knowledge displayed by staff about the range of services available and they are skilled in signposting users to appropriate agencies, supporting them further individually if appropriate. An example of this is the highly individualised support for parents through the Oasis and TOPS groups for families with children who have additional needs, sometimes using highly specialised resources such as the Bubble Room.

*These are the grades for the quality of provision*

<b>The extent to which the range of services, activities and opportunities meet the needs of families, including those in target groups</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The extent to which the centre promotes purposeful learning, development and enjoyment for all families, including those in target groups</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The quality of care, guidance and support offered to families, including those in target groups</b>	<b>2</b>

## **How effective are the leadership and management?**

<b>3</b>
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Formal governance at the centre is developing. The federation of the Falmouth and Penryn centres enabled the advisory board to be broadened to include all stakeholders, including parents, and partners. The board is led by a committed and knowledgeable chairperson who is working on developing more parental input to support decision making through the parents' forum. However, overall, the advisory board is still developing in its role in terms of monitoring the impact on outcomes for service users of centre provision. The local authority has a clear system of support and challenge based on the centre's annual conversation, largely referenced by a range of outcome data with an increasing focus on target groups. The centre manager uses her local knowledge to support the range of services provided. She has managed the federation of the Falmouth and Penryn centre without disruption to services and understands the opportunities presented by the new centre structure.

Effective partnerships with other agencies and voluntary organisations are distinctive features of provision. Some of these are well established. For example, the toy library has been based at the Falmouth centre for some time and is run by volunteers. Parents note that this is a valuable resource and one parent said, 'Coming here enables me to understand the toys that my child likes. We took home some musical instruments when he went through a stage of playing with these.' The toy library also enables parents to meet together and learn about the provision offered and provides a good point of contact with centre staff.



The inclusion of all children and families is at the heart of the work of the centre. Positive images, resources and tailored programmes highlight the centre's determination to support groups who may be subject to discrimination. For example, the well-attended Colourful Women's Group supports women from different cultures to join together with their children. In addition, support for families with disabled children and those who have special needs is a strength of provision.

The centre's safeguarding, vetting and recruiting procedures are good. All systems to ensure that children are safe and protected are effective, involve multi-agency cooperation, if appropriate, and are firmly based on early intervention. Secure and robust recording systems mean that individual records for families are comprehensive and up to date using the local authority system. An example of broadly-based and multi-agency focused early intervention is the programme for the Penwerris ward in Falmouth which involves a range of appropriate professionals including the primary school on the estate.

The standard of accommodation across the sites linked to the centre is fit for purpose. Resources of all kinds are used and managed well. Self-evaluation is broadly accurate based on an increasing analysis of outcome data and with a developing focus on target groups. However, this is not yet consistently embedded in the evaluation cycle for the centre. Overall, the broadly sound outcomes and engagement of users, backed by developing leadership structures and good partnership working, mean that the centre provides satisfactory value for money.

*These are the grades for leadership and management*

<b>The extent to which governance, accountability, professional supervision and day-to-day management arrangements are clear and understood</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The effectiveness of evaluation and its use in setting ambitious targets which secure improvement in outcomes</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The extent to which resources are used and managed efficiently and effectively to meet the needs of families, including those in target groups</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The extent to which equality is promoted and diversity celebrated, illegal or unlawful discrimination is tackled and the centre fulfils its statutory duties</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness of the centre's policy, procedures and work with key agencies in safeguarding children and, where applicable, vulnerable adults</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>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</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>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</b>	<b>3</b>

range of provision	
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## Any other information used to inform the judgements made during this inspection

Inspectors used statistical information prepared by Cornwall Council to make judgements about the outcomes for children and their families in the Falmouth and Penryn Children's Centre reach area.

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## Summary for centre users

We inspected Falmouth and Penryn Children's Centre on 28 and 29 March 2012. We judged the centre as satisfactory overall.

Your children's centre provides a satisfactory range of services that are helping families and children in the community. The proportion of families who access the services offered by the centre is broadly in line with the average for Cornwall and parent users who spoke to inspectors noted that provision had helped them improve their parenting skills and enjoy the opportunities available to them. During the inspection, some of you told us how you had benefited from the support provided by the centre and how you appreciated the work of the staff, often helping you on a one-to-one basis. An example of this is the individual support parents receive through the Oasis and TOPS groups. You told us that the centre manager and staff are approachable and welcoming and that relationships are good.

The centre works hard to develop services right across the area, linking all the sites in Falmouth and Penryn. Staff are working to ensure that courses and provision are matched to needs across the centre's reach area so that you do not have to travel far to get the help that you need. The centre is also working to encourage parents from across the area to provide information on their views on how to improve services and get involved in activities. If you can, do provide your views as this will help the centre develop services.

Strong aspects of the centre include the programmes to ensure children are safe, partnerships with voluntary groups and other support agencies, for example Jobcentre Plus and health visitors, and the good quality individual advice on a range of issues. The inclusion of all children and families is at the heart of the work of the centre. When families find themselves in difficulty or even in crisis, the centre is able to help them effectively by providing information and support, including for general and welfare benefits.

The local authority monitors the work of the centre appropriately and is developing the information that the centre uses to make decisions about how to improve provision. There is a stronger focus on the needs of specific and targeted groups in order to support the centre to meet their needs. Staff work hard to make sure that centre sites are safe environments for families.

Although outcomes for parents and carers who use the centre are broadly satisfactory, some aspects could be developed further. For example, despite the fact that the centre provides a range of courses and support for young parents, the rates for teenage pregnancies in the area remain above average. In addition, the work undertaken by the centre and partners to support healthy living has not yet shown significantly reduced percentages of five-year-olds who are overweight or obese. Also, the centre should continue to support nursery and playgroup settings to improve the achievement of children, particularly in personal development and communication skills, when they start school. Finally, the new advisory board has been formed following the federation but it needs to develop its systems for supporting the centre and monitoring outcomes for users.

As part of the report inspectors have made the following specific recommendations to help improve provision at the centre.

- Develop links with health colleagues to improve systems for needs analysis, target setting and outcome monitoring and use this information to provide services which will ensure that the following outcomes are at least in line with local authority averages:
  - the incidence of teenage pregnancies
  - the proportion of children in the Reception year judged as obese or overweight.
- Focus appropriate support and challenge for settings within the children's centre reach area to improve the proportion of children who achieve at least 78 points across the Early Years Foundation Stage Profile in the Reception year, with at least 6 points in personal, social and emotional development and communication, language and literacy.
- Develop the role of the advisory board to ensure that it is more involved in reviewing outcomes for the children's centre and providing appropriate challenge for improvement.

You can help in improving the work of the centre by continuing to take part in activities that take place throughout the area, together with offering your views on how they can be made better.

Thank you to everyone who took the time to come and speak to us, we are very grateful and we wish you every success for the future.

The full report is available from your centre or on our website: [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk).