

Inspection report for Greenacre (Priory) Children's Centre

Local authority	Norfolk
Inspection number	383942
Inspection dates	22–23 June 2011
Reporting inspector	Godfrey Bancroft

Centre governance	Great Yarmouth Community Trust
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Date of previous inspection	N/A
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Linked school if applicable	Greenacre School
Linked early years and childcare, if applicable	Priory Day Nursery, EY275636 and Peggotty Nursery, EY426343

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 representatives of the advisory board and local authority, the centre manager, senior staff, outreach works, partner providers, members of the community and parents and carers. They observed the centre's work and looked at a range of relevant documentation.

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Information about the centre

The Greenacre (Priory) Children's Centre is a phase two centre, which was developed out of the existing Great Yarmouth Sure Start local programme, a trailblazer Sure Start programme which began in 1999. The children's centre was designated in March 2007 and the full core offer was confirmed in December 2009. The lead partner for the children's centre is the Great Yarmouth Community Trust, a development trust which was set up to ensure the future sustainability of the Sure Start programme in 2001. The trust manages the children's centre on behalf of the local authority, Norfolk County Council. It also manages the Priory Children's Centre, and the management and administration of the two centres is shared, although each has a separate budget.

The administrative base for the centre is the Priory Centre, a Grade 1 listed building, which was formerly a primary school. The building was purchased by the Great Yarmouth Community Trust in 2003 and has been renovated as a multi-functional centre housing the children's centre and Priory Day Nursery. The children's centre also utilises other venues in the reach area; the main outreach buildings are the Peggotty Road community centre within the South Yarmouth area, the Gordon Road centre in Southtown, and two community centres in Cobholm. Services are also delivered in schools across the reach area.

The centre's reach area covers the electoral wards of Nelson and Southtown & Cobholm, within the urban Great Yarmouth area. The majority of the area experiences extremely high levels of deprivation, with the majority of children living within the 10% most deprived areas in the country. Parts of the Nelson area are within the 1% most deprived areas. The majority of the population are of White British background, but there is an increasing population from other European backgrounds, mainly from Portugal, Eastern Europe and the Baltic states.

As of April 2011, the Greenacre area had the highest number of JobSeekers Allowance claimants of all children's centres in the county of Norfolk, and household income levels are well below the national and regional averages. Levels of educational attainment are well below the national average and the area has a high percentage of adults with low level or no qualifications. Children enter early years provision with knowledge and skills which are significantly lower than those expected for their age.

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 a highly effective children's centre that meets the needs of users and the wider community exceptionally well. The centre does all it can to ensure that children and adults are safe. Staff celebrate the diversity of users' backgrounds and cultures. Everyone who attends the centre is made to feel equally welcomed and valued.

The needs of any user who might be potentially vulnerable or at risk are consistently recognised at an early stage and programmes are put in place to support their development and progress. The staff do not give up on anyone and help is sustained for as long as it is needed. In this respect, the partnerships forged with other agencies provide a seamless robe of support. As one user pointed out, 'Nothing is too much trouble and the staff do everything they can to ensure I and my children have the help we need.' Adults and children have access to a wide range of well attended activities and courses and that are precisely targeted at their learning

needs. This begins with courses in which children and their parents can play together and extends right through to the point where adults are supported exceptionally well in finding their way back into the world of work. Central to the centre's work is the highly effective focus on promoting the emotional, mental and personal well-being of adults and children. Much of the centre's work is delivered by highly qualified and experienced members of staff and by experts from partner agencies, such as clinical psychologists.

The centre's capacity for sustained improvement is excellent. This is illustrated by the ways in which the centre has been able to attract additional funding and extend its influence across the reach area. The governance provided by the Great Yarmouth Community Trust places the centre's work at the very heart of the community. For example, the programme has provided additional buildings at Peggotty Road Community Centre and at Gordon Road. The former provide additional, much needed, nursery places and the latter a venue that means staff can give excellent support for children who have additional or special educational needs. However, no-one is complacent and managers and staff are constantly seeking ways of improving the services they provide.

There are good examples of the centre working effectively in partnership with local schools to sustain the progress of children when they begin school. However, this is not the case for all schools within the centre's reach, although the centre is now working closely with a wider range of headteachers and schools, focusing particularly on sustaining children's emotional and personal development.

What does the centre need to do to improve further?

Recommendations for further improvement

- Extend the existing good links with schools to include all those within the centre's reach in order to sustain and support children's progress during their early years in school.

How good are outcomes for users?

1

All children, including those from potentially vulnerable groups, such as those who have a child protection plan, those who are looked after and those who are subject to the Common Assessment Framework process, do well in all aspects of their development. This is mainly because of the centre's strong focus on promoting emotional and mental health which allows children to get off to a good start and supports parents exceptionally well in helping their children's development. This includes the promotion of healthy living by providing encouragement to use the outdoors for exercise. The very enjoyable Forest Schools project makes an important contribution to this aspect of the centre's work. The cafe at the Priory Centre and the breakfast club that operates at Greenacre School do an excellent job in highlighting the importance of healthy eating.

Everything possible is done to ensure that children are protected and that parents

are aware of how they can keep their children safe. Welfare concerns are identified at an early stage by vigilant staff and prompt actions taken to provide and sustain the support that will help users to overcome the challenges they face.

It is clear that users greatly enjoy the activities provided and achieve well. This enjoyment is underpinned by the ways in which adults and children feel valued, their successes are celebrated and their self-confidence and self-esteem are raised. For children and for adults the biggest strides they make are in their personal, social and emotional development.

Children behave exceptionally well and relationships between children and adults and among adults are positive. This is because of the centre's focus on personal development and the advice and support that is readily available to address any difficulties that children and adults might face. In this respect, the Parent, Infant Mental Health Team makes an outstanding contribution and their work is greatly appreciated by all concerned. Music therapy has a high profile and makes a very successful contribution to the development of children and their parents. Sessions, such as 'Bridge to Music' are very beneficial and greatly enjoyed by all concerned. The centre also involves users exceptionally well in contributing to planning and decision making. This extends from day-to-day evaluations of sessions to the excellent contribution that users make to the governance of the centre.

Skills for the future are developed well, although the majority of children begin at very low starting points. Adults are supported exceptionally well to gain the skills they need. There is an excellent range of courses, many of which result in formal qualifications. Against a background of significant economic challenge the centre, as part of the Great Yarmouth Community Trust, has set up its own employment agency to supplement the 'warm phone' link it already has to Jobcentre Plus. The agency puts users in touch with selected employers and paves the way for them to get back into employment, often with considerable success.

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

Highly effective work across contributing agencies means that the needs of individuals are recognised and assessed at a very early stage. Within this context highly effective links with midwives feature strongly. That said, all the partner agencies are fully involved in referral procedures. Ongoing support, related to need, is invariably sustained with adult users and their children being 'signposted' towards activities that are closely tailored to their needs. Consequently, continued improvement is promoted exceptionally well. The progress made by children, in all areas of their development, is assessed accurately and frequently. Assessments of progress are presented in ways that are very user friendly for parents. For example, each child has a book which provides photographic evidence of their progress, accompanied by detailed annotations. Parents find this approach very helpful in understanding their children's progress and being involved in planning the next stages of development.

Purposeful learning, individual development and enjoyment are promoted exceptionally well. Learning is planned precisely and builds on the previous experiences of children and adults. For example, new mothers can take their children to 'Baby Bumble' and progress on to 'Treasure Baskets' and to 'Back to Basics.' Each of these experiences builds skilfully on what has gone before. All activities embody an individual approach. Because staff are very knowledgeable about the needs of each individual, they can provide precise, ongoing support as part of each course or activity. The same applies to the wide range of courses for adults, including those for personal development and the promotion of parenting skills.

The full range of available services meets the needs of users and the community exceptionally well. For instance, in addition to activities and services at the main centre, staff are always willing to reach out to users. The centre, which provides high quality, specialist support for children and the parents of children who have additional needs, is sited away from the Priory but is easily accessible for users. The centre provides transport so that those who participate in the carefully targeted 'Mellow Parenting' programme are able to visit their most convenient venue. A base has recently been established at a nearby Traveller site and is operating with great success.

Activities and services are publicised through some excellent marketing materials. These materials are all readily available in the full range of languages spoken by those who live within the centre's reach. All staff in different parts of the service are willing to undertake home visits, a process in which the highly skilled family support team play a major role. The Parent, Infant Mental Health Team have a central and greatly valued role in promoting emotional health. Its activities are precisely tailored to meet individual needs. The centre also reaches out to fathers with great success. Many attend the full range of parenting groups, but they also greatly appreciate

those sessions that are designed especially for them. Each activity across the range is evaluated carefully and the views of users are considered in the planning of subsequent activities.

Care, guidance and support are also of a high standard. All staff are well trained and vigilant, especially in terms of sharing concerns and responding promptly with care and sensitivity; for example, in the identification and effective response to instances of domestic violence. The result is that parents and carers and their children all have great faith in the capacity of the centre to protect them, should the need arise.

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

Day-to-day management and professional supervision are outstanding. Staff morale is high and the various teams work exceptionally well within and beyond their specialist fields by sharing and working closely with colleagues across the full core remit. Staff feel valued and appreciate that the quality of their work is recognised and celebrated. All staff provide and receive training of very high quality. Many are pursuing further higher-level qualifications and are involved in research activities aimed at improving the quality of the provision even more. At the heart of the centre's success is the inspirational leadership and example set by the centre leader. The Great Yarmouth Community Trust and the advisory board provide strong lines of accountability and their far sighted and supportive approach continues to enable the centre to expand and thrive. These bodies are excellent advocates for the community they serve and are tireless in ensuring that needs are recognised and met.

Ambitious targets are set and their rigorous evaluation provides yet more evidence of the centre's success. Users and the community have high expectations, based on the track record of what the centre can provide. They also have very positive views and hold the centre in high regard. At all levels, including within the trustees and on the advisory board, parents and other users are well represented and play an essential role in evaluating the quality of provision and in planning the next stages of development.

Resources are managed superbly and the centre provides outstanding value for

money. Trustees and managers are excellent at identifying and accessing additional financial resources. That said, their approach is carefully structured and targeted at those areas identified for development in the centre's improvement plan; the whole process being based on the careful research of users' needs.

The centre meets its statutory requirements very effectively, including those to eliminate any form of unlawful discrimination. Equality is promoted and diversity celebrated regardless of cultural, economic and ethnic background of users. The centre's work with the full range of key agencies to promote safeguarding is outstanding. This includes the provision for any potentially vulnerable children and adults. Requirements for child protection are met in full, as are those to ensure the recruitment of appropriate staff.

Partnerships with other agencies, such as health services and community groups are integrated seamlessly to ensure the needs of the reach are met. For instance, training activities are always shared across the full range of partners, no matter which is providing the training. This integration and co-operation provides a large part of the reason why the needs of users are met so effectively. Similarly, the centre engages very effectively with its full range of users and with the wider community.

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	2
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

There were no recent or concurrent inspections taking place.

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Summary for centre users

We inspected the Greenacre (Priory) Children's Centre on 22–23 June 2011. We judged the centre as outstanding overall.

We would like to thank those parents and carers who gave time to share their thoughts about the work of the centre with us. Your comments are greatly appreciated, especially as they support our view that the centre meets your needs exceptionally well. We are also pleased to report that your centre does all it can to ensure that you and your children are safe as possible.

We were very pleased to see the ways in which the centre makes everyone feel welcomed and how it helps you to gain good parenting skills. The activities and courses that are available help your children to thrive and do well. The approach taken by staff means that everyone feels valued and their successes are celebrated. The activities also enable you to gain experiences and qualifications that help you to prepare for starting or returning to employment as your children become a little older. The employment agency, set up by the Great Yarmouth Community Trust and operating at the Priory Centre, is certainly helping you to gain employment. This is especially creditable during what are, for many people, relatively difficult economic times.

We noted that your centre is especially good at recognising the sort of help you need and at keeping the help going for as long as it is required. Staff listen to your views, not only when considering the support they can provide but in taking on board your opinions about how the services they provide might be improved.

The children, parents and carers we saw during the inspection were clearly enjoying the activities provided. Among those we observed were the children learning at the Priory Nursery and at the new Peggotty Nursery. We also saw a 'Treasure Baskets' group, a 'Back to Basics' session and a 'Bridge to Music' group at the Priory and the breakfast club at Greenacre School. All the sessions were going really well and it was

easy to see why you appreciate the work of the centre so much. We saw children who have additional needs learning at Gordon Road and were equally impressed by the excellent support these children and their parents and carers receive.

We also heard from you how much you appreciate some of the other services that we were not able to see at first hand. These include the counselling services the centre provides, the home visits of the family support team and the 'Mellow Parenting' sessions. We also heard how much you value the work of the Parent, Infant Mental Health Team. The wide range of activities your centre provides means that there is something for everybody.

There are lots of examples of how the centre works well in partnership with local schools to support your children's progress when they begin school. At the moment this does not apply to all the schools within the centre's reach. Consequently, we are asking managers to see if this important work can be extended to the remaining schools where it does not currently take place.

The advisory board and the Great Yarmouth Community Trust do an excellent job in overseeing the work of the centre. We noted that the people on the trust and on the advisory board in partnership with the staff are in no way complacent about the centre's work and are always looking for ways to make it even better.

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