

Inspection report for Emneth Children's Centre

Local authority	Norfolk
Inspection number	362475
Inspection dates	1-2 December 2010
Reporting inspector	Julie Winyard HMI

Centre governance	Emneth Nursery School and Children's Centre
Centre leader	Mrs Susan Clarke
Date of previous inspection	n/a
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Linked school if applicable	Emneth Nursery School
Linked early years and childcare, if applicable	Emneth Nursery School

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 additional inspector.

The inspectors held meetings with the centre headteacher, users of centre services, centre governors, staff and outreach services.

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

Information about the centre

Emneth Nursery School and Children's Centre is a Phase 1 children's centre. It was designated in 2006 and was the amalgamation of an established Norfolk county nursery school, a day care centre for children aged three months to five years, developed under the neighbourhood nursery initiative and run by the school governors, and an existing Sure Start project of three cross-border mini-programmes. The governing body of the school was designated as the lead partner under local authority direction and the headteacher is the named lead for the school, day care and children's centre.

The children's centre's reach area is located in the far west corner of Norfolk, close to the Cambridgeshire and Lincolnshire borders. The reach area consists of 509 children under five years of age. The reach area surrounding Emneth Village extends out 15 miles at its furthest point and is predominantly within the 30% most disadvantaged areas; although sparsely populated there are identified pockets of poor housing. There are 9% of children living in workless households. There are very few families from minority ethnic groups or whose first language is believed not to be English. Ante-natal and post-natal universal services have been reduced over time and difficulties in recruiting health staff has been, and continues to be, a major challenge in this locality.

The reach area is served by five primary schools. Children's attainment on entry to

day care is well below that expected for children of their age nationally. The Nursery school is partnered with a special school in a nearby town and greatly benefits from their advice and expertise especially with regard to children identified as being on the autistic spectrum.

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

Emneth Nursery and Children's Centre is a good children's centre whose good provision enables all users to achieve good outcomes in most areas of their lives. The children's centre has grown out of excellent early years and childcare provision in the attached day care and nursery. Parents are highly appreciative of this provision and its impact on outcomes for children has been recognised as outstanding. However, although the outcomes for children who attend the nursery are excellent this does not yet extend to the wider community as the development of children's centre services across the wider reach area is inconsistent. Whilst those users who also access early years provision at the centre value the range and quality of groups available to support them and their very young children, this good provision does not always extend far enough or draw in sufficient users from the wider community. The governors provide good support and challenge to the nursery but admit that, 'We are all guilty of having our nursery hat on rather than our children's centre hat.' The headteacher of the nursery and children's centre provides good leadership very ably supported by a good senior leadership team, all of whom have a clear drive and ambition to improve provision and through this, outcomes for users. The team includes health professionals attached to the centre and there is good and effective integrated working. All are involved in formulating the centre development plan. However, because this is currently interwoven with the nursery development plan, it does not distinguish clearly enough between the work of the centre and the work of the nursery. Because of the good leadership of the centre and effective integrated services teamwork, the centre has a good capacity to make further improvements.

Outcomes for children are good. Children have good understanding of how to live healthy lifestyles. For example, they relish the opportunity to serve themselves at

lunchtime and are happy to try all the healthy foods on offer, including Brussels' sprouts! Their behaviour in the centre is outstanding because they enjoy all the activities presented to them and are fully engaged in learning. They make excellent progress from below average starting points and leave the nursery with attainment in all areas of learning similar to other children of their age. They feel completely safe in the nursery and work very well with each other and with all staff. The excellent support they receive for their language development and in learning other basic skills means they are extremely well prepared for the next stage in their education. This is confirmed by the headteacher of the main feeder primary school and carefully documented by the nursery who have excellent tracking systems, recording each child's learning journey very carefully. There are excellent outcomes for children with special needs and/or disabilities due to the skilful early intervention by home start and portage workers based at the children's centre and by day care and nursery staff.

Adult users of children's centre services are very pleased with the good quality of provision they receive. They have a good understanding of how to keep their families healthy because of the good support they receive through breastfeeding workshops and the baby café. One mother said, 'It's encouraged me to persevere; it's such a special time between mother and baby.' Fathers who attend the 'Dad's Group' also value the special time this has enabled them to have with their children and talk enthusiastically about the new recipes they have tried at home thanks to the ideas given to them in the group. Users are very grateful to staff for supporting them through periods of great difficulty in their lives. One user said, 'I would have gone insane without the groups'. Another user who was in a very vulnerable condition due to circumstances, talks with great depth of emotion about the consistent, practical and caring support received. All safeguarding procedures at the centre are robust and meet requirements. Staff and users have an excellent understanding of how to deal with any concerns they have and know who to go to with a concern.

Those users who take part in adult learning activities very much appreciate the opportunities this gives them to further their academic skills and say this helps them to help their children with their learning. Some parents have returned to work thanks to the good advice and support they have received at the centre which has boosted their confidence and self-esteem. There is some good anecdotal and case-study evidence that the good provision the children's centre provides has a positive outcome for all users who engage with services. However, this is still rather ad hoc and the centre does not have detailed or systematic records of outcomes over time; for example, as it does for the nursery and day care.

Users say there is no discrimination of any kind at the children's centre and that all users are given an equal opportunity to access services whatever their background or ethnicities, and are equally valued and supported. This aspect of the children's centre's work is outstanding. For example, the centre has a very positive relationship with the local traveller community who take an active part in helping the community to understand their culture and values.

What does the centre need to do to improve further?

Recommendations for further improvement

- Ensure that all children's centre services extend into the wider designated reach area.
- Sharpen recording systems so that there is clear, detailed and systematic evidence over time of the impact of children's centre services on users.
- Make a clearer distinction between the work of the children's centre and the work of the nursery school in development planning and governance.

How good are outcomes for users?

2

Users have a good understanding of how to help their children to live healthily. The good support they receive from health professionals, which starts with a home visit for all before the baby is born, ensures that emotional well-being is well supported. Parents say this gives them the opportunity to share any concerns they have and this builds trust. Parents feel confident because they understand that, 'There is no such thing as a stupid question.' Because of the good support they receive, mothers quickly grow confident with breastfeeding and data indicates this is sustained well through the early months of a baby's life. The weigh-and-play sessions help mothers manage their lives effectively, 'It's great because if I miss the clinic I have another opportunity at Weenies.' Children and adults feel exceptionally safe at the nursery and children's centre and at the outreach groups. Families who are supported through the Common Assessment Framework process find this helpful and are happy to work with centre and nursery staff as lead professionals. Children who have a child protection plan are very well supported in the nursery. The centre data for accident and emergency admissions and re-admissions indicates it is one of the lowest in the area. The Police Service Community Officer works very effectively with the centre for example together they supported one user through a difficult domestic violence situation.

The outcomes for adult users who take accredited courses at the children's centre are good. For example, on the most recent course, of the nine users who attended, eight achieved Level 2 in mathematics and seven achieved Level 2 in English. Users' feedback forms indicate they enjoy the courses and that they improve their confidence. The primary school headteacher reported that because of users taking courses at the children's centre, they are better able to support their children at school and that they have a very positive attitude to working in partnership with the school. Most of the local childminders attend the children's centre groups and say that this helps them to find new activities to explore with their children at home and also enables the children in their care to socialise regularly with their peers.

Users make a good contribution to the work of the children's centre. For example, there are several breastfeeding peer supporters who have been trained by the centre's health professionals to support other mothers. Users are also keen to support the running of groups if centre staff are not available. For example, one of

the local childminders leads the toddler group if need be. There is no parents' forum and users say this is because they do not feel the need for this. They find the centre staff so approachable that they can voice their views at any time and that centre staff respond well to their suggestions. Whilst this is true of users who currently engage with the centre, mainly those within the nursery school community, it does not represent the views of users in the whole of the reach area.

Representatives from Jobcentre Plus attend the centre once a month and users say they find this very helpful in enabling them to find out more about how they might get back to work and also about the benefits available to them to improve their families' economic well-being. For example, one user now has a part-time job. However, there is no robust data to show the impact of the beneficial outcomes of courses and back-to-work advice on improving families' economic well-being over time or for the whole of the reach area.

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 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	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

Health professionals based at the children's centre ensure that there is good coverage of the reach area with regard to home visits for expectant mothers and those who have recently given birth. During one of these visits, a children's centre pack is offered to parents and they are encouraged to register at the centre. Those who also use the day care and nursery make good use of this information. However, this is not consistent across the designated area and the centre knows that not all families who need services are being reached. Home visits are followed up by door to door contact from the head of community services, but this approach is not always effective at making face to face contact with potential users and a single leaflet drop is not sufficient to encourage users in the more isolated parts of the area to attend the centre. The centre is beginning to address this through increasing the capacity of its outreach team and through offering more groups in areas where potential users may not have transport. Even so, this has hampered the assessment of the wider

reach area and means that services may not be as well tailored as they could be to meet the needs of all families.

The requirements of the nursery community are assessed well and users say how relevant the groups and courses are to support them in their parenting and in understanding their children's learning and development. In 'Coffee and Chat' sessions, parents describes how staff, 'get to know the family and what your problems are so you don't have to keep repeating yourself to different professionals.' There is excellent support for children with special educational needs and their families, because the Portage and Home Start workers support each other very well to ensure that there are no gaps in provision. For example, sign language is taught very effectively to parents as soon as possible so that they can teach simple signs to their children to aid communication especially where there are speech and language delays or autism.

The children's centre promotes purposeful learning and development for all users who engage with the centre well. Users say they enjoy the opportunities to come together and talk about a range of topics related to their lives and their children's learning and development. They say the agendas are well planned, take account of their needs and that they find the centre staff very helpful and informative. Where learners take accredited courses they achieve well by gaining qualifications, particularly in basic skills. The nursery and day care celebrate children's achievement exceptionally well and adults' achievements are also celebrated through end of term events with the children, which enable them to see that their parents are achieving as well. Local childminders are good advocates for the centre and parents have attended groups due to their recommendations.

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	3
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

Leaders and managers at all levels are focussed on ensuring the children's centre provision is of the highest quality and meets the needs of its users. They are aware that they are not yet reaching all users and are working hard to achieve this. Governance of the centre is good because of the clear lines of accountability for all professionals based at the centre with professional supervision being provided by partner agencies where this is appropriate. The local authority is providing effective

support to the centre and is developing a more strategic approach to its children's centres across the county. However, there have been issues, yet to be resolved, with the Primary Care Trust for the area because information needed by the centre regarding live births has not been readily forthcoming. The health professionals at the centre have found a way around this problem and have acquired the information they need which they are using well. The governors of the nursery school children's centre manage aspects such as the budget well. This and the good provision and outcomes means the children's centre gives good value for money. However, the governors are not as focussed on the outcomes for the children's centre as they are for the nursery. Self-evaluation by the senior leadership team is robust and accurate. The centre knows its strengths and has identified where it needs to make further improvements.

Safeguarding processes and procedures are outstanding because these are of the highest priority. All staff have the required Criminal Records Bureau and recruitment checks. All required training is up-to-date with good systems to ensure that staff know when they need to refresh their training. Users also understand safeguarding and how to deal with any concerns they may have. Health and safety systems are robust and risk assessments are thorough and carefully evaluated. The Police Community Safety Officer works in close collaboration with the nursery and children's centre to ensure that all aspects of road and water safety are covered. He attends 'Coffee and Chat' sessions in the centre answering users' questions, as well as talking to the children in the nursery.

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	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	3
The extent to which partnerships with other agencies ensure the integrated delivery of the range of services the centre has been commissioned to provide	2
The extent to which the centre supports and encourages the wider	3

community to engage with services and uses their views to develop the range of provision	
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Any other information used to inform the judgements made during this inspection

The inspection of Emneth Nursery and Children's Centre in June 2009.

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 Emneth Children's Centre on 1-2 December 2010. We judged the centre as good overall. My colleague and I would like to thank all of you who gave so generously of your time during the inspection. We found your views most helpful and they have informed the judgements we made about the centre.

It was great to have the opportunity to see the excellent provision for children in the nursery and day care and to join them for lunch one day. We were both impressed at how confident they are in serving themselves and with their enjoyment of the delicious and healthy food. For example, they all tucked into Brussels' sprouts very enthusiastically! It is clear that they make excellent progress because of the outstanding care and teaching they receive. It was good to see how well children with special needs and/ or disabilities are supported, particularly through the 'I CAN' and other projects. The Home Start and Portage workers do a good job ensuring that children and families are supported from the earliest age. We also enjoyed attending some of the groups and appreciated the very positive atmosphere and hearing the good advice you receive from health professionals and the rest of the children's centre team. It was good to hear about those of you who have taken the good range of courses available and how well you have achieved for example in the mathematics and English courses. I enjoyed meeting the fathers in the 'Dad's Group' and hearing about how they value this opportunity to have quality time with their children. We found that the children's centre staff work very hard to provide a good selection of activities that you enjoy and because of this they result in good outcomes for you and your families. However, there are some people in the community are that are not yet being reached and so we have asked the children's centre to ensure that they reach everyone. We have also asked the staff to ensure that they keep detailed

and systematic records over time of the positive impact they have with families so that they can celebrate this success.

The headteacher leads the nursery exceptionally well and has good leadership of the centre. She is very ably supported by a good senior leadership team who all work hard for the benefit of children and families. The governors of the nursery and children's centre are very knowledgeable about the nursery, but they admit that they do not always have the same knowledge or understanding of the children's centre. This is partly because the development plan for the nursery and children's centre are too closely linked together. We have asked the centre to make a clear distinction between the two plans so that the staff and governors can track progress in both provisions more accurately. Safeguarding at the nursery and children's centre is outstanding, as is the extent to which equality is promoted and diversity celebrated. All safeguarding policies and procedures are fully in place so that children, families and staff feel very safe. There is no discrimination of any kind at the centre and everyone is made to feel equally welcome and receives the same level of care and consideration.

We would like to wish you and the centre every success for the future and for continuing to improve the quality and reach of services offered.

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