

Inspection report for Newport Children's Centre

Local authority	Telford and Wrekin
Inspection number	365708
Inspection dates	9–10 June 2011
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Centre governance	Local authority
Centre leader	Jane Roberts
Date of previous inspection	n/a
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Linked school if applicable	Newport Infant School
Linked early years and childcare, if applicable	Noah's Ark Nursery EY730021

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 an additional inspector and an early year's inspector.

The inspectors held meetings with senior managers, outreach workers, health and education professionals, representatives of the local authority and members of the advisory board. They observed the centre's work, and looked at a range of relevant documentation and spoke with users of the centre

Information about the centre

Newport Children's Centre is a phase two centre which was designated in 2007. It is located in Newport Infant School. The centre provides a range of integrated services that include health, family support and early year's advice and guidance.

It is managed and governed under the strategic direction of Telford and Wrekin Borough Council and the centre also has an advisory board. While its main base is at Newport Infants School, services are also delivered from several local venues. The head of the centre has responsibility for two other centres and staff are deployed between the three centres. The head of centre is seconded to the post on a temporary basis and her deployment is due to be reviewed.

The area served by the centre contains pockets of social deprivation and economic disadvantage as well as more affluent neighbourhoods. Users within the borough are also able to access services at other local children's' centres. Children start Reception class in the co-located primary school with skills that are similar to those that are expected for their age. The population served by the centre is largely White British with relatively few families known to be from other ethnic heritages. The proportion of children living in workless households is below average.

Noah's Ark Nursery is the designated provider of childcare. It is run by a Private Voluntary Committee and is inspected separately.

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

Newport Children’s centre provides a good service for the young children, parents, carers and families who live within its reach area. It is particularly good at supporting potentially vulnerable families and their children. Strengths include preventative work relating to domestic violence and work to improve parenting skills. The way that the centre works in partnership with a wide range of other agencies is outstanding and is particularly effective at ensuring that families receive outstanding care and guidance. The range of services that is offered is good and results in good outcomes as families deepen their understanding of how to live healthy lifestyles, keep themselves safe and develop skills that enable them to manage their money more effectively.

The centre is effective in raising levels of attainment for young children, particularly in enhancing their social skills and improving children’s communication skills. Children enjoy their time at the centre, they particularly enjoy interacting with other children and taking part in the musical activities provided in the ‘Noisy Nipper’ sessions. Much is done to ensure that the childcare commissioned by the centre is of a high quality. A strong partnership with the speech and language service is helping to ensure that children’s speech develops well. Consequently, there has been a reduction in the number of children in the locality whose attainment is particularly low at the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage. Partnerships with local health workers are exceptionally effective. This, together with good quality advice and the outstanding individual support provided for families, has had an excellent impact on the extent to which children, including those from vulnerable groups, are physically, mentally and emotionally healthy.

Parents, carers and families appreciate the good-quality support and advice they receive. They especially value groups such as ‘Parent and Toddlers’ and courses such as ‘Incredible Years’ which assist them to support their children’s development. These activities are well attended and user satisfaction rates are high. Although the centre is good at reaching the most vulnerable families in the area it serves, leaders are aware that the centre is not as effective at reaching other members of the local community.

The centre meets safeguarding requirements and promotes equality and diversity well. The analysis of the needs of those who use the centre is good but the centre has not yet fully investigated why it is not reaching more families in the local community. The advisory board has only been established recently and currently parents and carers and other members of the local community are under-represented. Consequently, they have limited opportunities to contribute to shaping the development of the centre. Although the way the centre evaluates its work is improving, data is not always used effectively to evaluate the impact of provision on outcomes for children and their families and to inform planning for the future. The uncertainties that surround plans for the future leadership and management of the centre staff have been managed well. Consequently, staff moral has remained high. Staff have worked well to establish and develop good provision that effectively meets the needs of those who attend the centre and the capacity for further improvement is good.

What does the centre need to do to improve further?

Recommendations for further improvement

- Improve the extent to which users contribute to governance and the shaping of the development of the centre.
- Use data more effectively to measure the impact of provision on outcomes for children and their families and to inform plans for further improvement.
- Reach more families in the area served by the children's centre.

How good are outcomes for users?

2

Outstanding partnerships with health professionals ensure that mothers who are potentially vulnerable are identified early in their pregnancies and are offered the correct level of support. Rates of initiating and sustaining breastfeeding are above the national average. These rates continue to improve reflecting the way that recent training for staff has enhanced the quality of support the centre is able to provide for new mothers. Additionally, the outstanding partnerships with health professions have also helped to improve immunisation rates and these are now well above average. Good-quality personal support for families makes a good contribution to the mental health of parents, carers and children. Many users say that the staff in the centre and the friends they have made during the sessions have provided emotional support at times when they were potentially vulnerable. The number of children who join the Reception year and who are obese is below average, reflecting the centre's excellent focus on developing healthy life styles. A number of courses have been run in conjunction with other professionals. These have helped parents and carers to understand how they and their children can eat healthily and save money. The centre is not complacent and staff are continuing to develop their knowledge of health and nutrition in the early years. Good support for teenage parents including a high quality partnership with local health professionals ensures that conception rates are low for those that are under 18. Workers are helping parents and carers with children that have additional needs that impact on their educational or physical

development to access appropriate services. A group for parents and carers of disabled children is run at a neighbouring centre and parents and carers from Newport are actively encouraged to attend.

There is a good emphasis on helping children and parents to be aware of how to keep themselves and their families safe. Parents and carers say that they feel very safe and secure in the centre. The centre's work on preventing domestic violence has been particularly successful and users say that the confidence they have gained has helped them to take the decisive action that has improved their individual situations. Good-quality support is provided for children who have child protection plans and staff support families who are facing challenging circumstances exceptionally well. Relationships between staff and users of the centre are warm and supportive.

The centre's case studies show how well individual families have made progress in their personal and social development, acquired skills for the future or improved their economic stability or independence. The centre has been particularly successful in helping families to manage debt and in ensuring that families are able to access the benefits to which they are entitled. Children make good progress in their learning when they attend the centre's provision and demonstrate good behaviour and good relationships. They grow quickly in confidence and make good progress in improving their speaking and listening skills. Consequently, the proportion of children reaching national expectations at the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage has improved. Parents and carers report that the close links with the adjacent nursery provision and infant school assist their children to make an easy transition between the different stages of their education. The centre has also helped parents and careers to develop their confidence in their own abilities and to raise their aspirations. Back to work courses ease the transition into working life and the centre helps parents and carers to overcome barriers and to become more actively engaged in education or to access the world of work. Teenage parents are encouraged to re-engage in education.

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	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	2

How good is the provision?

2

Excellent communication with a wide range of agencies ensures that a high priority is placed on children's well-being. The centre actively seeks out parents and carers who would gain the most from using the centre. Contacts are made through multi-agency risk assessment conferences and regular productive meetings with professionals from other agencies. Additionally close work with midwives and health visitors also ensures that potentially vulnerable families are promptly identified. The centre is obtaining more precise information about new births in the area and, as a result, there is now the potential to reach even more families.

The activities provided in the centre are of good quality and promote purposeful learning, enjoyment and development; ultimately they successfully improve parenting and outcomes for children and their families. Many activities focus on improving children's health. For example, recent training concerning healthy exercise and nutrition training for the really young has improved staff expertise and ensured that they are well equipped to support families in regard to improving levels of fitness. Programmes have been available for parents to attend which focus on good nutrition and getting value for money. Additionally, the centres signposts users to where they can access expert advice that will help them to take responsibility for managing their debts.

Parents and Toddler 'Noisy Nippers' and 'Under Ones' activities have a clear focus on developing children's language skills and their personal and social development. These sessions provide good opportunities for children to make discoveries by having fun. They also help to develop parents and carers understanding of how young children learn through play. The centre has started to record children's development through the use of learning journeys but these are at an early stage of development. Currently, the centre lacks the robust data to allow it to make well-informed judgements about the impact of its work on children's learning. The centre is successful in signposting users to advice, in making referrals to other education and training providers and in providing support for ways back into employment.

Potentially vulnerable families are quickly identified and receive excellent individual support that often involves eliciting the support of many other agencies in developing a whole package of care. Additionally, parents and carers are offered very high quality support in times of crisis and the Common Assessment Framework is used well to ensure that families can access support that is carefully matched to their needs. Highly skilled and very well targeted support is provided for teenage parents, domestic abuse survivors and children on child protection plans. The centre ensures that very good quality information about many aspects of parenting including advice about how to keep children healthy and safe is freely available to parents and carers. Although very few families in the area are from minority ethnic groups the centre makes certain that their needs are exceptionally well met and those that attend the centre are extremely appreciative of the high quality support and advice that has been given.

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	1

How effective are the leadership and management?

2

The leadership, at all levels, is strongly focused on providing a good range of services, particularly for potentially vulnerable users. High expectations are shared by all staff and have been sustained during a period of uncertainty. Leaders are enthusiastic and channel their efforts to good effect and manage themselves and others well. Teamwork among staff is excellent and contributes well to the positive ethos and welcoming atmosphere in the centre. Professional management systems are used effectively to monitor the work of the centre and there are clear lines of accountability. Leaders know the strengths and weaknesses of their services and have sensible plans for improvement. Although the centre is relatively good at targeting its services, focusing on those with the most need, it has been less successful in encouraging the wider community to engage with its services. The centre routinely seeks the views of those who use the centre and they express high rates of satisfaction. However, the centre has yet to establish exactly why some families do not make the best use of the good provision available within the centre. Some parents feel that the centre is not well advertised saying that they had wished they had known about it earlier. The centre is now working to promote itself in the local area, for example, through distributing leaflets at local supermarkets.

The advisory board is fairly new and consists mainly of professionals who already have well-developed working partnerships with the centre. The centre established a parents' panel but found that it was not particularly well attended. In order to reach more parents the centre has changed the format of its meeting and parents can now express their views in a more informal setting and through the evaluation of activities. They have limited opportunities to contribute to governance and shape the strategic direction of the centre. Nevertheless, the centre does seek feedback from parents and carers on the quality of its services and makes use of this information in order to refine what it offers. For example, it has altered the arrangements for 'Parents and Toddler' groups in response to parents' suggestions. As a result, more parents can access activities, and the activities are tailored more carefully to meet the needs of different age groups.

Partnerships are pivotal to the centre's good work. In addition to the excellent partnerships with the neighbouring primary school and nursery provision, there are also good links with independent providers and childminders. Staff have a conscientious approach to safeguarding. All staff have their backgrounds and

identities checked carefully. Staff training is thorough and adults are highly sensitive to child protection issues. Early intervention, together with effective multi-agency work, is helping to protect children’s emotional health. The centre successfully promotes equality and diversity. The inclusion of all children and families, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, is central to the work of the centre and all parents and carers are made welcome irrespective of their background. The centre is well aware of its target groups and case studies provide good examples of narrowing the achievement gap and improving outcomes for children and their families. However, the centre is not as good at using data to illustrate its impact and to plan where improvements are necessary. The centre offers good value for money because it makes effective use of the skills of staff who move seamlessly between working in different centres and it provides good-quality support for those families in the reach area who face the most challenges.

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 integrated delivery of the range of services the centre has been commissioned to provide	1
The extent to which the centre supports and encourages the wider community to engage with services and uses their views to develop the range of provision	2

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

Judgements about outcomes were informed by information taken from the recent inspection reports from Noah's Ark Nursery and Newport Infant School.

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 Newport Children's Centre on 9-10 June 2011. We judged the centre as good overall.

We would like to thank all the people who spoke to us when we visited the centre. Many of you told us what you thought about the centre and its activities. Your views were very helpful. It was particularly heartening to observe the way that you all supported each other.

The children's centre provides a good range of services that are helping children and their families in Newport. Throughout the inspection, those of you we met were keen to tell us how you and your children have benefited from activities like 'Parents and Toddlers' and 'Noisy Nippers'. You said it had helped your children's confidence and language development as well as providing you with opportunities to make new friends. It was good to hear that you have been helped to establish good routines and boundaries for children and that you found the 'Incredible Parenting' course so useful. Although the centre is very good at reaching and supporting potentially vulnerable families there are still families in Newport with children who are under five that have not benefited from this good provision. A number of you said that you wished you had heard about the children's centre earlier because your older children have not always had full access to children's centre services. As a result, we have asked the centre to strengthen its efforts to improve the number of families it reaches.

The centre works exceptionally well with its partners. You told us that the good links with the infant school and nursery provider on the same site have made it easy for your children to move seamlessly through the different stages of education. The partnership work with health professionals is particularly strong and is helping to ensure that more children lead healthy lifestyles, are of normal weight and have the immunisations they need. Support from the children's centre is helping more of you to continue breastfeeding beyond six weeks. You told us that the centre provides you with good-quality emotional support and is good at helping you in times of crisis, and we agree. In fact we judged the care, guidance and support that are provided by the

centre to be outstanding. The centre is good at providing opportunities for you to develop the skills that will help you find jobs in the future and at helping you to maximise the money you have. It is also good at making certain that you know how to keep yourselves and your children safe. Its work on reducing the impact of domestic violence and supporting teenage parents is particularly good.

The centre is managed well by an experienced leader who is supported by an enthusiastic staff. Together, they work well as a team to make sure that activities are of a high quality and effectively improve outcomes for children and their families. Staff listen to the feedback given by those who attend activities and use that information to enhance the quality of provision when necessary. However, the centre does not provide parents and carers with sufficient opportunities to contribute to the governance of the centre. We have asked the children's centre to improve this aspect of its work.

The leaders and managers at the centre have done a good job and ensured that the centre has continued to improve. They have kept up high standards during a period of uncertainty about the future leadership of the centre. Leaders and other staff are well aware of where they want to target their efforts and case studies provide good examples of narrowing the achievement gap and improving outcomes for children and their families. However, staff are not as good at using data to illustrate the impact of the centre's work and to plan where improvements could be made. We have asked them to develop the analysis and use of data.

Thank you again for the time you took to come and speak to us. It is clear from these conversations and from the information gathered by the centre that you have positive views about the children's centre.

We wish you well for the future.

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