

Inspection report for Newhaven Children's Centre

Local authority	East Sussex
Inspection number	367844
Inspection dates	21–22 June 2011
Reporting inspector	Jo Caswell HMI

Centre governance	Local Authority
Centre leader	Stella Edmonds
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected
Centre address	Newhaven Children's Centre, Denton Island
	Community Centre, Denton Island, Newhaven, East
	Sussex BN9 9BA
Telephone number	01273 580504
Fax number	Not applicable
Email address	Stella.edmonds@eastsussex.gov.uk

Linked school if applicable	Not applicable
Linked early years and childcare, if applicable	Denton Island Nursery – EY279429

The inspection of this Sure Start Children's Centre was carried out under Part 3A of the Childcare Act 2006 as inserted by section 199 of the Apprenticeships, Skills, Children and Learning Act 2009.

Introduction

The inspection addresses the centre's contribution to:

- facilitating access to early childhood services by parents, prospective parents and young children
- maximising the benefit of those services to parents, prospective parents and young children
- improving the well-being of young children.

The report is made to the local authority and a copy is sent to the children's centre. The local authority may send the report to such persons it considers appropriate and must arrange for an action plan to be produced in relation to the findings in this report.

This inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and an early years inspector.

The inspectors held meetings with the centre management, a representative from the local authority, front line staff, partnership agencies and users of the centre. They observed the centre's work, and looked at a range of relevant documentation.

Information about the centre

Newhaven Children's Centre originated from the local Sure Start programme. It is a phase one centre which serves the town of Newhaven, East Sussex. It was designated as a children's centre in October 2004. Newhaven Children's Centre is part of a cluster of centres within East Sussex known as the coastal group. An area coordinator oversees the management of all six centres. The centre is located within the Denton Island Community Centre, which is owned and managed by the Newhaven Community Development Association (NCDA). Governance of the centre is provided by the local authority. The local community experiences high levels of social and economic disadvantage and is located in one of the 30% most deprived areas of the country. The majority of families are of White British heritage. However, the number of minority ethnic families including Gypsy, Roma and Traveller families and those families who speak English as an additional language is increasing. There is an international ferry port in Newhaven and a number of industries within the town. Housing is mixed, consisting of privately-owned accommodation, rented property and social housing.

The centre offers the full core offer of services. Daycare is provided by the Denton Island Nursery, which is managed by NCDA. Most children enter the Early Years Foundation Stage with skills and abilities lower than those expected for their age. Unemployment levels in Newhaven are high. The numbers of children aged under five years living in households dependent on workless benefits is higher than the

county average. The proportion of children attending schools in the area who are known to be entitled to free school meals is above the national average.

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

Newhaven Children's Centre provides a very welcoming and fully inclusive environment. The provision is of good quality with some outstanding aspects. This leads to improving outcomes for children and families. Effective systems are in place to target the most vulnerable and those known to be harder to engage. As a result, the centre is successfully reaching families who are most in need. Management and governance arrangements are secure and clear lines of accountability are in place between the local authority and NCDA. This ensures services are delivered seamlessly between both partners. Partnership arrangements at all levels are a real strength of the centre, as are the wide range of services available to parents. This ensures highly effective signposting and integrated working between all agencies. This is having a positive impact on the rate in which outcomes for families are improving. As a result, the centre's capacity to improve is good.

Leadership and management arrangements are good. The leadership team have a good understanding of the needs of local families and this knowledge is consistently used to inform future service provision. The process of evaluation throughout the centre is good and staff continually reflect on their practice and identify areas for development. Systems for monitoring the longer-term impact of services on outcomes for children who have now started school are not yet fully in place.

The centre demonstrates excellent commitment towards promoting equality and diversity. All children and adults demonstrate respectful and harmonious relationships with one another and community cohesion is extremely good. The centre uses data exceptionally well to monitor the take-up rates of services by all priority groups and ensures all services are fully inclusive. As a result, centre staff are successfully identifying and engaging with groups within the local area who may be harder to reach. This is having a positive impact on children's learning as the gap between the

most disadvantaged children and the rest is closing.

Children benefit from the good quality early years provision in the linked nursery. All activities are purposefully planned around the six areas of learning of the Early Years Foundation Stage. Particular focus is given to supporting children's personal, social and emotional development and improving their communication, language and literacy skills. This is generally promoted effectively. However, opportunities for children in the crèche and the nursery to have continuous access to the outdoor area are restricted. As a result, children's opportunities to be physically active and benefit from outside learning whilst at the centre are sometimes limited.

Excellent measures are in place for safeguarding children and vulnerable families. The centre adopts exemplary practice in early intervention and preventative care to keep children safe. Families who are experiencing crisis in their lives are supported exceptionally well. Management of safeguarding procedures is extremely thorough with excellent liaison between all agencies.

What does the centre need to do to improve further?

Recommendations for further improvement

- Develop the evaluation process to consistently evidence longer-term impact of outcomes for children who have attended the centre who have now started school.
- Ensure children attending the crèche and the nursery have continuous access to outside provision.

How good are outcomes for users?

2

Outcomes for families who use the centre are good. Parents appreciate the care and compassion shown to them by staff. One parent praised the help she had received following a difficult period in her life. She described the support from staff as 'like having a lovely warm blanket round you'. Other parents told inspectors they had increased their confidence by attending activities at the centre and made new friends. Many parents stated they had developed a better understanding of health outcomes for children as they had attended drop-in clinics with health professionals and learnt about healthy lifestyle choices. Parents clearly understand the importance of nutrition and the benefits of breastfeeding, as they have attended relevant support groups and received help from specialist mentors. One parent told inspectors she would have stopped breastfeeding if she had not received the support she did. The Positive Weaning course has played a significant part in targeting support to help parents provide healthy, nutritious meals for their babies. The centre utilises most opportunities to encourage parents and children to adopt a healthy lifestyle. As a result, parents state they have learnt the importance of being active with their children and enjoy lively musical groups, such as Jitterbugs and Wriggle and Rhyme. The centre has made arrangements with the local leisure centre, offering families the opportunity to go swimming and benefit from physical activity. As a result, the centre

is having a positive impact on reducing childhood obesity levels. However, the centre does not fully utilise opportunities for children to benefit from continuous access to outdoor play. Children attending the crèche do not have as much access to the centre's garden as those children in the nursery.

Parents say how safe and secure they feel at the centre. One parent said, 'You know you will always be safe here.' There are very good strategies in place to help parents understand the importance of safety and recognise potential hazards within the home. Links with the emergency services enable parents to develop a clearer understanding of safety. Many families have benefited from the fire service home safety checks and the free installation of smoke alarms. Children are consistently kept safe and procedures for safeguarding are outstanding. Children supported by the Common Assessment Framework are extremely well cared for through excellent multi-agency working. Children subject to a child protection plan benefit from positive improvements in their outcomes as a result of the children's centre involvement.

Parents benefit from many courses which help them to develop stronger and more positive relationships with their children and enhance their emotional well-being. One parent told inspectors completing the courses enabled her to 'turn her life around'. Sessions, such as Bags of Fun, encourage parents to understand how to support children's mathematical development through everyday experiences. The Dads' group offers many opportunities for fathers to enjoy a range of quality play opportunities with their children. Activities are generally purposeful and facilitated well, encouraging good participation between adults and children. Parents told inspectors how much they enjoyed the sessions and benefited from having 'quality time' with their children.

Children make good progress in the Early Years Foundation Stage, both at the linked nursery and within the crèches provided by the centre. Activities are planned to support learning, with particular support for developing children's social skills and language development. Parents enjoy having the opportunities to enhance their own life skills. The strong links with Sussex Downs College and the Newhaven Community Employment Partnership enable parents to easily access information on training and employment. This is having a positive impact on reducing the numbers of children living in workless households. As a result, a number of parents have undertaken accredited training and obtained qualifications, enabling them to be successful in seeking employment.

These are the grades for the outcomes for users

The extent to which children, including those from vulnerable groups, are physically, mentally and emotionally healthy and families have healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which children are safe and protected, their welfare concerns are identified and appropriate steps taken to address them	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

The centre offers an excellent range of services which are clearly targeted and meet the needs of local families. Staff know the local area exceptionally well and are proactive in seeking out relevant support for individual families. For example, it works exceptionally closely with the Gypsy Roma Traveller community and offers extensive support where needed. The centre recognises the changing demographics of the reach area through close analysis of data and provides relevant services accordingly. In recent months, the centre has seen a significant increase in the numbers of minority ethnic families living in the area and has provided extensive support to ensure all families are fully integrated. The centre actively celebrates the diversity of each family and recognises the importance of tackling discrimination.

The quality of care for children and adults is good. All families comment positively on the nurturing environment and state how easy they find staff to talk to and approach for help and guidance. One parent told inspectors, 'Everyone wants to help you.' The Family Outreach Service work consistently hard to identify vulnerable families and those most in need, and show dedication towards supporting all children and parents. Data show the numbers of vulnerable families and priority groups accessing services is increasing. Centre staff liaise exceptionally well with partner agencies to ensure families benefit from a cohesive range of services. Staff receive training from partner agencies ensuring they have a good understanding of the role of different services and this enables them to be effective in assessing individual need.

Provision to help children to learn and develop is good. Staff know the children well and carry out detailed assessments on their individual needs. As a result, activities are planned to promote all areas of learning and development. However, provision for outside play is not as well utilised as it could be to enhance children's learning. The adult learning programme is well developed. The excellent links with external agencies and training providers, such as Sussex Downs College, enhance the opportunities for parents to increase their skills and knowledge and improve their employability.

Provision for children and adults with disabilities is good. Data show there has recently been a significant increase in the numbers of children with disabilities benefiting from services within the centre. Specialist groups, such as Something Special, and close links with local groups for children with additional needs, ensure children with disabilities are fully catered for. The well-resourced sensory room has been designed in consultation with specialists to provide a positive learning

environment for all children, but especially those with additional needs.

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	1
The quality of care, guidance and support offered to users within the centre and the wider community	2

How effective are the leadership and management?

2

Governance of the centre is good. The local authority and NCDA work together well to offer an extremely cohesive range of services. Opportunities for professional development are good, resulting in a highly-trained, dedicated staff team. The area coordinator is an extremely effective leader with a clear vision of high quality provision and services. All senior managers share a commitment towards providing an extensive range of services which successfully meet the holistic needs of all children and families. The cluster model of local children's centres enables services to be shared and not duplicated. This enables the centre to provide an extensive range of services, while still providing good value for money.

Safeguarding arrangements are excellent. Procedures for ensuring the safety and suitability of staff are extremely thorough and all staff frequently update their knowledge of child protection policies and procedures. Protocols for making referrals and sharing information are exemplary. Partnership working with a wide range of agencies and different services is excellent. Risk assessments are comprehensive and centre staff are dedicated to ensuring the health, safety and welfare of all centre users. There is particularly good support in place for families experiencing crisis. Effective and early intervention by the outreach services ensures families experiencing difficulties are quickly identified and signposted to relevant support.

The inclusion of all children and families lies at the heart of the centre's vision and ethos. All staff place strong emphasis on making groups and events fully inclusive and accessible to all. Centre staff ensure all barriers to learning and access to the centre are continually broken down. For example, in response to the recent increase in the number of minority ethnic families living in the reach area, the centre established links with the Sompriti service, a specialist support group. This is having a particularly positive impact on helping mothers to access health services within the centre. Staff utilise every opportunity to support communication and adapt information into different languages and formats. The books in the children's library have recently been reviewed to ensure they cover a full range of dual-language books and represent languages spoken by families in the local area. Inclusion for

children and adults with disabilities is excellent and specialist support services are fully in place. Centre staff are also particularly attentive towards recognising the different family structures of all centre users and ensure all resources consistently reflect equality of opportunity and tackle discrimination.

Parents are becoming increasingly involved in the work of the centre and are now starting to make an impact in shaping future services. The newly-formed parents' group is developing an active voice in the local community. For example, the group have recognised the town's bus service is difficult to access for parents with buggies. Therefore, the group are working with the local bus company to improve this. Parents are now becoming empowered by the centre to enforce change and improvement. As they have an increased understanding of safety issues, they recognise some roads within the local area are potentially dangerous for children and are working with the highways department to consider whether speed bumps are necessary. This challenging role is now beginning to make an impact on how they review the centre's services and some groups have been adapted as a result of their feedback.

Evaluation of services is embedded at every level and staff routinely reflect on their practice to identify improvement. Parents' views are welcomed and acted upon. Data are used systematically to identify the centre's business plans and the local authority challenge the centre and hold it to account based on monthly performance. There is extensive case study evidence of the impact of services on families on improving outcomes for children. However, systems for carrying out longer-term monitoring of impact once children start school are not yet fully embedded and are currently being developed.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The extent to which governance, accountability, professional supervision and day to day management arrangements are clear and understood	2
The extent to which ambitious targets drive improvement, provision is integrated and there are high expectations for users and the wider community	2
The extent to which resources are used and managed efficiently and effectively to meet the needs of users and the wider community	2
The extent to which equality is promoted and diversity celebrated, illegal or unlawful discrimination is tackled and the centre fulfils its statutory duties	1
The effectiveness of the centre's policy, procedures and work with key agencies in safeguarding children and, where applicable, vulnerable adults	1
The extent to which evaluation is used to shape and improve services and activities	2
The extent to which partnerships with other agencies ensure the integrated delivery of the range of services the centre has been	1

commissioned to provide	
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

The linked early years provision, Denton Island Nursery, was not inspected as part of this inspection, although inspectors did visit the nursery and the provision for daycare was considered as part of this inspection.

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 Newhaven Children's Centre on 21 and 22 June 2011. We judged the centre as good overall.

We would like to thank all of you who took the time to talk to us about your involvement and experiences at the centre. It was very enjoyable to meet with you and your families. You made it very clear to us how much you appreciate the children's centre and the support you receive from staff. Many of you told us the positive impact the centre has had on your lives and how it has supported you in times of crisis. We found that the staff are very caring towards you and are totally committed to helping you and finding the services available to support you. The range of services available to you in the centre is outstanding. All the people working in the different services work really closely together to help you and your families. This ensures you get the professional help and support you need very quickly. Procedures for safeguarding children and protecting them from possible harm are excellent.

We thought the work that has been done to encourage healthy lifestyles is good. Many of you told us how much you had learnt about healthy eating and had received support to continue with breastfeeding when you were finding it difficult. We noted the many opportunities you have to enjoy physical activity with your children, such as in the Wiggle and Rhyme group. We saw that children in the nursery have some opportunities to play outside, although children attending the crèche provision had fewer opportunities. We have asked the centre to ensure that children in the nursery and the crèche have access to outside learning opportunities at all times.

We noted how well the centre welcomes all children and families. Groups are organised to ensure that no family is disadvantaged. Staff offer sensitive support and ensure information is adapted to enable all families to understand it and be fully involved. We noted the centre is extremely aware of the different cultures, family groups and languages spoken with the local community and has reviewed its story books and range of written materials to reflect this.

The centre is fully committed to making ongoing improvements and the area coordinator and her team are always looking at ways to evaluate services and help them meet your needs. We noticed that the centre has lots of information about how it is helping you now. However, it has not yet completed its processes for measuring the longer-term impact of children who have left the centre and started school. We have asked the centre to address this.

During the inspection, we met with some parents who are members of the parents' group. We noted how good you are at identifying issues in the local community which affect families and taking relevant action to make improvements. We recognise the impact this group is now having on challenging the centre and asking it to make changes based on your feedback. For example, we noted the Jitterbugs group was changed to cover different age groups in response to parents' feedback.

Thank you again for your participation in the inspection. We would like to wish you and your families the very best for the future.

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