

Inspection report for South Weston Children's Centre

Local authority	North Somerset
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Reporting inspector	Mark Lindfield HMI

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Linked school if applicable	
Linked early years and childcare, if applicable	Littlewaves Community Nursery EY332399

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.

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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 senior leaders, representatives of the local authority, health professionals, partners who offer services and parents and carers. Inspectors observed the centre's work and looked at a range of relevant documentation.

Information about the centre

South Weston Children's Centre is a phase one centre, based on three sites in Weston-super-Mare. The For All Healthy Living Centre, located in Lonsdale Avenue, is managed by the Healthy Living Company and includes a doctor's surgery, café, community library and meeting rooms. A play centre on site and adjoining rooms are managed by the children's centre with sessions and activities provided by Jobcentre Plus, Adult Mental Health and early years sessional staff. The Oldmixon Family Centre is located in Monkton Avenue and includes crèche and play facilities, meeting rooms and space for family support workers. The centre provides an Early Years Foundation Stage education for a maximum of 22 children at Littlewaves Community Nursery. The nursery provides part-time and full-time places and is open from 8.40am to 3.30pm for 47 weeks of the year. Many children attending the nursery arrive with limited language skills. The nursery supports a number of children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The nursery is situated in the Bournville area on the site of Windwhistle Primary School and currently has 40 children on role.

There are currently 817 children under 5 years of age within the centre's reach area. The centre serves an area where a few families come from more affluent areas, but a third of the Lower Super Output Areas within the centre's reach, fall within the lowest 3% of the most deprived areas of the country. There is a high proportion of lone parents, teenage mothers and families out of work. Over a third of all children Under 5 live in families dependent on workless benefits and a seventh of families are

eligible to benefit from the childcare element of working tax credit. A small proportion of families are transient residents with accommodation provided for emergency and short-term tenancies within the reach area. Specific housing support is provided for young lone parents. The majority of families are of White British origin with a small minority of Asian, Black Caribbean, Black African and White Eastern European. The centre is governed by the local authority; the South Weston Partnership Board was re-launched in November 2010. An advisory board was disbanded in July 2011.

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

3

Capacity for sustained improvement

The centre’s capacity for sustained improvement, including the quality of its leadership and management

3

Main findings

The centre’s overall effectiveness is satisfactory. It offers sound levels of support for families so that outcomes in all areas are satisfactory. The centre provides services that help to improve outcomes for some of the vulnerable groups of users. Timely and appropriate support is provided to help adults to develop their emotional health and well-being. Parents are able to choose from a range of activities which allows them to select the most appropriate support. A senior staff member at the centre has piloted Blue to New drop-in sessions to support adults to improve their emotional health and this innovative approach has been introduced in other children’s centres across the local authority. In addition, the centre provides specific sessions for postnatal depression which help to develop parents’ well-being and reduce their sense of isolation. Senior leaders have a variety of professional backgrounds, with a sound understanding of the centre’s strengths and they have produced action plans to address areas of weakness. They have used their expertise to build strong speech and language support and secure improving outcomes for children in Early Years Foundation Stage settings. In developing provision in these key areas the centre’s leaders and managers have demonstrated a satisfactory capacity to improve.

The proportion of mothers within the centre’s reach area breastfeeding their child at 6 to 8 weeks, at 27%, is the lowest in North Somerset. Some parents report that breastfeeding support is not readily available when needed. The centre intends to introduce volunteers to provide peer support and a number of adults have completed

training at a neighbouring children's centre. The centre signposts families to Baby Diners sessions at a neighbouring centre and has recently completed staff training to raise awareness and to encourage mothers to sustain breastfeeding. Obesity rates in Reception-age children in the centre's reach area are higher than the local authority average. The centre's approach to improving healthy eating is satisfactory. Parents are encouraged to provide healthy food for their children and the centre provides healthy choices at snack and meal times. Children are introduced to new foods by the children's centre staff. A young parent reported that, as a result of the centre's encouragement, her child '...will now sit and eat a meal and will try anything'. Parents have requested additional activities to improve healthy eating.

Littlewaves Nursery provides well-coordinated support, organised through monthly multi-agency sponsored and funded day care panels, for children with additional needs and for vulnerable pupils which helps them to make good social and academic progress. Working in partnership with the Springboard charity and specialist professional agencies, nursery staff develop individual play and educational plans closely matched to children's needs. There is strong support for children to develop their communication and language skills through a coordinated approach from specialist speech and language professionals and the centre's qualified Early Years Foundation Stage teacher. This has helped to raise children's attainment in communication, language and literacy across a range of local settings.

Case files show that family support workers are well aware of safeguarding procedures and the centre's involvement in supporting families with vulnerable children is high. There is a high proportion of families within the area where there are child protection concerns. The centre is able to point to a number of families where staff have provided supported that has helped to reduce the risk of harm and improve their circumstances.

Families do not fully contribute to strategic decision making because there are currently no parents or carers actively participating in governance meetings. Parents and carers attend informal sessions and coffee mornings where they are encouraged to express their views and opinions. At the time of a local review of childcare provision, families were quick to express their support for Littlewaves Nursery and their views were taken into account in continuing the provision. Parents feel that individual staff members listen to their views about individual sessions. Parents have put forward ideas to develop cookery sessions and their views are taken into account in developing activities. However, adults are not consistently asked to evaluate individual sessions and to gauge the impact of activities on developing their skills and understanding.

The centre's governance arrangements have been through recent changes in structure and, as a result, roles and responsibilities are not clearly understood. Initially the local authority set up an advisory board in April 2010, with a role of 'supporting and challenging the direction and service delivery'. This advisory board was disbanded in July 2011. This is replaced by the South Weston Partnership Board which was re-launched in November 2010, but with limited representation from

partner organisations and users. As a consequence, the local authority's governance arrangements are inadequate and do not currently provide sufficient challenge and support to raise outcomes to consistently good or better. Data and information held by key partner organisations have not been shared with the centre or used by the local authority to fully evaluate the effectiveness of the centre and ensure performance management processes are robust. During the inspection, inspectors were presented with recent data that confirm that the centre engages a satisfactory proportion of vulnerable groups of users, but this had not previously been presented to the centre's leadership.

What does the centre need to do to improve further?

Recommendations for further improvement

- Ensure governance arrangements provide appropriate levels of challenge and support and secure good outcomes for families by:
 - making more effective use of available data and information to manage and evaluate the performance of the centre
 - ensure families and key partners are fully represented in governance arrangements, provided with clear roles and responsibilities and actively participate in self-evaluation and strategic planning.
- Improve being healthy outcomes for families by increasing the proportion of mothers sustaining breastfeeding and reducing levels of childhood obesity.
- Provide services more closely tailored to the needs of all vulnerable groups of users by;
 - ensuring a more accurate assessment of the needs of all vulnerable groups
 - ensuring all users regularly contribute their evaluations of individual activities and services.

How good are outcomes for users?

3

The centre has developed regular links with Jobcentre Plus advisers so that families are able to access employment and careers advice. In relocating sessions from the middle of the town to the Family Living Centre, attendance at appointments has risen significantly. Previously the proportion of missed appointments at the town centre site was around 80%, this has decreased significantly to the extent that the majority of appointments based at the centre are now kept. The support of individual staff has helped a number of users to maintain financial stability by completing benefit claims and accessing credit and financial loans. A partner organisation Westonworks provides 'back to work' programmes specifically for lone parents that have helped a number of adults to access employment or work-based training. The centre is aware that some parents access adult education and qualifications at local colleges, but is unsure of the numbers of families involved or the level of qualifications obtained.

The majority of users are developing a satisfactory understanding of how to keep

themselves and their families healthy. Health professionals provide a range of antenatal and health checks for babies and young children at both the Oldmixon and the Family Healthy Living Centre. Adults are encouraged to improve their health and fitness by participating in swimming sessions and accessing support from Healthy Trainers. The centre is intent on increasing the small proportion of users accessing smoking cessation support and advice and makes innovative use of text messages to provide additional encouragement. Changing Patterns courses provide adults with a safe environment where they develop their self-esteem and are helped to improve their emotional health. A parent reports, 'I feel more strong, focused, confident, mature and happier,' as a result of attending session at the centre.

The centre provides a number of targeted support activities and programmes for families that they report help to improve their feelings of safety. Sessions including Mellow Parenting and Incredible Years parenting courses help to improve parenting skills and improve the welfare of vulnerable adults and children. In addition, responsive support from family support workers helps to develop close bonds with families facing challenging circumstances and sustains adults' developing confidence. Information from case studies shows that the centre has provided valuable support to families in times of difficulty. The centre is aware that the proportion of emergency and hospital admissions for children under five years of age is higher than average and works with partner organisations to help families to stay safe. Young parents attending Rug Rats are provided with opportunities to learn and improve home safety during child safety week. The centre recommends some households for a fire fighters' visit to improve fire safety and parents have requested a home fire safety visit. Staff have been trained in first-aid procedures, but the centre has missed opportunities to extend training to families and adults.

Children who attend day and sessional care activities are making good progress in developing their communication, social skills and independence. Children engage in a variety of activities, both outdoors and inside, and enjoy using a good range of resources. Children, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, make good progress in developing their speaking and language skills. They receive individual support closely matched to their needs and are consistently encouraged by staff to express their ideas and to talk as they play. Parents further develop their personal and parenting skills by acting as volunteers in some sessions. They state that they appreciate the welcome they receive from staff and express their confidence that they will be treated with respect and understanding. They are able to present their views and opinions informally, but few parents are actively involved in the governance and strategic decision making of the centre.

These are the grades for the outcomes for users

<p>The extent to which children, including those from vulnerable groups, are physically, mentally and emotionally healthy and families have healthy lifestyles</p>	<p>3</p>
<p>The extent to which children are safe and protected, and their welfare concerns are identified and appropriate steps taken to address them</p>	<p>3</p>

The extent to which all users enjoy and achieve educationally and in their personal and social development	3
The extent to which children engage in positive behaviour and develop positive relationships and users contribute to decision-making and governance of the centre	3
The extent to which children are developing skills for the future and parents are developing economic stability and independence including access to training and employment	3

How good is the provision?

3

The centre provides suitable services and activities that satisfactorily engage the majority of the priority vulnerable groups of users in the community. Experienced members of staff know individual families well and have a secure understanding of the needs of many families in the local area. The centre provides satisfactory support for adults seeking employment and financial advice and guidance so that a satisfactory proportion of families are helped to maintain their economic stability and develop their suitability for employment. The centre provides targeted activities for young parents under 25 years old and their children in weekly Rug Rats activity sessions where they develop their parenting skills and make close social relationships. Specific sessions for lone parents and fathers engage a small proportion of these groups, although activities for fathers do not currently involve their children. Outreach workers provide close support for a high proportion of families within the local community facing challenging circumstances. Family support workers develop secure relationships and maintain regular contact with families so that they are able to refer them to other agencies for appropriate support and advice. Hitherto the centre has been able to access only limited information and data to determine the participation rates of vulnerable groups within the local area. The most recent data confirm that the centre engages with the majority of groups of users, but that relatively few families other than those of White British origin attend activities.

The centre provides well-organised speech and language support and advice to develop children's early communication skills across the local area. Speech and language therapists and the centre's qualified teacher have helped to provide training and support to childminders and local schools. Across all sites, centre staff show good awareness and consistently use a range of strategies to develop children's speaking and listening skills. The centre plans to provide training to help parents to develop their strategies to communicate with their babies and children. A multi-agency review panel coordinates professional support for children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities attending Littlewaves Nursery and with an appointed inclusion worker ensures children are provided with activities closely tailored to their needs.

The centre provides a range of activities which help to build on parents developing personal skills and confidence. For example, separate Peers Early Education

Partnership (PEEPs) sessions are provided for babies, one-year-olds and two-year-olds. Parents and carers report that these help to increase their parenting skills in managing children’s behaviour and increasing their understanding of age-appropriate development, although parents and carers also report that they would appreciate longer sessions for older children. The centre encourages adults to give their views and opinions informally but does not consistently gather evaluations from users and use these to shape and maximise users’ learning and development.

In response to the high proportion of local families in need, the centre has developed partnerships with professionals providing employment and careers advice. The centre is intent on working with health partners to improve rates of childhood obesity and increase the proportion of mothers breastfeeding their babies. The centre has recently provided training sessions for staff to increase their awareness of the support available for families to make informed choices about sustaining breastfeeding.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The effectiveness of the assessment of the needs of children, parents and other users	3
The extent to which the centre promotes purposeful learning, development and enjoyment for all users	3
The extent to which the range of services, activities and opportunities meet the needs of users and the wider community	3
The quality of care, guidance and support offered to users within the centre and the wider community	3

How effective are the leadership and management?

3

Centre leaders are engaging vulnerable groups in the area, but the measurement of the centre’s success has previously been inhibited by the lack of information and data provided by the local authority and partners. Information held by Jobcentre Plus, health professionals and adult education providers is not routinely available to senior leaders. As a consequence, the centre’s strategic development plans, whilst satisfactory, do not provide clear and quantifiable success criteria aimed at improving outcomes and increasing participation rates of vulnerable groups of users. Over time, senior leaders have developed an accurate understanding of the context of the local community. They have systematically evaluated the work of the centre and used their own information to develop and improve services and provision in a number of key areas to ensure that the centre provides satisfactory value for money.

The centre promotes the inclusion of children and their families and can point to improvement where it has effectively targeted actions. Services are targeted at engaging vulnerable groups of users including young parents and lone parents. In building on the expertise of senior leaders, the centre has improved services and provision to develop children’s communication, language and literacy skills and has

helped to narrow the achievement gap for Early Years Foundation Stage children. The centre has developed innovative approaches to support adults' emotional health and well-being and promote their greater involvement as parents and members of the community. Strong leadership of Littlewaves Nursery has developed good-quality provision and narrowed the achievement gap for children as they transfer to mainstream settings, including the achievement of a high proportion of children with additional needs. In developing provision in these areas, the centre's senior leaders demonstrate satisfactory capacity to improve.

The centre's governance arrangements have been through recent changes in structure. Recent changes in the local authority's advisory board and the centre's partnership board have resulted in a lack of clear roles and responsibilities. The local authority's arrangements to manage the performance of the centre do not currently provide sufficient challenge and support to raise outcomes for vulnerable users so that they are consistently good and address comparative weaknesses in partnerships with health and adult education.

The centre has clear procedures to ensure safeguarding arrangements are in place and that children and families are kept safe. The local authority ensures recruitment checks are completed to ensure the suitability of staff. The centre maintains a clear register of the completion of criminal record checks on all staff. Staff maintain close and regular liaison with other agencies, attending regular meetings to share information. Staff child protection training is up to date and, as result, staff are clear on the actions that they should take to record and share their concerns. The centre's safeguarding policy makes no specific reference to helping the high proportion of children with communication difficulties to express their concerns and views, although it is clear that staff are well aware of children's abilities and are well trained in communication strategies.

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	4
The extent to which ambitious targets drive improvement, provision is integrated and there are high expectations for users and the wider community	3
The extent to which resources are used and managed efficiently and effectively to meet the needs of users and the wider community	3
The extent to which equality is promoted and diversity celebrated, illegal or unlawful discrimination is tackled and the centre fulfils its statutory duties	3
The effectiveness of the centre's policy, procedures and work with key agencies in safeguarding children and, where applicable, vulnerable adults	3
The extent to which evaluation is used to shape and improve services	3

and activities	
The extent to which partnerships with other agencies ensure the integrated delivery of the range of services the centre has been commissioned to provide	3
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	3

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

Littlewaves Community Nursery was previously inspected in October 2008 and the quality of provision and overall effectiveness were judged good.

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Summary for centre users

We inspected the South Weston Children’s Centre on 10 and 11 August 2011. We judged the centre as satisfactory overall.

Thank you for making us feel welcome and for contributing to the inspection by sharing your experiences of your involvement with the children’s centre. Many of you told us that the staff provide support and advice in a friendly and non-judgemental manner. We saw how much your children enjoyed attending Littlewaves Nursery and taking part in activities at both the other sites. We enjoyed watching you participate in mini Olympics and attending Stay and Play sessions.

The centre provides appropriate support for adults to develop their emotional well-being. Weekly activities, such as Blue to New, are open to all adults and help many of you to get support and advice. Where necessary you are helped to receive additional sessions that help to reduce your sense of loneliness and help to improve your well-being. Many of you told us that you appreciated the chance to choose the most suitable support and advice from a range of sessions aimed at helping you to manage postnatal depression.

In the local area only a small proportion of mothers are breastfeeding babies two months after their birth. Some of you reported that you were unable to get hold of support and advice when you most needed it. The centre is aware of the situation and is working with a neighbouring children’s centre to train volunteers to provide the support you need when you ask for it. The centre have also recently provided training for staff so that they know what support and advice to recommend.

Staff at the centre help to encourage your children to try new healthy snacks and to eat healthily. However, we have asked the centre to work with health partners to do more to increase the numbers of mothers breastfeeding their babies and to reduce the numbers of Reception-aged children in the local area who are overweight or obese.

Children who attend the Littlewaves Nursery make good progress in their education and personal skills. This is because staff work closely with speech and language therapists and other professionals to encourage your children to talk and listen at every opportunity. Staff show a good understanding of individual children and use this information well to provide them with play equipment and activities that they enjoy and learn from.

Staff at the centre are open and friendly and this helps to build good relationships with you. They work closely with a number of families to help them deal with difficult times. You told us how important their support was to you and your families in helping you to keep your children safe and to develop your parenting skills.

Some of you go to the coffee mornings and are happy to give your ideas and views to staff. You provided good support to ensure that the nursery continued to operate. We have asked the centre to ask gather your views and comments on how much individual sessions and activities are helping you and your children to learn and develop. You can help to support the centre by regularly taking part in meetings to let the centre know what it should improve. We have also asked the local authority to set up a committee that involves parents, carers and partners to make sure that the centre is challenged to improve and provided with appropriate support from all key partners.

We would like to wish you your children and families who live in the South Weston area the very best for the future.

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