

# Inspection report for Shoebury Children's Centre

Local authority	Southend-On-Sea
Inspection number	362565
Inspection dates	29–30 November 2010
Reporting inspector	Jackie Cousins AI

Centre governance	Southend-On-Sea Local Authority
Centre leader	Lynda Baksh
Date of previous inspection	Not applicable
Centre address	Delaware Road
	Shoeburyness, Southend-On-Sea
	SS3 9NS
Telephone number	01702 291305
Fax number	01702 297511
Email address	shoebury@pre-school.org.uk

Linked school if applicable	Not applicable
Linked early years and childcare, if applicable	Shoebury Nursery EY296575

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 Section 3 of the Childcare Act 2006. The report of this inspection is available on our website [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk).

This inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors.

The inspectors held meetings with the head and deputy head of the children's centre, nursery manager, headteacher of a local infant school, health visitor, outreach worker, Jobcentre Plus Worker, a group of parents and carers, the Chair of the Advisory Board and a member of the local authority. They observed the centre's work, and looked at a range of relevant documentation.

## Information about the centre

Shoebury Children's Centre is situated in one of the most deprived areas in the country with high levels of unemployment, families receiving benefits and workless households. Much of the area immediately around the children's centre is characterised by terraced housing, low rise flats and maisonettes. Most families who live in the surrounding area of the children's centre are White British. A few are from Black African or Eastern European and Asian groups. Most children enter day care and early education with skills that are significantly lower than those expected for their age. The centre has an advisory board made up of representatives from the Pre-School Alliance, local authority, parent governors, the Primary Care Trust, neighbourhood partners, health providers, a local headteacher and centre staff, which it shares with the day care provision. The centre was established when a new building was created to house the day care and children's centre. In 2005 it was designated a children's centre. Since then it has operated as an integrated centre and provides the full core offer with a wide range of services, early education and day care. It is led by the head of centre supported by the Pre-School Alliance, the deputy head of centre and the nursery manager. The centre operates in one main building and other activities take place at various community venues within the reach

area. In 2009 the centre received an Inclusive Practice Award from the local authority.

## 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

Shoebury Children’s Centre offers good support for children and families. The head of centre and all staff ensure that users feel welcome from the moment they walk through the door. One parent summed up her thoughts by saying, ‘You are greeted with happiness.’ The centre is a safe and secure place to visit because safeguarding is given a high priority. The welfare of all users is taken very seriously by staff and senior leaders. Safe practices and healthy lifestyles are adopted successfully by users and their families. They take part in nutrition sessions where they effectively learn about new ways to cook with healthy ingredients. One parent said after attending a few of these meetings they had made new healthy supper dishes such as Spanish omelette and lamb kofta. Children and parents really enjoy taking part in stimulating activities such as baby massage and baby yoga sessions.

The key to the centre’s success is the outstanding level of care, guidance and support it offers to users. Parents and carers really value the way that their personal needs are met due to the extreme dedication of staff. For example, one parent typically commented, ‘It has been a life line to me.’ Another parent said, ‘The centre will care for your child when ever you need it and offer you extra sessions.’ In a recent survey, seven out of ten users evaluated their satisfaction with the centre as excellent and virtually all assessed it as good or better. Case study evidence indicates that families have received extremely thoughtfully integrated support in times of crisis because of perceptive referrals made by staff. High quality guidance means that many parents and carers learn about the best ways to manage their child’s behaviour and personal needs. For example, parenting classes are run regularly by staff with a high level of expertise during the daytime and evenings at the centre.

Children from the reach area who attend the Early Years Foundation Stage provision make good gains in their speech and language skills as well as personal, social and emotional development. They behave well at the centre. In 2010, assessments made

of children's attainment at the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage indicate that outcomes are improving significantly across the surrounding area. For example, the gap between those children who live in challenging circumstances and others was reduced by three per cent. However, the recording of users' and children's attainment in key areas of learning when they start coming to the centre is not always outlined in detail and so it is not easy to track the full extent of their progress while they attend.

Senior leaders and the Chair of the Advisory Board have a clear view of the strengths and areas for development across the centre. This is reflected in a thoughtful improvement plan. The centre's self-evaluation is accurate and is based on reflective monitoring and evaluation procedures. The centre recognises that systems to collect data and measure the longer-term impact of the centre are not fully developed. It does not offer a wide enough variety of accredited courses and so it is not able to offer training which would assist users to improve their basic skills and get paid employment. An important development means that clinics to check up on each baby's health are held regularly at the centre. Visits to users' homes have been re-established and some cover safety checks which allow users to access free resources such as stair gates and cupboard locks. The centre meets its statutory responsibilities for the promotion of equality and diversity well. It has been particularly effective in supporting users with special educational needs and/or disabilities. For example, in 2009 the centre received an Inclusion Award from the local authority for successfully integrating children and adults with additional needs. Good provision and outcomes, coupled with significant improvements demonstrates the centre's good capacity for sustained improvement.

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

### **Recommendations for further improvement**

- Ensure the centre collects more data to enable it to evaluate thoroughly its longer term impact on children, parents and carers.
- Use initial assessments more effectively to track children's, parents' and carers' progress on a regular basis.
- Make sure more parents and carers are successfully involved in developing key skills and acquiring qualifications which will assist them to gain paid employment.

## **How good are outcomes for users?**

<b>2</b>
----------

Healthy eating and lifestyles are developed well by the centre. Users learn successfully about the importance of eating five portions of fruit or vegetables a day. For example, one parent said, 'I learnt how to measure a portion of fruit or vegetables.' Another parent said they understood more about how to organise a plate of food so that it is not over loaded. A 'Pushy Mothers' session encourages users to exercise rigorously while they are pushing a child in a buggy. The children

who attend the holiday club learnt effectively to keep fit when they practised Irish and Turkish dancing. Senior leaders and all staff give a high level of importance to the safety of all the centre's users, including those who are most vulnerable. Consequently, users' welfare inside and outside the centre is promoted effectively. For example, 44 mums, dads and carers have successfully taken a course to learn about first aid. One parent reported to the head of centre that they had learnt valuable ways to deal with medical emergencies with children. External agencies report that the centre uses the Common Assessment Framework rigorously and centre meetings are utilized carefully to develop staff's understanding of how this system works. Case study evidence indicates that vulnerable or looked-after children and their families are supported well as a result of the centre's work. The centre knows the families it works with really effectively. As a result, early identification and prevention play a key role in the centre's work to reduce harm to children.

Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage are keen to come to the centre. As a result children achieve well. One parent said, 'My child often asks to come at weekends.' Children establish strong relationships with staff because they follow up on children's interests successfully. Observations of sessions demonstrate that children have positive attitudes to learning because staff plan interesting activities for them such as exploring different types of liquids with their hands. Staff carefully evaluate children's learning in sessions but one or two do not always utilize national guidance effectively to record their attainment and developmental stages. Staff use the woodland areas around the centre well to develop children's knowledge and understanding of the world. Transfer arrangements to local schools are well established and children are effectively prepared, especially in their social skills.

Adult users contribute their views thoughtfully about the effectiveness of the centre through the 'Parents Forum'. In addition, parents and carers are regularly encouraged to evaluate with their children the sessions that they have attended. The centre takes positive action, based on this information, to improve its services. For example, the after-school club was set up because parents asked for care for their children including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities while they were at work. The centre is well established and has a good reputation in the local community. It is promoting community cohesion effectively. It is successful at integrating parents from different age groups, backgrounds, faiths and cultures.

Parents are encouraged astutely to improve their management skills of children. For example, a baby weaning, sleep and behaviour group allows parents and carers to share their concerns and pick up advice on how to handle various challenges with children due to guidance from a health professional. Parents and carers are provided with a good range of information and guidance regarding childcare options at the centre and in the local area. Users have undertaken assertiveness courses which allowed them to feel more confident in challenging situations. Financial advice sessions are used well by parents. Some have effectively accessed extra benefits which they are entitled to because of advice given by specialist staff.

*These are the grades for the outcomes for users*

<b>The extent to which children, including those from vulnerable groups, are physically, mentally and emotionally healthy and families have healthy lifestyles</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which children are safe and protected, their welfare concerns are identified and appropriate steps taken to address them</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which all users enjoy and achieve educationally and in their personal and social development</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which children engage in positive behaviour and develop positive relationships and users contribute to decision-making and governance of the centre</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which children are developing skills for the future and parents are developing economic stability and independence including access to training</b>	<b>2</b>

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

<b>2</b>
----------

The centre knows its users needs well because careful assessment is undertaken. Partnership working across all the services based at the centre is really successfully established. As a result, support for the most vulnerable families is very effective and all have access to good quality day care and nursery education. The senior leadership team, with representatives from a range of agencies, meets regularly to ensure services are meeting users' needs. Children's language development is given a great deal of emphasis because assessment has been used carefully to identify a need in this aspect of their learning in a few children from the surrounding area. As a result, one parent said, 'My child's speech problem has been over come and she really talks to me now.'

Users' achievement is celebrated through positive displays and award sessions which have been photographed. For example, groups of parents receive certificates for regularly attending 'Play and Learning' sessions. This allows parents to develop their skills in promoting children's development in such areas as literacy. Opportunities for parents and carers to develop their basic skills and gain accredited qualifications are limited.

The centre provides a wide range of services and activities which effectively meet the needs of the reach area. It is particularly successful in engaging with working families. Saturday morning activities such as 'Rough and Tumble' sporting sessions are popular and enable the centre to make successful contact with dads. Activity sessions astutely allow children to experience handling a rich variety of materials in an appropriately equipped area. For example, children and parents really valued a recent session where together they made Christmas decorations. The centre keeps

satisfactory records of local participation rates and engagement in different activities offered.

All parents who spoke to the inspectors were very positive about the centre and the effect that the different services are having on their families. They were outstandingly positive about the care, guidance and support they received from all staff. For example, one parent explained, 'Staff are really encouraging without being too hard or condescending.' The centre means our children and families are safe and effectively looked after. Another parent outlined how valuable a basic hygiene course had been in assisting her to keep her family well cared for. Virtually all mothers who come to centre sessions continue to breast feed their children for at least six weeks due to the knowledgeable and positive encouragement offered by centre staff and health care experts. Outreach provision ensures targeted groups of users are supported really thoughtfully.

*These are the grades for the quality of provision*

<b>The effectiveness of the assessment of the needs of children, parents and other users</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which the centre promotes purposeful learning, development and enjoyment for all users</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which the range of services, activities and opportunities meet the needs of users and the wider community</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The quality of care, guidance and support offered to users within the centre and the wider community</b>	<b>1</b>

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

**2**

Governance arrangements are effective and lines of accountability are suitably in place. Members of the advisory board are committed to improving outcomes for children and their families in the local area. The head of centre ensures that the members of the advisory board are well informed about the services offered. Improvement planning is secure but one or two targets for development are not always recorded in a way that would assist leaders to rigorously evaluate their success. The centre has already identified that it does not always gather evidence fully to show what impact it has on users. Systems are not effectively in place to record the starting points of children and parents who attend the centre and so it is not always able to evaluate their progress fully on a regular basis in key areas of learning. All relevant partners are thoroughly involved in the drive for improvement due to high expectations and enthusiasm of the head of centre. As a result of effective management and outcomes for users, value for money is good.

Astute leadership is provided by the head of the centre and she is ably supported by

the deputy head of centre and the nursery manager. As a result, staff are keen to develop the centre and morale is high. The centre runs smoothly on a day-to-day basis, and the well-being of all users is at the fore front of all staffs' minds. Users' views are regularly sought and significantly influence services provided by the centre. The head of centre has developed careful systems and procedures to ensure that provision is successfully integrated.

Resources are well managed and rigorously targeted towards users with the greatest needs. The accommodation for the Early Years Foundation Stage is generous in size and includes a satisfactory outdoor area. The centre is well-maintained and health and safety issues are quickly dealt with. It keeps detailed records about staff which containing valuable information on for example, their qualifications and right to work in the United Kingdom. Records indicate that all staff working at the centre have been subject to an enhanced Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) check before they start to work with the children at the centre.

Collaborative working is a considerable strength of the centre's work. Centre staff are pro-active in sharing information once they have permission to do this. Inter-agency working is really thriving and it carefully identifies those families and children who are at significant risk. Protocols and practices for referrals are well known by staff. The centre's child protection policy and guidelines are robust and all staff have been fully trained at the appropriate level in child protection procedures. Risk assessments are created satisfactorily but occasionally they do not involve parents and carers effectively in evaluating hazards for particular environments outside the centre.

The centre meets all the requirements with regard to promoting equality and diversity and tackling discrimination. Staff are dedicated to promoting the inclusion of all families within the surrounding area. The centre gathers valuable information about the different user groups and evaluates their engagement. For example, case study evidence indicates the centre has been effective in working with children and parents who faced communications challenges. As a result some families in the area have undertaken courses in the use of Makaton which have helped them to break down barriers to learning and allow information to be shared rigorously. Children with disabilities are well provided for both in the physical accessibility of the building and by access to appropriate professional support.

*These are the grades for leadership and management*

<b>The extent to which governance, accountability, professional supervision and day to day management arrangements are clear and understood</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which ambitious targets drive improvement, provision is integrated and there are high expectations for users and the wider community</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which resources are used and managed efficiently and effectively to meet the needs of users and the wider community</b>	<b>2</b>



<b>The extent to which equality is promoted and diversity celebrated, illegal or unlawful discrimination is tackled and the centre fulfils its statutory duties</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness of the centre's policy, procedures and work with key agencies in safeguarding children and, where applicable, vulnerable adults</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which evaluation is used to shape and improve services and activities</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which partnerships with other agencies ensure the integrated delivery of the range of services the centre has been commissioned to provide</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>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</b>	<b>2</b>

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

The Inspection report for Shoebury Nursery EY296575.

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](http://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](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk).

## **Summary for centre users**

We inspected the Shoebury Children's Centre on 29–30 November 2010. We judged the centre as good overall.

Thank you for helping us to find out about your children's centre. We enjoyed having the opportunity of talking to some of you.

Your children make good progress in their learning and behave well at the centre. It helps to prepare your children successfully for the next stage of education. You and your children are encouraged effectively to keep yourself and your family safe whether you are at home cooking or out and about.

You and your children really enjoy and value the centre and the support it provides. We heard you like finding out about healthy foods and new recipes. You appreciate sessions where your children can explore a wide variety of materials in a suitable place such as making Christmas decorations.

Through the work that the staff do, you and your children are guided extremely well. This means that you learn about successful ways to support your families. Several of you told us how well staff care for you and you really appreciate the thoughtful way they listen to you. The staff work closely with other agencies to make sure that you are put in touch with others who can give you the right help and support.

The centre welcomes people from all backgrounds and treats everyone equally fairly. Your head of centre and senior staff have good ideas about ways to improve the centre. You told us staff are always looking for exciting ways to improve the centre. It conducts regular surveys to find out what you are happy with and less pleased. The centre responds well to your requests and has added extra sessions at times which suit you best such as parenting classes during the evenings as well as the daytime.

We have asked the head of centre and senior staff to look at how they can make things even better. The most important things are to.

- Develop a system to check how well the centre is doing over longer periods of time.
- Ensure staff watch over you and your children's progress in key areas of learning even more carefully.
- Provide more opportunities for you to participate in courses to develop your skills and enable you to gain paid employment.

It was a real pleasure to meet you and your children. I hope you continue to flourish and enjoy your time at the Shoebury Children's Centre.

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