

Inspection report for Hollingdean Children's Centre

Local authority	Brighton and Hove
Inspection number	367814
Inspection dates	27–28 July 2011
Reporting inspector	Joanne Caswell HMI

Centre governance	Local authority
Centre leader	Siobhan Hier
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected
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Linked school if applicable	n/a
Linked early years and childcare, if applicable	Cherry Tree Nursery EY284309

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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 team, the local authority, health professionals, representatives from the advisory board, front-line staff, parents and carers and partner agencies.

They observed the centre's work, and looked at a range of relevant documentation.

Information about the centre

Hollingdean Children's Centre is a phase one centre which was designated in September 2005. The centre developed from the local Sure Start programme and operates from purpose-built premises in the Hollingdean area of Brighton. It serves one of the 30% most deprived areas in the country. There is a high level of need in the area and housing consists primarily of local authority housing and privately-owned homes. Unemployment levels are high within the centre's area and the numbers of families relying on benefits is higher than the city-wide average. The area is less ethnically diverse than other areas of the city with the majority of families from White British heritage. Children's levels on entry to school are often lower than those expected for their age.

The local authority and Primary Care Trust provide governance to the centre, arranged through a Section 75 agreement. Hollingdean Children's Centre is a health-led model, which provides the full core offer services and has health professionals, such as midwives and health visitors, operating directly from the centre. Full day care provision is delivered by Cherry Tree Nursery which is open from 8.00am to 6.00pm throughout the year. An advisory board is in place and includes membership of parents and carers, partner agencies, the local authority, stakeholders and multi-disciplinary professionals

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

Hollingdean Children's Centre provides an outstanding level of service and meets the needs of the local community exceptionally well. The health-led model provides a seamless integration of services with a strong focus on preventative care and early intervention. The centre works extremely hard with key partners to deliver cohesive services which are tailored towards personal need. As a result, outcomes for children and families are improving at an impressive rate.

Safeguarding is given the utmost priority. The centre has extremely effective and rigorous policies to ensure the safety and well-being of all centre users. Meticulous attention is given towards ensuring the premises are safe and secure at all times and robust risk assessments are undertaken. Centre staff model positive behaviour and safe practice and help centre users to clearly understand how to keep children safe and protect them from dangers. Exceptional partnerships with children's services and other agencies ensure children who may be at risk are monitored closely. Vulnerable families and those known to be facing crisis are extremely well supported.

The centre offers outstanding provision. The emphasis placed on reaching out to vulnerable families within the community is exemplary. Midwives, health visitors and early years visitors continually share information to ensure targeted support is provided to those most in need. The outstanding nursery provision enables children to develop a real thirst for learning. As a result, children are better prepared for the transition to school and make faster progress within the Early Years Foundation Stage.

The centre is fully inclusive and welcoming to all families. Many parents described the centre to inspectors as a 'life saver'. Staff demonstrate compassion and dedication towards all adults and children and are totally committed towards meeting personal needs. One parent told inspectors that staff are so kind and caring they 'become like family'. All staff consistently strive for the highest standards of provision and thoroughly evaluate and review all areas of provision to continually raise standards.

The centre collects a large amount of data from a number of sources and analyses this robustly to assess the needs of families on an individual basis. These data provide exceptional evidence that the centre is reaching 100% of families within the area and has a positive impact on all children and adults. There is excellent signposting and rapid referral between all agencies, which leads to the significant improvements in outcomes. However, the current process of analysing data on an individual basis restricts centre leaders from monitoring the long-term impact of services on a small number of vulnerable groups. As a result, the centre does not always have explicit evidence of the overall impact on outcomes of all groups. It has this on an individual basis, but is not clearly defined across some groups.

The centre actively seeks and welcomes the views of users, services and the wider community. It meaningfully involves centre users in the governance of the centre and empowers them to shape future services. As a result, families have really taken ownership of the centre and regard it as an integral part of their local community. Attendance levels are continuing to rise and an increased range of services is becoming available in response to centre users' feedback. Consequently, the centre provides outstanding value for money and has outstanding capacity to improve.

What does the centre need to do to improve further?

Recommendations for further improvement

- Apply the same rigour to evaluation of the impact of services on individual children and families to further consider the impact on outcomes for some disadvantaged groups in a more explicit way.

How good are outcomes for users?

1

The children's centre offers an extremely welcoming and safe environment. Staff work hard to successfully build secure relationships with all parents and carers and target support where it is needed most. Children subject to a child protection plan, or those involved with the Common Assessment Framework, are extremely well supported by the highly effective, multi-agency team around the child and family approach. Comprehensive information is shared and the referral process is rapid, ensuring children are quickly protected from harm and kept safe. Children, and parents and carers, learn how to keep themselves safe and reduce the risk of accidents. Targeted intervention helps to significantly reduce the numbers of children previously needing hospital treatment. Parents and carers told inspectors how beneficial they found completing the paediatric first-aid course. One parent stated she prevented her child from choking as she knew the relevant action to take. Home safety assessments and safety items, such as smoke alarms, are made available to help improve safety levels within the home. Topics and themed-safety activities help to significantly raise children's awareness of potential dangers. The local police officers are regular visitors to the centre's 'Snickle Doodle Café'. This provides a relaxed and informal venue where any concerns can be raised and information

shared to help keep families safe.

Parents are empowered to believe in themselves as parents and develop positive attachments with their children. Many parents and carers praised the way in which the centre helps them to feel more confident and positive about themselves. There is strong support for all parents and carers to feel valued and develop strong emotional well-being. As a consequence, many parents and carers have formed friendships within the centre and these have helped to reduce their feelings of loneliness and isolation. One parent told inspectors, 'It's good to know you can turn up here and there's always someone to talk to.' Another parent stated the centre 'lifted her out of a hole'. Positive relationships are evident throughout the centre. The views of adults and children are represented throughout the centre and these enable all centre users to feel valued and included. Community cohesion within the centre's area is exceptional.

Parents and carers praise the excellent links they have with health professionals through the centre. They state this has enabled them to gain extensive information regarding their child's healthy development through the 'Healthy Child' clinics. Breastfeeding rates have improved at an impressive rate. Parents and carers develop an excellent understanding of the importance of health and nutrition as they undertake regular courses, such as 'Cook and Eat'. This helps them to understand what constitutes a healthy meal and enables them to prepare freshly-cooked, wholesome meals for their families. Recently, parents and children took part in an organised 'Soup and Stomp' activity where they helped to prepare fresh ingredients to make a soup, take a healthy walk within the local area and return to the centre to enjoy the homemade soup for lunch.

Children thoroughly enjoy their time at the centre. The nursery provides an exciting, highly stimulating environment where children thrive and make outstanding progress from their initial starting points. The 'Stay and Play' sessions are very well attended and there is an excellent range of high-quality early years provision. Parents and carers enjoy interacting with their children and recognising how to extend children's learning through daily experiences. Parents and carers very quickly see the value of social activities for young children and are inspired to form their own groups. For example, two parents recently set up their own music group for babies. There are many opportunities for parents and carers to enjoy new activities and develop new skills. There is a wide range of training courses available and opportunities for adults to take on responsibility and develop new skills. As a result, some parents now work as volunteers within the centre and local area and some parents have been 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	1
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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

Services provided by the centre are intrinsically linked to ensure seamless transition between one agency and another. This is particularly effective for those children and families needing targeted support. The care, guidance and support provided to families are exceptional. Information sharing and signposting to relevant services are first class and result in swift referrals between all agencies to improve family welfare. Parents and carers praise the level of care and guidance shown to them by staff. One parent commended the dedication shown by staff in providing professional expertise. She told inspectors, 'You only have to mention a concern to one person, and the expert gets back to you.' Parents praised the way in which early years visitors took the time and care to support individual need. For example, some parents have received personalised support from centre staff in completing school applications for their children. Parents endorsed this by telling inspectors, 'Staff will help you with anything.'

All centre staff, partner agencies and the local authority have an exceptional understanding of the issues facing the families living in the centre's area. The needs of families are assessed meticulously to ensure services are tailored to suit their individual needs. The different agencies play an exceptional part in supporting the most vulnerable families and in helping them to make the changes necessary to improve their own lives and those of their children. The range of services is good and increasing. Parents and carers are becoming more confident to ask for additional services or to access services which are targeted at specific families. Participation rates are good and increasing. At present, due to the current format of data analysis which focuses specifically on individuals, the centre is unable to offer explicit evidence to show the impact of services of some vulnerable groups.

The learning and development opportunities for adults are good. Parents and carers are inspired to develop their skills and knowledge. One parent told inspectors, 'I am now making plans to do things that I never would have thought of, or known that I could, before.' Provision for personalised learning is in place. Participation rates in training courses are increasing. The centre has formed excellent links with providers and partners, such as the 'Friends Centre', to increase the range of training

opportunities available. As a result, some parents have been able to complete courses which help them to prepare for employment and further training.

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	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?

1

Governance and accountability arrangements are very well established and clearly understood at all levels. There are exceptional links between strategic planning, management plans and service provision. Excellent monitoring and evaluating processes are in place and implemented at all levels. The local authority, in conjunction with the Primary Care Trust, has worked hard to implement a model which has fully integrated health services. This has had a significantly positive impact on improving outcomes. However, there are issues identified in the way in which data are analysed, as these are currently completed on a mainly individual basis. As a consequence, evidence of long-term impact on improving outcomes for some vulnerable groups has been harder for the centre to demonstrate explicitly.

The advisory board includes an extremely wide range of representatives, including centre users and partner agencies and is chaired by a parent. The group plays a key part in representing the views of the local community. It is fully involved in the self-evaluation process and frequently challenges the centre about action plans and target setting and holds centre management to account. The 'Parents' Voice' provides centre users with an exceptional forum to be involved in the design and set up of services and centre provision. A recent consultation with children led to a full evaluation of services and adaptations made to reflect their views and ideas. For example, children wanted pictures displayed on doors to help them understand what was behind each door. Adults used the forums to share feedback on other issues around the centre, such as improving the café menu, selecting displays for the centre and ensuring the installation of low-level hand rails for children on the stairwell. All parents and carers are represented on the forums. One parent stated, 'Everyone is listened to.' Another parent stated, 'There's no snobbery here.'

Safeguarding arrangements are rigorous and robust at every level. Early intervention and preventative work are key to the success of the children's centre in securing future outcomes and reducing the numbers of children requiring a child protection

plan. Staff are highly trained professionals who are exceptionally experienced in identifying needs and working with families to protect children. The centre has extremely comprehensive recruitment procedures and carries out relevant checks to ensure the suitability of all staff and volunteers. All staff are trained in safeguarding and child protection and the welfare of children is of paramount importance. Staff act as positive role models and help parents and carers to understand appropriate behaviour to keep children safe. There is excellent support in protecting families at times of crisis. Parents and carers consistently told inspectors how safe they feel at the centre and know staff will help them, particularly when they are feeling low and vulnerable or may be at risk.

The inclusion of all children and their families lies at the heart of the centre's vision. Strong emphasis is placed on identifying individual need and targeting support. The centre has provided appropriate groups for parents who speak English as an additional language. For example, the 'Bilingual Family Group' at the neighbouring children's centre has helped families of diverse cultures to integrate together. In addition, the 'Mosaic Group' is a specialist group for families of Black and mixed parentage families. There is a good selection of support for both children and adults with disabilities through specialist groups and specific groups for fathers to attend with their children. Early Years Foundation Stage profile results show that boys and girls are achieving equally and the gap between the most disadvantaged and the rest is continuing to close each year. Centre staff are extremely committed to helping all families remove barriers to learning and inclusion. Concerted action has been taken to promote equality throughout all centre activities. At present, it is unclear from the centre's process of data analysis whether outcomes for all key groups are improving as rapidly as the rest.

Resources are used and managed extremely effectively. The city-wide model for children's centres has been carefully designed to reduce expenditure and prevent duplication of services. All activities are risk assessed and have to demonstrate sustainability. Centre staff are exceptionally well trained and have links with an exemplary range of additional partners to ensure a high level of service delivery. Therefore, the centre provides outstanding value for money.

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	2

The effectiveness of the centre's policy, procedures and work with key agencies in safeguarding children and, where applicable, vulnerable adults	1
The extent to which evaluation is used to shape and improve services and activities	1
The extent to which partnerships with other agencies ensure the integrated delivery of the range of services the centre has been commissioned to provide	1
The extent to which the centre supports and encourages the wider community to engage with services and uses their views to develop the range of provision	1

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

The linked early years provision, Cherry Tree Nursery, was inspected by Ofsted on 2 June 2011. It was judged as outstanding overall. Findings from this inspection have contributed to the children's centre report.

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Summary for centre users

We inspected Hollingdean Children's Centre on 27 and 28 July 2011. We judged the centre as outstanding overall. We would like to thank those of you who took the time to talk with us about your involvement and experiences at the centre. It was very enjoyable to meet with you and your children and was very clear to see how much the centre means to you and your families. It is clear to us that you value the centre and the staff who work in it and the centre has had a very positive impact on your lives. We found that all staff are totally dedicated to helping you, and providing you with information and services that support you in caring for your children.

Hollindean Children's Centre has many outstanding features. Procedures for keeping children safe and protecting them from possible harm are excellent. Many of you told us how safe and secure you find the centre and that staff go out of their way to help you and notice when you may be feeling a bit low. We recognise how caring the staff are and the friendly, welcoming and happy atmosphere with the centre.

The provision for you to access help and advice regarding children's health needs is superb. Many of you told us how beneficial it is to have midwives, health visitors and early years visitors working from the centre and helping you when you have any

concerns about your children's development. We noted the exemplary provision in place to help mothers to sustain breastfeeding and many of you told us how you had received support with this when you were finding it difficult. We noted the wide range of courses and activities available to help you learn how to cook healthy meals for your families and to enjoy physical activities and exercise with your children.

The centre plays an excellent role in helping you all to feel valued. Many of you told inspectors how you had made friends at the centre and met people you may not have met before, even though you live close to each other. We observed how well parents and children get on with each other and support each other and we feel the centre's role in the community is a very special one.

We met with centre management and discussed the ways in which they keep records of how they are helping you and your families. The health services are particularly successful as every family living in the Hollingdean area is registered at the centre and attends for health appointments. Centre managers are extremely good at assessing your needs on an individual basis and finding you the relevant support very quickly. Many of you told us how useful you find this, particularly when you need expert help and advice. The centre managers record different types of data to show what the centre is doing and regularly look at this to ensure they are adapting services to meet your needs. However, at present, the way in which these data are recorded does not enable managers to easily check that all of you are receiving the support as quickly as each other, and we have asked the centre to address this.

We observed the nursery provision and the 'Stay and Play' groups and noted the excellent range of early years activities. Children make rapid progress in the nursery and children's centre. Many parents and carers told inspectors how the centre had helped them to understand how children learn through play and how they could extend this at home. We noted how many courses are available for parents and carers and that attendance at these courses is increasing. We saw evidence that some of you have completed accredited courses and received help in accessing employment and volunteer opportunities.

During the inspection we met with some representatives from the advisory group. We noted how easily centre users can share their own ideas about the design and set up of services and that some of you have already suggested ideas for future activities. The 'Parents' Voice' is an extremely good way to ensure that all parents and carers can share feedback. We noted the way in which children can share ideas and offer feedback and we think this is particularly good and very important.

We observed how well all families are welcomed into the centre and that everyone is valued. We spoke to many parents who told us they all feel listened to. Some parents who do not speak English as their first language stated they had completed relevant courses and enjoyed attending groups, such as the 'Bilingual Family Group' and the 'Mosaic Group'. This had helped them to make new friends and socialise with other families.

We would like to take this opportunity to thank you for your involvement with the inspection and 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.