

Inspection report for Nomony Children's Centre

Local authority	Plymouth City Council
Inspection number	366396
Inspection dates	9–10 March 2011
Reporting inspector	Alex Baxter

Centre governance	Action For Children Management Board
Centre leader	Lesley Price
Date of previous inspection	N/A
Centre address	27 St. John's Road Cattedown Plymouth, PL4 0PA
Telephone number	01752 667869
Fax number	01752 202292
Email address	nomony.childrenscentre@actionforchildren.org.uk

Linked school if applicable	
Linked early years and childcare, if applicable	Nomony CC incorporating Mount Street CC.

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 maintained nursery was carried out two days before the inspection of the centre under Section 5 of the Education Act 2005. The report of this inspection is available on our website www.ofsted.gov.uk.

This children's centre inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors.

The inspectors held meetings with representatives of the centre's governing body, advisory board, the local authority and the senior management and leadership team. Other partnership agencies located within and outside the centre, the headteacher of the school which hosts the link children's centre, and members of the staff and users of the centre were also consulted.

The inspectors observed the centre's work, and looked at a range of relevant documentation including key policies, the centre's self-evaluation documents, its development plans, evaluations of services and data about people who use the centre.

Information about the centre

Nomony Children's Centre is a Phase 1 Children's Centre which opened in July 2006 and is managed by the charity Action for Children on behalf of the local authority. Nomony also has a link centre based within the grounds of Mount Street Primary School and this opened in June 2009. The area served by the children's centre reflects a higher than average level of social and economic disadvantage, as seen in the above average percentage of families on low incomes, benefits or with the main wage earner without work.

All three of the neighbourhoods served by the children's centre contain an above average number of families from minority ethnic groups, increasingly from Asian and White European backgrounds, where English is spoken as an additional language.

The centre comprises of a 69-place day care nursery unit, crèche and a range of other facilities for families and children under five. Children’s skills on entry to the Early Years Foundation Stage provision are generally below those expected for their age.

The centre delivers the full core offer, including health, maternity and outreach services. Nomony also offers a range of additional services, including back-to-work and educational advice and courses, parenting classes and a variety of toddler and baby groups, with specialist groups for families with children with additional needs.

During the summer 2009, the day care opened its doors on Saturdays providing full day care and crèche provision and these services continue. The centre includes facilities of play rooms, various group rooms, a community kitchen, toilets and office space which are occupied by staff and midwives. Nomony also has three separate outdoor areas with all-weather shelters where children have free-flow access.

The link centre at Mount Street includes a consultation room for health visitors and midwives to run clinics. There is also a large group room and good outside space which is shared with the Early Years Foundation Stage of the school.

The Early Years Foundation provision within the nursery was inspected separately prior to the children’s centre inspection.

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

1

Capacity for sustained improvement

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

1

Main findings

This is an outstanding children’s centre that lies at the heart of its community where it is rightly held in high esteem. Nomony fully lives up to its name as a ‘Home of hope, peace and welcome’.

The very well respected and capable centre leader and her highly qualified team are totally committed to continued improvement. Together, they show an impressive and

successful determination in reaching out to more users and to provide the very effective services and support which they need. In recent years, they have been successful in extending partnerships to develop a wider range of expertise and resources, in particular to support an above average number of vulnerable families in their reach area. For example, very close links with midwives, now based at the centre, and with health workers and parenting staff, who regularly visit family households, have led to significant reductions in teenage pregnancy, drug-taking during pregnancy and childhood obesity in the community served by the children's centre. Such partnerships and outcomes, within a fully self-evaluative and reflective setting, demonstrate an excellent capacity for sustained improvement.

Safeguarding children's welfare is another notable and exemplary feature. Arrangements to share concerns between specialist staff and service providers and to record information are extremely well developed. Systems to ensure the suitability of both those who are employed by the centre and partner agencies are very robust. Systems to assess and reduce risks and maintain appropriate staff ratios are fully implemented within all activities across all of the centre's sites. As a result, parents and carers, and for their age, the children themselves, are greatly improving their understanding of how to keep themselves and their families safe.

Leadership has established excellent strategies for identifying the needs of the families within the community that the centre serves. Adults working at the centre assess the needs and progress of children and families extremely well, including impressively during all crèche sessions. Staff share information fully at an early stage with each other and with appropriate agencies to keep children safe and help them to progress. The centre now makes effective use of data with and from partners to evaluate, plan and demonstrate the impact of its services very supportively. For example, this has enabled the centre to increase the number of fathers and families from minority ethnic backgrounds accessing services. Initially, this has been accomplished through universal parenting courses such as the 'Little Bundles' baby group. These have lifted the confidence of parents and have subsequently prepared the way for more specifically targeted activities, such as parenting programmes which include multicultural and English language support and 'Me and My Dad' leisure and sports activities. The centre can demonstrate that it is engaging very supportively with increasing numbers of minority ethnic families entering the community, many of whom initially have difficulty understanding and speaking English. However, the centre's work in enhancing the readiness of parents for future employment is not as advanced as its other services.

The centre's much improved and very effective engagement with an increasing number of families from minority ethnic backgrounds fully illustrates its highly inclusive ethos and welcoming approach, which sustains equality and diversity extremely well. Parents and carers are involved in the governance of the centre, as members of the advisory board, in the feedback that they supply within all courses they attend and, increasingly, through independently produced case studies. A recently commissioned telephone survey of parents and carers also showed the diligence of the centre leadership in ascertaining and responding to users' views.

Typical comments such as 'I can't think what it would be like without Nomony, it's such a big part of our life' and 'It's amazing what they do for all the people in the community,' fully reflect users' appreciation of the help they receive and the very supportive impact that the centre has on people's lives.

What does the centre need to do to improve further?

Recommendations for further improvement

- Further develop the services provided to prepare parents for training and employment, thereby enhancing their readiness to engage with services such as Jobcentre Plus to access the employment opportunities available.

How good are outcomes for users?

1

Outcomes for parents and carers and their children are outstanding. The centre has clear statistical evidence to show how very effective services are significantly improving the lives of families in the local area. For example, a substantial increase in the percentage of parents breast-feeding their children reflects the value of the advice and support given to mothers of new-born babies. Similarly, in response to timely targeted guidance in sexual health in partnership with TEEN (an organisation working in sexual health) and for other parents and carers engaging in the 'Healthy Eating' Programmes, teenage pregnancy and childhood obesity in the area are much reduced and participants are increasingly adopting very healthy lifestyles. Children in the nursery and various toddler and crèche groups are also making excellent progress in understanding healthy living.

Excellent procedures for protecting children and the staff's diligence in implementing the Common Assessment Framework, alongside consistently high-quality pastoral care from staff, help the children and their parents and carers to feel very safe and emotionally supported during the range of activities at the centre, its link site and during associated home visits. Excellent links with other agencies, particularly health professionals, also ensure that the children's welfare needs are met very well. All users, especially those considered vulnerable to risk, or others with complex needs, feel and stay safe. Centre and partner outreach workers are also mindful of the need to support families in undertaking home safety checks, and the targeted first-aid courses and liaison with the fire service to conduct home safety visits further secure children's welfare.

Without exception, parents and carers spoken to during the inspection express the view that they are fully involved and consulted, as seen, for example, in the comment that, 'Knowing my children are safe and happy gives me the confidence I need to leave my child in their care.' All observations of children and their parents and carers participating in the variety of activities taking place at the centre showed

great enjoyment in learning. The gurgling sounds and gleeful expressions on the faces of babies as they mixed with each other beautifully illustrated the joy in learning that takes place at the centre. Similarly, the look of wonder and appreciation seen in parents and carers of children with very complex needs as their children responded to the centre's very skilled practitioners was a joy to see.

Observations of learning and play activities showed the children's excellent behaviour and relationships. The centre's detailed assessments of children's responses in their individual 'Learning Journeys' booklets also show their excellent progress across all the areas of learning. Children with special educational needs and/or disabilities and some with additional needs, such as understanding English, also make outstanding progress relative to their abilities, during the very effective 'Step By Step' sessions in the pre-school provision.

As a result, children are very well prepared for the next stage of their education. Parents and carers also derive much benefit from the particular financial guidance they receive, for example from the 'Money Advice' worker. In response to an increasing number of families from minority ethnic backgrounds entering the community, the centre has made good progress in linking with 'work clubs' to lift parents' readiness for employment through engagement with Jobcentre Plus. The centre recognises, though, that this is a service that needs to continue and develop.

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	1
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	1
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?

1

The centre has made significant progress in recent years in reaching out and making contact with an increasing number of families in need across the local and wider area that it serves. This has been achieved, for example, through the development of the link centre at Mount Street, increased access to 'drop-in' support and through much improved partnerships with other services, which has extended the outreach

capability to reach parents and carers in their homes.

The services provided, including, for example, parenting courses and home visiting, promote excellent learning and development for all users, particularly in raising self-confidence and extending communication, language and healthy living skills. In addition, there is significant enhancement of parenting skills for vulnerable families and teenage, single and other young parents.

All families are fully consulted about what services they want to see at the centre. At times of need, parents and carers say that they can turn to a range of extremely well qualified and passionate staff at Nomony and Mount Street in the knowledge that their particularly needs will be fully supported by exemplary care and guidance. As one young mother remarked, 'It's lovely that there are other people around that we can approach for personal guidance and support.' Fathers, too, welcome the centre's refreshing and imaginative approach to providing services and support that reflects their interests and suggestions, and which is leading to more sports-related activities. Such careful adaptation of services to meet users' needs, both at the centre and through outreach support in users' homes, typifies the centre's outstanding provision. For example, the development of support for minority ethnic families reflects a very purposeful response to increased numbers of families from other backgrounds entering the area and needing help. The consistency of parents' very positive views shared with inspectors also fully reflects the success of this approach in meeting their needs.

All staff at the centre use assessment extremely well to identify and evaluate the complex range of needs of families in their area. Strong partnerships with other services, especially midwives, health workers and the 'Malezi' worker who supports young parents, ensure that the Common Assessment Framework is followed very effectively to coordinate services for vulnerable children and their families. As a result, children with special educational needs and/or disabilities and those with additional emotional or health or language needs are fully included and have their needs met very effectively.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The effectiveness of the assessment of the needs of children, parents and other users	1
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	1
The quality of care, guidance and support offered to users within the centre and the wider community	1

How effective are the leadership and management?

1

All aspects of leadership and management are outstanding and, as leaders leave no stone unturned to develop new services, so improvement continues and excellent value for money is sustained. The strengthened partnerships with other services such as midwives and health workers and the subsequently improved lifestyles of supported families reflect this sustained improvement. The centre's current aim, to bring parents' skills to a level whereby they can confidently seek employment, although not fully developed, further shows the excellent use of self-evaluation and development planning to identify and pursue relevant priorities.

The centre's leaders and managers have a very clear understanding of the effectiveness of the services that are delivered because monitoring systems are securely established. Strong governance through 'Action For Children', informed by the diligent work of the advisory board and the centre's leaders, ensures that data are routinely collected by the centre or requested from the local authority to check the impact of their services. Parents and carers regularly contribute to evaluation of services and say that they feel that their views are taken on board and acted upon. Leadership is further strengthened by the staff's united commitment and determination to constantly focus on how services can be adjusted and developed to more effectively meet users' needs.

Other particularly strong aspects of leadership and management include the exemplary work of the centre's leader and the way she empowers all staff and works closely with the group manager of 'Action For Children', the local authority and with a wide range of partner services. She is extremely well supported by senior leaders and staff, whose understanding of their roles and place in delivering the centre's services is a key ingredient in sustaining consistently high-quality provision. The comment, 'Nomony stands out as a beacon of excellent practice', from a partner service provider, fully represents the complimentary views of other partners.

Safeguarding arrangements are very thorough and all statutory duties, including child protection procedures and regular staff training, are fully met. Very close cooperation between the centre staff and Action For Children's central management ensures that all the necessary checks on staff, visiting services and volunteers, including Criminal Records Bureau checks, are fully completed and updated as necessary. Risk assessments of the sites and of risks associated with specific children, visits or lone working are equally rigorous in helping to ensure the safety and well-being of users of the centre and its services. Well-established multi-agency support also ensures that risks to families, including from domestic violence, are reduced by early intervention and by regular monitoring of users' emotional health and well-being.

Inclusion and sustaining equality and diversity lie at the core of all that the centre delivers. Very close attention is paid to respecting the breadth of language, cultural and religious customs and beliefs present in the local community, and these are often celebrated within the centre's displays. In recent years, there has been notable success in supporting families who speak English as an additional language or have special educational needs and/or disabilities.

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	1
The extent to which ambitious targets drive improvement, provision is integrated and there are high expectations for users and the wider community	1
The extent to which resources are used and managed efficiently and effectively to meet the needs of users and the wider community	1
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	1
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	1

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

This inspection took account of the inspection findings from the concurrent Early Years Foundation Stage inspection of the nursery provision at the Nomony Children's Centre.

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 Nomony Children's Centre on 9–10 March 2011. We judged the centre to be outstanding overall and to be a place where parents and carers and their children make excellent progress. We found that because of exemplary leadership and teamwork, the staff at Nomony and its linked centre at Mount Street continue to build upon already very supportive practice to support an increasing number of families.

In recent years, by linking more closely with a range of providers, for example, with the midwifery team now based at Nomony, leaders have enriched the expertise and range of service opportunities even more. This raised capability has significantly increased the number of families served by centre, through, for example, more 'drop-in' opportunities, such as the 'Step by Step' family support group at Mount Street. As a result, Nomony demonstrates an excellent capacity to sustain improvements into the future.

We judged almost all the centre's procedures and services to be outstanding. We were particularly impressed by the centre's excellence in keeping your children safe, helping you personally at time of need, and in supporting vulnerable families and in helping children with special educational needs and/or disabilities.

We were also pleased to hear that all the staff treat you with respect and genuine concern. The staff's total commitment to helping you with your various needs and problems was clear to see. We were particularly moved on several occasions by the boost in confidence and joy that you and your children feel by attending the centre's activities and by the many longstanding friendships made. We were also pleased to see so many of you seeking to improve your parenting skills so that you can not only help your children, but enjoy being a parent. So much so that now an increasing number of you give voluntary support to others.

You also told us about how well you and your children are progressing as a result of attending activities such as the parenting programmes and 'Chatter Box' groups and of the exciting learning which takes place in the associated crèche sessions and in the attached nursery. Our inspection findings agree with your very positive observations.

Many of you value the opportunity to 'drop-in' for support, and the courses which help some of you to learn how to speak English. We agree that the centre should continue to provide courses which develop the communication and other skills needed before you feel ready to take up employment opportunities, and so we have recommended this to the centre leader.

Many thanks for your time and support during the inspection.

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