

Inspection report for Mundesley SureStart Children's Centre

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| Local authority | Norfolk |
| Inspection number | 362528 |
| Inspection dates | 22–23 September 2010 |
| Reporting inspector | Georgina Beasley AI |

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| Centre governance | Action for Children |
| Centre leader | Ian Duckmanton |
| Date of previous inspection | First inspection |
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| Linked school if applicable | Mundersley First School |
| Linked early years and childcare, if applicable | Pebbles Childcare and Family Services Ltd |

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.

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 registered early years/childcare provision was carried out at the same time as the inspection of the centre under Sections 49 and 50 of the Childcare Act 2006. The report of this inspection is available on our website www.ofsted.gov.uk.

This inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors.

The inspectors held meetings with staff, parents and carers, health professionals, day care, pre-school and first school staff, members of the Advisory Board, Jobcentre Plus and representatives of the Local Authority.

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

Information about the centre

Mundesley is one of four in the Poppylands Sure Start Children's Centre cluster. The majority of the 312 children who live in the reach area live in Mundesley with small clusters of population in Bacton, Gimingham, Trunch, Trimingham and Southrepps. Nearly all families are White British. A very small number are from Eastern European backgrounds. The economic position of families is mixed. The centre serves a rural community which is in one of the 30% most deprived wards in the country. Around 178 children live in families that receive workless benefits.

The Centre provides a base for a range of health, educational and social services that take place on site, in the home and in local community venues closer to where families live. An onsite voluntary pre-school provides for 52 places including nine under twos. Some day care and pre-school is provided by three childminders and two voluntary providers offsite. The children start pre-school with skill levels below those typical for their age. The Local Authority contracts out the leadership and management of services to Action for Children.

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 users and the wider community

2

Capacity for sustained improvement

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

2

Main findings

The Children’s Centre is good and serves its local area well. The senior managers give very clear direction and set very high expectations. All staff work as a cohesive team to provide effective support for children and their families. Several aspects are outstanding. The centre gives excellent and well-matched supports for the most vulnerable individuals, and to families who have an immediate and urgent need. Users say they, ‘appreciate the insight of staff’ in dealing sensitively to their specific needs. If necessary, the centre provides a free taxi service for users who would otherwise find it impossible to access important services and activities. This prevents the isolation of those who live in very rural areas. Safeguarding arrangements are robust and monitored rigorously. Everyone follows the agreed procedures to ensure everyone’s safety whether services are delivered onsite or in other localities. Everyone asked said they felt safe. The achievement and enjoyment of children and adults who use the centre are excellent, especially in personal development and emotional well-being. The large majority of users value the approachability of staff, feel that they listen and trust the advice they are given. The strong past record, good quality services and clear direction ensures the centre’s good capacity to improve.

The centre has a good range of anecdotal and detailed observational data about families and individuals. Consequently, staff know users’ needs extremely well and ensure they receive relevant services that meet their specific needs. There are excellent assessment systems for measuring the progress children make in their learning and development and in evaluating users’ levels of enjoyment. The centre is developing good systems for assessing the parenting skills of parents and carers who access the centre’s numerous groups and courses. It does not have recent enough data about some aspects of users’ health and wider economic well-being against which to compare its performance with national indicators. This limits its capacity to measure its effectiveness objectively and to plan for sustained improvement. Parents are able to express their views individually and through the parents’ forum. The centre does not regularly survey all of its stakeholders to find out why some users do not continue to access the services and so be absolutely sure it is meeting the needs of everyone in the reach, especially those who are hardest to reach.

What does the centre need to do to improve further?

Recommendations for further improvement

- Strengthen the collation of reach-based information and data about all outcomes for users' health and economic wellbeing
- Use reach-based information and data to set measurable targets against which to evaluate the effectiveness of services, to target the hardest to reach groups and to plan for sustained improvement.
- Seek more proactively the views of stakeholders within the reach area to inform the centre's evaluation and development of services.

How good are outcomes for users?

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Outcomes for children and their families are good. Every new mother is visited at home to promote healthy lifestyles and signpost the centre's services available to her and her family. The importance of immunisation and dental healthcare is shared during these visits as are other health services. The midwife and health visitors encourage pregnant and new mothers and their families to give up smoking during home visits. Although no precise figures are available, staff indicate that this individual support results in about a third of pregnant women successfully giving up. However, data indicates there are still more adult smokers in the reach area than national indicators suggest. The centre does not run formal programs to encourage and support smokers to give up and so increase the proportion of children living in smoke-free environments.

Children achieve exceptionally well in their personal, social and emotional development and early communication skills. Staff in the adjacent school endorse that, 'children are prepared extremely well for learning in the Reception year'. The speech therapist provides excellent support for parents and carers, childminders and preschool settings. As a result, there has been a remarkable improvement in the children's communication skills, especially of two-year-old boys. Parents and carers report that they thoroughly enjoy the varied opportunities to play with their children at Play and Stay and more formal opportunities such as the Learning Effective Adequate Parenting (LEAP) course where they develop their parenting and play skills. Adults especially enjoy the Baby Cafe, Daisy Chains group, the music program and the 'About Boys' course.

The centre staff work very effectively to raise the awareness and develop the knowledge of parents and carers about how to keep their families safe. Through the Toy Library, users are able to access safety equipment to use at home, such as stair gates and electric socket covers. Children who use the centre know how to keep themselves safe. Children who use the playgroup enjoy pushing the pads to open the doors, but none leave the building without an adult. One boy was overheard telling his parent to remember to, 'bolt the gate behind us'. Babies and toddlers who attend the Baby Cafe stay close by their parents and carers and/or adults with whom they feel safe.

Many parents become volunteers thus enabling them to make a positive contribution to the centre's work. The centre's open-door ethos and feedback sheets for every activity and service offered encourage users to express their views about what they enjoy and any improvements they would like to see. Following requests from parents and carers, the centre is repeating its 'About Boys' course to help them understand how boys learn and play, and so manage their behaviour more effectively. A parents' forum is held twice a year to gather views more formally. Its usefulness is currently being evaluated as parental representation on the recently formed local advisory board grows. The centre does not survey formally the wider community to enable all stakeholders within the reach area to contribute to decisions about its programme.

Teenage mothers make good progress in their personal development and, due to effective support, most are enabled to return to education. Through its positive relationship with Jobcentre Plus, the centre signposts users to relevant courses at local schools and colleges and to job vacancies. There are few formal systems for following up how many return to education or work as a result of staff efforts. This makes it difficult for the centre to evaluate whether further support is required. A more regular Jobcentre Plus clinic for all parents and community users actively seeking work is planned but is not yet available on site.

These are the grades for the outcomes for users

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| The extent to which children, including those from vulnerable 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 users enjoy and achieve educationally and in their personal and social development | 1 |
| The extent to which children engage in positive behaviour and develop positive relationships and users contribute to decision-making and governance of the centre | 2 |
| The extent to which children are developing skills for the future and parents are developing economic stability and independence including access to training | 2 |

How good is the provision?

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The E-Aspire assessment system enables staff to work together to track the progress of families against personalised learning and development targets. Individual learning plans as a result of discussions and reviews ensure services are well matched to individual need. The centre has recently introduced the Soft Outcomes Universal Learning (SOUL) system for assessing users' skills and confidence at the start of activities and again at the end to measure progress more accurately. The analysis of data in graphical form enables staff to evaluate quickly what went particularly well and those aspects that need more emphasis. It has resulted in changes being made

to the 'About Boys' and LEAP courses to better meet the needs of users and children.

The 'Learning for Everyone' programme successfully builds parents and carers' self-confidence and parenting skills. Playworkers visit families in their homes if necessary to show them how to get involved in their children's play. Parents often start coming to 'Stay and Play' groups held at the centre or local venue as they become more confident. The 'Beyond the Bump' group for teenage mothers delivers effective advice and support around playing and learning with their children and provides excellent support networks to enable many to get back into education.

The centre has excellent procedures for identifying and including the most vulnerable families and those who are hard to reach. The centre provides high quality support for children, individual users and families with a specific need. 'Daisy Chains' based at the Cromer Children's Centre provides highly effective support for children and adults with a special educational need and/or disability. The reciprocal partnership with Citizens' Advice Bureau (CAB) and Jobcentre Plus has given centre staff the skills to advise users about work-related benefits, and Jobcentre Plus and CAB staff to signpost childcare facilities for those users looking for work.

The care, guidance and support offered by the centre are outstanding. All centre staff are aware of each family's particular needs. They respond with great care and sensitivity at times of crisis and provide practical help to overcome barriers to learning and getting back into work. The centre gives parents of children who have special needs and/or disabilities excellent guidance in accessing services available from a wide range of sources. Parents and carers receive excellent guidance to all aspects of preventative treatment, such as immunisation and dental care. Adults can access a wide range of courses, some of which carry accreditation, concerning the physical and emotional wellbeing and safety of their children. The centre provides a wide range of very helpful information and advice on such topics as stopping smoking, sexual health and avoiding the hazards posed by the misuse of alcohol and drugs. These and other measures have resulted in improvements in the health of children and parents and carers who were previously thought to be at risk.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

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| The effectiveness of the assessment of the needs of children, parents and other users | 2 |
| The extent to which the centre promotes purposeful learning, development and enjoyment for all users | 1 |
| The extent to which the range of services, activities and opportunities meet the needs of users and the wider community | 2 |
| The quality of care, guidance and support offered to users within the centre and the wider community | 1 |
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How effective are the leadership and management?

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Strong and caring leadership from the programme manager ensures everyone shares high expectations for achievement and well-being. Action for Children ensures that governance arrangements are highly effective in maintaining safety and welfare and in establishing service level agreements that meet the needs of all users. Every member of staff has an annual review of performance and is held to account for his or her conduct. Effective personal support and professional training is available for all staff. The centre's zero tolerance to any discrimination by anyone who visits or uses the centre facilities results in a great respect for diversity.

The safety of children and users is given high priority. The centre makes sure that all staff and volunteers who work with children and users have had the required recruitment checks. Every member of staff attends mandatory safeguarding training within three months of their appointment. Regular updates ensure everyone is clear about national and local requirements. The centre works extremely closely with all agencies that use the centre to ensure that each organisation's health and safety and risk assessment arrangements are understood and followed consistently at all times.

Excellent cooperation between all agencies ensures integrated services meet users' specific needs extremely well. Representatives from health, local childcare and centre staff meet at least monthly, and more regularly if there is a concern, to discuss individual cases and to review service provision. As a result, the care for the physical, mental and emotional health and wellbeing of the most vulnerable individuals and families are met extremely well. Families of children who have special educational needs and/or disabilities feel very well supported in finding the right provision for their children's learning and development. Similarly, parents with disabilities are given excellent support that enables their children to be fully integrated into the centre's activities. The reciprocal partnership between the centre and Jobcentre Plus staff ensure lone parents attending either venue receive effective support and guidance in applying for benefits and in finding suitable childcare. This enables them to continue with their education or to find and/or stay in work. Diversity is celebrated effectively through multicultural resources and through International Group when parents from different nationalities come together to play with their children. A translation service is available to parents who do not speak English.

SOUL provides a useful tool for agreeing action plans and providing relevant supports for families who require more complex intervention. This enables the family to have clear ownership of the support they receive and enables the centre to track progress achieved. This is still relatively new and although targets are agreed these are not quantifiable. Therefore, the centre knows that progress has been made but is not fully clear about whether this is enough in comparison to national indicators. The centre action plan defines the actions it plans to take with the clear intention of bringing about improvement. When data is known, targets include precise measures against which to evaluate the success of actions. Measures for some health and economic well-being outcomes, including smoking cessation and adult education beyond basic levels, are not always included even though both aspects are improvement priorities in the centre's business plan. Careful analysis of spending

against Every Child Matters outcomes gives the centre a clear picture of whether it is giving more focus to one outcome than another. Regular monitoring of impact and users' needs ensures resources are matched to need. This includes maintaining the transport budget to enable users who live in rural areas to be reached and to benefit from the full range of services offered. The centre gives good value for money.

These are the grades for leadership and management

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| The extent to which governance, accountability, professional supervision and day to day management arrangements are clear and understood | 1 |
| The extent to which ambitious targets drive improvement, provision is integrated and there are high expectations for users and the wider community | 2 |
| The extent to which resources are used and managed efficiently and effectively to meet the needs of users and the wider community | 2 |
| The extent to which equality is promoted and diversity celebrated, illegal or unlawful discrimination is tackled and the centre fulfils its statutory duties | 1 |
| 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 evaluation is used to shape and improve services and activities | 2 |
| The extent to which partnerships with other agencies ensure the integrated delivery of the range of services the centre has been commissioned to provide | 1 |
| The extent to which the centre supports and encourages the wider community 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 findings from the inspection of Pebbles Day care and Family Services Ltd and the children's outcomes at the end of the Reception Year in personal, social and emotional development and in communication language and literacy contributed to the children's centre report and judgements.

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaining about inspections', which is available from our website: www.ofsted.gov.uk. If you would like us to send you a copy of the guidance, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

Summary for centre users

We inspected the Mundesley SureStart Children's Centre on 22–23 September 2010. Thank you for talking to us about yours and your children's experiences at the centre.

We judged your centre as good. Several aspects were judged to be outstanding. Particularly noteworthy is the significant and often immediate care, guidance and support given to those who have an urgent need. Some of you we spoke to told us that without the centre's help with childcare, you would have had to stop going to work or would not have been able to go on to college. Those of you who need specific help to get to the centre or other activities feel particularly well supported. Inspectors endorse the excellent support given to children, adults and families with very specific needs and/or disabilities. Safeguarding arrangements receive high priority from the centre staff and governance to ensure yours and your children's safety not only when you are at the centre but also when you attend one of the groups held at another locality. You all told us that you felt safe at the centre. Many of you told us how much you valued being able to talk to staff in confidence and how you trusted the advice and support they subsequently gave to you, your children and your families.

The centre manager provides strong and caring leadership. All staff share his high expectations for you and your children, especially in ensuring your welfare, personal development and emotional wellbeing. As a result, staff from the different agencies work very closely together to get to know you personally and ensure your specific needs are met. They value your feedback and repeat or adjust services accordingly: the 'About Boys' course is an example of this. Many of you are looking forward to taking part in the rerun after hearing positive comments from those who have already benefitted from the course.

The varied range of groups, courses and services meet all of your needs at some point. Attendance at the large majority of groups is growing and some are so popular that they are over-subscribed. The centre has fair and equal processes to try to make sure it includes as many of you as possible. The Baby Cafe gives excellent support to pregnant mothers and to those of you who breastfeed your children. The midwife and health visitors give extremely focussed support and knowledgeable guidance to help you ensure your children's health. Volunteers play an important and significant role in making you all feel welcome. Achievement and enjoyment of users who access the groups and parenting programs are excellent. Children who attend pre-school are extremely well prepared for their learning when they start school. Feedback from parents and carers reflect their children's enjoyment of the music group. The play workers and speech therapist work closely together to help your children develop their speech and language skills. This is particularly so for the boys. The toy library is a valuable resource in helping you to borrow toys and safety equipment to try out at home before you decide to buy.

We have asked your centre in partnership with the Local Authority and Action for Children to improve three things.

The centre collects a lot of information from you to help them plan individual services that meet your specific needs well. We have asked the centre to gather more precise information about how many of you benefit from health services, whether it can provide more practical support to help those of you who have asked to give up smoking and how many of you successfully return to work or education to improve your skills.

We have asked centre leaders to use this information to set more precise targets against which to measure not only whether it has been successful, but also by how much, and to compare its performance against national indicators to evaluate whether this is enough.

We know that the centre is always asking for feedback from those of you who use its services regularly and involve you in making decisions about its activities, groups and services. We have asked that the centre, in partnership with the Local Authority and Action for Children, to seek the views of the wider community to make sure it is reaching as many people as it can and encourage even more people to use the centre and so benefit from its good work.

Thank you again for welcoming us to your centre and telling us how you, your children and your families have benefitted from its work.

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