

Inspection report for Westwood and Ravensthorpe Children's Centre

Local authority	Peterborough
Inspection number	362621
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Reporting inspector	Susan Smith HMI

Centre governance	Family Care
Centre leader	Sue Carroll
Date of previous inspection	N/A
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Linked school if applicable	Highlees Primary School 110768 and Ravensthorpe Primary School 110761
Linked early years and childcare, if applicable	Little Tigers Day Nursery EY392716 and Westwood and Ravensthorpe Family Project EY389118

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.

This inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and an early years inspector. The inspectors held meetings with centre staff, representatives from professional partnerships, representatives from the advisory board, and the local authority, parents and carers. They observed the centre's work, and looked at a range of relevant documentation.

Information about the centre

Westwood and Ravensthorpe Children's Centre offers co-located services at two sites; Ravensthorpe Primary School and Highlees Primary School. It is a phase one children's centre and was designated in September 2005. The centre is governed by a registered charity Family Care on behalf of the local authority.

The original Westwood and Ravensthorpe Children's Centre boundaries were around the Westwood and Ravensthorpe estates, much of which falls in the 10% most economically deprived areas in the country. In 2009, the boundaries were extended to incorporate the West Town, Netherton, Thorpe and Longthorpe areas of the city, some of which fall outside 30% deprivation levels.

The area is made up of mixed housing, where 26% of households with dependent children have no adults working and 36% of households with dependent children have lone parents. The local area is also home to families from a wide range of ethnic and cultural backgrounds, including those of White British and Asian heritage. More recently, the area has seen an influx of families from East European countries. The percentage of families where English is not the first language is increasing.

The centre's premises are used to provide a range of activities including meetings, consultations and community activities. Evidence indicates that the skills and knowledge that children have when they enter Early Years Foundation Stage settings

is lower than those expected for their age. The centre offers the full core offer which includes early education integrated with day care.

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 overall effectiveness of the centre is good. This is a well-regarded and forward thinking children's centre that provides a range of good quality services for the families in its locality. The care, guidance and support provided are a strength as centre staff have a good understanding of users' needs, particularly those who are more vulnerable. The family support team is extremely effective at supporting families in times of crisis and difficulty. Inspectors met several parents who reported very positively on the support they had received.

The centre has developed good partnerships with a range of other agencies which ensure effective working practices, such as information sharing, safeguarding procedures and signposting to each other's services. The centre works hard to develop links with all relevant partners and plans are in place for developing closer working partnerships with the local private day care provision and the local schools.

The centre has undergone significant change over the last year with changes to management and staffing structures. This has resulted in a concerted effort to identify weaknesses in provision, and recent improvements are already reflected in improving outcomes for all children and users of the centre. Clear structures and procedures are in place to support future improvement. As a result, capacity to improve further is good.

The centre's approach to safeguarding, safe recruitment and child protection is robust and meets statutory requirements. Outcomes for users reached by the centre are good and improving. Users are responding well to courses and activities, such as summer outings to the seaside and first aid courses. Parents and children attend and enjoy a range of sessions, including 'Messy Play' and 'Little Explorers'. Early Years Foundation Stage and childcare provision is mainly good across the area although outcomes are still below the national average. The centre listens to users' views and

takes them into account when planning future activities. Examples include deciding the destinations of trips and purchasing more play equipment for the older children.

The centre is inclusive and users benefit from positive relationships as they and centre staff treat each other with respect and consideration. The centre has close links with the portage service which is a home-visiting educational facility for pre-school children with additional support needs and their families that is based at the centre. However, managers recognise the need to increase the support for children with special educational needs and/or disabilities and they have made links with the organisation Otter's Retreat to explore ways that they can work together to provide services to meet this need.

The centre is collecting a wide range of data and this is developing. Managers are beginning to analyse it more precisely as they recognise more needs to be done to ensure all potential users are reached so that the centre can have an even greater impact on the outcomes for users. The centre's business plan is seen as a working document and senior leaders adequately monitor progress on outcomes for current users. Targets are in place but not all are sufficiently measurable to show if outcomes are improving and whether targets have been met. This makes it difficult for those in governance roles, such as the advisory board, to challenge leaders and to hold them to account for the centre's success.

What does the centre need to do to improve further?

Recommendations for further improvement

- Analyse the data and trends to adjust services as necessary to ensure that all groups in the community that require support are reached and that all users needs are met.
- Develop the centre's business plan so that it contains sharp, measurable targets to enable leaders and managers to evaluate the success of their work and to enable the advisory body to challenge the centre's managers and hold them to account.

How good are outcomes for users?

2

The centre offers a range of child and family services which promote children's, parents' and carers' emotional well-being, physical health and understanding of how to adopt healthy lifestyles. Staff provide strong role models that successfully support children's positive behaviour and a culture of respect is evident throughout the centre.

Children are encouraged to learn about keeping themselves safe through topic discussions and through play-based learning. Initiatives such as activities to highlight safety issues in the home during national safety week help parents to develop a good understand of how to keep their children safe. There has been a steady increase in the number of parents taking advantage of obtaining safety equipment from the

centre so that they can protect their children in the home environment.

Vulnerable adults in the community are identified and their needs are met well. The centre effectively supports children with child protection plans and those who are subject to the common assessment framework process. Staff are fully aware of safeguarding procedures and follow the centre's policies to ensure that all children are safe and protected.

Parents attending healthy cooking sessions speak highly of its impact on changing the eating habits of their family. The 'Love Local' project successfully promotes the nutritional and environmental advantages of buying locally grow produce. Activities such as 'Jabadeo' are very popular and are effective in promoting the importance of physical activity in young children through fun movement sessions. Parents can access the 'Change 4 Life' website at the centre and eat healthily in the community café. Such strategies ensure that families are developing a good understanding of how to keep themselves and their children healthy. Parents report that they have valued guidance and gained a greater confidence when breast feeding.

Centre workers guide parents and carers to other providers for courses to improve employability and workplace skills. Parents particularly value the support received from the advice and training coordinator. Evidence in the form of thank you letters show how this support has had a positive impact on the lives of some people by enabling them to apply successfully for training courses and employment. As one client stated, 'She made me feel confident, and gave me brilliant suggestions that worked.' The use of volunteers within the centre is a good example of the commitment to developing users' confidence and to support them to move into further training, education or employment. However, lack of basic language and numeracy skills are a potentially significant barrier in preventing families from gaining economic stability. The centre recognises the need to provide more opportunities within the centre for families to gain these skills.

Parents value courses where they are introduced to a range of play experiences with a different theme each week, such as heuristic play and singing, as they develop a greater understanding of how to support their child's learning. For children attending the playgroup the development of personal and social skills is good. Children are developing good skills for the future.

The vast majority of parents and carers feel that they have a voice within the centre through the well-established parents' forum. A number of examples of how services have been provided or adapted to meet their specific needs were shared. An example cited was the introduction of additional activities through the summer holidays. However, the centre is aware that opportunities for parents and carers to influence services through the advisory board are not fully developed.

These are the grades for the outcomes for users

The extent to which children, including those from vulnerable groups, are physically, mentally and emotionally healthy and families have

2

healthy lifestyles	
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 users 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 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	3

How good is the provision?

2

All provision is of good quality and helping to improve outcomes for children, parents and carers who come to the centre. A good range of services and activities are delivered by the centre or on their behalf, to ensure there is a good balance of universal and targeted services provided to meet the needs of the community.

A range of case-study evidence demonstrates how the centre has supported many families facing a range of issues. The centre works well in partnership with other agencies to ensure it assesses the needs of users effectively. Such accurate assessment enables the centre to provide appropriate services and support, particularly for those with the greatest need. Centre staff are sensitive to the needs of families and family support workers often go the extra mile to support parents in times of crisis.

Assessment is used effectively to record children's progress and to inform teaching and learning in the Early Years Foundation Stage. These strengths mean that the centre very effectively promotes the learning and personal development of children. Parents also talk highly about the positive impact of the play sessions on their own learning and enjoyment. Several targeted sessions are run at centre locations to help parents and carers develop their skills in supporting the emotional, social and educational development of their children. Good-quality resources and equipment are available at these events.

The centre has established good links with health visitors and midwives who carry out baby checks and weighing sessions at the centre. Health visitors have been instrumental in the drive to increase the number of families, including some harder to reach families, registered with the children's centre. They ensure information about the centre and the registration forms are given to families on their home visit.

The centre has had some success in the past in attracting dads into the centre. Lately, the numbers of dads involved in the centre has been on the decline. The centre has responded to this by appointing a 'Dad's Worker'. Although the post is not

yet up and running the aim is that this will have a positive impact on sustaining the regular attendance of dads at the centre. Recently, the centre has formed a number of new partnerships such as working with National Association for the Care and Resettlement of Offenders (NACRO) to develop services to teenage parents. This ensures specific support is available to those users who need it the most.

Outreach work carried out by the family support team helps families understand child development by engaging parents in their child's play. The toy library is helping parents to offer a wider range of toys and resources to their children at home to promote their learning. The centre provides activities at weekends and through school holidays and considers provision for working families by arranging events at weekends.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

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	2
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	2

How effective are the leadership and management?

2

Governance is good and systems to ensure accountability are secure. There are clear lines of responsibility within the staffing of the centre and in decision making processes. Supervision and clinical support is given to staff by relevantly qualified managers ensuring that their professional development and knowledge is current. The local authority has gone through a major re-organisation. As a result it has moved to a locality-based model which ensures that there are clear lines of responsibility and support for the children's centre. The advisory board has been established and provides support; it has yet to mature so that it can provide sufficient challenge for the centre manager. The value for money provided by the centre is good because activities are thoughtfully planned.

The centre manager has high expectations of the staff team and service partners. Together they demonstrate genuine commitment, dedication and determination to improving outcomes for all children and their families. Relationships are good and staff are enthusiastic and positive about the work they do. They are proud of the impact they have on the lives of the children and families who attend.

The centre is using innovative ways to develop its services, such as linking with

Roehampton University to develop its practice with regard to promoting attachments between parents and their children. The centre is collecting a wide range of data and this is developing. There is evidence to show the good impact of the centre's work on outcomes, and the centre recognises this as an area to expand further.

Safeguarding arrangements are good. Child protection arrangements work effectively and ensure children are kept safe. Risk assessments are rigorous and monitored to a high standard. The centre has a nominated officer for safeguarding. All staff have undergone the relevant checks by the Criminal Records Bureau and all staff information is kept in a central record. Recruitment procedures fully comply with requirements.

The views of users are sought regularly through, for example, evaluations from those who have attended courses. The parents' forum provides an effective link between users of the centre and the advisory group. The centre has a strong commitment to providing an inclusive environment and removing barriers. They have developed services according to the needs of those attending the centre and are now beginning to reach out to people in the surrounding areas for their views to shape services. For example, managers are seeking suitable premises in West Town so that activities can be made accessible to all. It is too early to evaluate the impact of some of these new projects but a strong sense of forward planning is clear.

Self-evaluation is systematic and supported by evidence of the impact services are having on the outcomes of users. Targets are developed from the self-evaluation and identified gaps in service, but not all targets are sufficiently measureable to show if outcomes are improving and whether targets have been met.

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 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	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 evaluation is used to shape and improve services and activities	2
The extent to which partnerships with other agencies ensure the	2

integrated delivery of the range of services the centre has been commissioned to provide	
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 Ofsted report for Little Tigers Day Nursery and for Westwood and Ravensthorpe Family Project, which were both conducted in September 2009, were taken into account.

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 Westwood and Ravensthorpe Children's Centre on 6–7 October 2010. We judged the centre as good overall.

All staff place the upmost importance on you and your families and always provide a listening ear for you. They are passionate about creating a welcoming environment where you feel at home and are able to talk freely about things that matter to you or are causing you concern. As a result, you value the centre, which means you have no hesitation in using the services regularly. You are actively encouraged to contribute your views and your feedback is used constantly to develop the services provided to ensure they reflect any changes in your needs.

The centre offers a good range of services and activities for all families in the area, which are led by skilled and dedicated professionals. All centre staff are good at guiding you and referring you and your children to other activities and services they think you would also benefit from and enjoy. You told us over and over again that coming to the centre had increased your confidence and self-esteem. This is because centre staff and professionals from different agencies work closely with you and with each other to find out exactly what help and support you and your family need and making sure this is provided.

You told us that you think that the centre is a safe place for parents and their children. Inspectors agree with this view and think that staff work very well to ensure the health and safety of all who use the centre. The centre is also very good at helping children in need to be safe by working well with other agencies such as the health service and social care. They are helping you to keep yourselves and your children healthy by promoting healthy eating.

They also help you to support your children's learning and development at home by providing services which help you bond with your children, such as baby massage. They encourage you to engage in play with your children from a very early age at sessions such as 'Little Explorers' and 'Messy Play'.

Several of you have become volunteers at the centre and others have been successfully supported back into employment as a result of guidance from the advice and training coordinator.

We have asked the centre to analyse the data it collects to ensure that everyone within the community becomes involved in the centre and that the needs of all the users are met. We have also asked staff to develop the centre's business plan so that it contains sharp, measurable targets to enable leaders and managers to evaluate the success of their work. This will also enable the advisory board to challenge the centre's managers and hold them to account. The leadership team has appropriate plans in place to address this issue and we have every confidence that it will be successful.

We would like to thank everyone who came to speak with us. It was a privilege to be able to talk with you. Your honesty and openness helped us immensely during the inspection. We are very grateful for your help and we wish each of you every success for the future.

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