

Inspection report for New Brighton Children's Centre

Local authority	Wirral
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Date of previous inspection	Not Previously Inspected
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Linked school if applicable	Mount Primary School 104993
Linked early years and childcare, if applicable	New Brighton Day Nursery EY335779

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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.

An inspection of the registered early years provision was carried out at the same time as the inspection of the centre under section 49 of the Childcare Act 2006. The report of this inspection is available on our website: www.ofsted.gov.uk.

An inspection of the co-located primary school was carried out at the same time as the inspection of the centre under section 5 of the Education Act 2005. The report of this inspection is available on our website: www.ofsted.gov.uk.

This inspection was carried out by one additional inspector and one early years inspector.

The inspectors held meetings with senior leaders, members of staff and partner professionals from other agencies. Discussions were held with members of the advisory board, parents and service users and representatives from the local authority. They observed the centre's work and looked at a range of relevant documentation.

Information about the centre

New Brighton Children's Centre is a phase 1 centre. It was first designated in February 2007 and was later confirmed as providing the full core offer in February 2010.

The centre provides services from two designated sites to a population from a broad range of economic and social backgrounds, with 20% of families living in areas within the 30% most deprived areas. The remainder live in areas ranked within the 70% most deprived in the country.

The number of families attending schools in the area who are known to be entitled to free school meals is below average, as is the proportion of children aged under four years who are living in households where no-one is working. The number of children in the area known to have a disability is lower than average.

The vast majority of families within the area served by the centre is white British, with a small but increasing Polish community.

The centre provides a wide range of supporting services, including a crèche, drop-in health support, adult courses and workshops. In addition, the centre delivers outreach services at different venues within the community.

The centre's advisory board is made up of representatives from the local community, professional agencies and parents.

The centre's full day-care provision is provided by the local authority and is subject to a separate inspection by Ofsted. Most children enter early years provision with a range of skills higher than 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 families

3

Capacity for sustained improvement

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

3

Main findings

Overall effectiveness of the centre is satisfactory with some aspects that are good. The centre is becoming increasingly well established in the community and those in charge are developing a clear vision and understanding of the centre's strengths and areas for improvement. Outcomes are improved for families who use the centre because staff work effectively with parents to provide good activities and high standards of care and support. However, the majority of families who live in the area do not use the centre or its services and the total number of those registered is low. Although the centre promotes the services it offers there has been no significant increase in the number of families registering.

Families attending the centre develop a good understanding of dangers and how to keep themselves and each other safe. Staff have well-developed skills and understanding of safeguarding children and use these effectively to provide a safe and secure environment within the centre. Parents who are experiencing change and challenging circumstances in their lives share their concerns with staff because they trust them and know they will receive effective help. However, work with partners to ensure all children within the community are safeguarded is less well developed and

arrangements for the quality assurance of their safeguarding arrangements lack sufficient rigour.

There are good arrangements to ensure families attending the centre are encouraged to contribute positively to their community and the life of the centre. Children behave well at the centre and develop positive relationships with each other and adults. Families using the centre are listened to and feel they are included in making decisions about how the centre is run. Some parents who registered with the centre at a time when they had low confidence and self-esteem have developed greater self-assurance and improved their personal well-being. Attending the very popular baby massage sessions has helped many parents to strengthen bonds with their child.

Families attending the centre enjoy the activities on offer and children make good progress preparing for school. However, the centre does not provide a sufficient range of opportunities for adults seeking help to find work, undertake training or gain accredited qualifications.

Leadership and management of the centre are satisfactory. An acting centre manager has been in place for 12 months and during this time has established strategies to ensure the centre has satisfactory capacity to improve. Partnership working with a broad range of private, public and third sector organisations is becoming increasingly effective. However, some statutory organisations, such as children's social care and the area special educational needs teams, do not routinely share information which would help the centre make more accurate assessments about the needs of the community. Although gradually improving, this situation is preventing more effective integration of services.

The centre ensures that arrangements to ensure equality of opportunity and the promotion of diversity are satisfactory. Barriers to attending services are effectively overcome and there is a positive trend in the reduction of the achievement gap in Early Years Foundation Stage profiles.

The local authority provides the centre with a good range of data about the population of the area it serves but this is not used effectively enough to help the centre improve. Not all of the targets set by the local authority are clear or precise enough to help the centre understand exactly what it needs to do to improve.

What does the centre need to do to improve further?

Recommendations for further improvement

- Increase registration and participation through more effective promotion of the centre's offer and by more effective identification and targeting of those most in need.
- Provide a comprehensive range of services and opportunities for adults interested in seeking paid work, training and education.
- Develop more effective integration of services by establishing clear protocols for

- the exchange and sharing of information about children with disabilities and those subject to child protection plans.
- The local authority should provide the centre with clear key performance targets to meet the needs of targeted groups and the local community, and to help the centre staff understand exactly what is required to improve.
- Ensure that a robust system for the review and quality assurance of safeguarding arrangements is introduced.

How good are outcomes for families?

3

Outcomes for the children and families who use the centre are satisfactory. The centre is bright, attractive and welcoming, which helps families respond well to the wide range of activities relating to improving diet, development, exercise and lifestyle. Health outcomes are improving, such as in breast-feeding, immunisation and smoking cessation. The centre leadership team are aware that more families could be using the centre and are determined to increase the number of those registered so that more people can benefit from its services.

Children and families feel safe when accessing services at the centre because arrangements to help keep them safe are good. Staff have a good level of expertise and the building is secure. Children settle quickly in the crèche and day care as they have positive relationships with the adults and respond very well to the established routines. Children's behaviour in the centre is good. Staff establish trusting relationships with parents who confidently discuss and share their issues.

Courses available are valued and used well by parents. They give them confidence, help support their children's learning, promote good parenting skills and, for very few, increase educational attainment and prepare them for the world of work. Opportunities for those seeking to improve their educational qualifications, undertake training or find paid work are underdeveloped and not currently available to the majority of the population who are not registered with the centre.

Staff build strong, trusting relationships with users so families feel more able to engage with other professionals to access help and support. These relationships support the good work that is undertaken through the Common Assessment Framework, with those subject to child protection plans and with looked after children. However, arrangements to identify this target group are incomplete. This support is highly valued by users; for example, one parent told us, 'I was very depressed when I first started attending the centre and I hid behind the staff all of the time. Slowly they helped me relax and feel better about myself. I started to mix with other mums and feel better about my child too'.

Attendance at almost all sessions offered by the centre is good. There is a strong focus on language and communication. This has resulted in positive benefits in improving children's speech and by increasing parents' understanding of how they can encourage their children's language development. The centre uses art sessions to encourage creative skills, understanding and development by demonstrating the

value and importance of colour, detail and perspective.

The centre collects and analyses data which suggest that contact with the centre has enabled children to have a better start to school life. The children's centre foundation consultant works very well with local early years providers to improve the quality of their provision and so improve outcomes for children.

These are the grades for the outcomes for families:

The extent to which children, including those from target groups, are physically, mentally and emotionally healthy and families have healthy lifestyles	3
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 children and parents, including those from target groups, 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 parents, including those from target groups, contribute to decision-making and governance of the centre	2
The extent to which children are developing skills for the future, and parents, including those from target groups, are developing economic stability and independence including access to training and employment.	3

How good is the provision?

3

The quality of provision at New Brighton Children's Centre is satisfactory. The staff and partners are experienced and establish effective, supportive relationships with all users. Assessments cover the whole range of needs, including the needs of those from target groups. Assessment is used well to plan individual support for users but the majority of the population are unknown to the centre. Because partnership working with some organisations is not fully integrated, the centre does not have a complete profile of the needs of the communities it serves.

Satisfactory partnerships are in place with a range of key organisations including the co-located school, health, speech and language therapy, social care, Early Years Foundation Stage providers and voluntary and private sector organisations. The centre follows clear procedures to involve these partners in targeting services for individual children and families.

Analysis of data indicates that the number of families currently registered with the centre is low but increasing. Outreach workers hold events in the local community to attract new members and the targeting of families who are thought to have the greatest needs is progressing well. The outreach team use their knowledge and influence to help families engage with other professionals to ensure the well-being of children and their parents.

Current arrangements for education, training and support to find employment are underdeveloped. The centre recognises the need to do more to widen the range of

opportunities and increase access to these services for more adults.

Families using the centre and its services in the community receive satisfactory care, guidance and support. Evidence shows that many families using the centre achieve improved outcomes through the personal and practical support they receive. They have fun and engage in exciting activities, whilst building their confidence, relationships and parenting skills. One parent told us, 'I'm a different person now because I have a better understanding of what a good father should do. Everyone prefers the new me'.

The centre has an underdeveloped strategy to publicise its programme of activities. It does not use a website or routinely circulate the programme of activities to a broad enough range of community organisations or partners.

These are the grades for the quality of provision:

The extent to which the range of services, activities and opportunities meet the needs of families, including those in target groups	3
The extent to which the centre promotes purposeful learning, development and enjoyment for all families, including those in target groups	3
The quality of care, guidance and support offered to families, including those in target groups.	3

How effective are the leadership and management?

3

Leadership and management of New Brighton Children's Centre are satisfactory. The centre's leadership team has a positive impact on improving outcomes for centre users. The growing range of interesting and challenging activities is beginning to increase the number of families registered with the centre. The acting-manager provides a clear focus for the well-motivated staff to recognise the strengths of the centre and to continue to improve the services it offers. However, staff are unclear about the performance of the centre and do not have specific targets for the work they do. The centre has an established advisory board, which is chaired by a parent. She receives adequate support but has had no formal training for her role. The advisory board reviews progress but does not set targets or clear priorities for the centre. The parent forum provides an effective link between centre users and the centre's leadership team, who listen to and take account of users' views.

The local authority has not set key performance targets for the centre but it does recognise the importance of doing so and is currently working with the centre to do this. The centre leadership team have adequate arrangements to involve staff, partners and centre users in the process of self-evaluation. Staff do not have a clear understanding of the centre's vision and priorities but they do appreciate and recognise the importance of the impact of their work on improving outcomes for children and their families. The development plan sets out the centre's ambition and identifies where improvements are needed, making useful links with national and regional priorities. The centre provides satisfactory value for money.

Staff value the challenge and support they receive from their individual line-managers and are improving their skills and knowledge through ongoing training. The centre is committed to inclusion and removing barriers, including those faced by children with disabilities. It promotes equality satisfactorily in its activities, some of which involve the celebration of different cultures and beliefs. Discrimination, where it occurs, is dealt with promptly and effectively. The centre has contributed well to narrowing the achievement gap between the lowest 20% and the rest in the Early Years Foundation Stage.

The acting manager of the centre uses effective arrangements to ensure safeguarding regulations are met. All centre users are protected and their welfare and development are promoted effectively. Staff receive suitable training, have a good level of awareness and know what to do if action needs to be taken. However, there are insufficient quality systems to ensure these arrangements continue to be effective or to develop/share aspects of good practice, such as improved review arrangements for key policies relating to safeguarding and staff vetting.

Partnership working is effective in improving outcomes for those families who attend the centre. However, services are not fully integrated because some partners are unclear about what is expected of them and are concerned about the protection of sensitive information. Where relationships between key partners are clearer the centre becomes more effective at identifying and meeting the needs of more families in the 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	3
The effectiveness of evaluation and its use in setting ambitious targets which secure improvement in outcomes	3
The extent to which resources are used and managed efficiently and effectively to meet the needs of families, including those in target groups	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 partnerships with other agencies ensure the integrated delivery of the range of services provided by the centre to meet its core purpose	3
The extent to which the centre supports and encourages families in the reach area 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

None

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Summary for centre users

We inspected New Brighton Children's Centre on 13 and 14 September 2011. We judged the centre as satisfactory overall.

We enjoyed our visit to your centre and meeting so many of you. We would like to thank those of you who helped us with our work. We found that, under the guidance of the centre leadership team, the staff work well to provide satisfactory levels of care, guidance and support for all users. We found the staff to be committed and keen to support children's development, to develop adults' confidence and to make being a parent more enjoyable and rewarding. However, we think the centre needs to provide more courses for adults who want help to find work, undertake training or increase their education.

The staff have established some satisfactory partnerships with other professionals and organisations to ensure you have access to a full range of support and guidance. They are providing adequate guidance on how to keep families healthy and safe, and have placed great efforts on increasing children's development through many of the interesting and exciting activities.

Some of you told us that the support of the centre is very important when you are having problems. We found the staff to be good at providing individual personal support and that they are determined to become even better at supporting families with the greatest needs.

We found the centre to be a safe place for you and your children and we have asked the centre to make sure the arrangements to keep you safe are regularly checked. We found that the reception staff are very welcoming and helpful. Some of you told us how the centre is a bright and attractive place and we agree. The rooms and play equipment are of a very good standard and the staff have lots of experience and skills to make sure your time there is well spent. The children we saw were making good progress and enjoyed what they were doing.

The centre is a very useful place for you to meet other parents and people who can help families. Some of you said that sessions such as breast-feeding support and baby massage are very valuable and we agree. We also think that your centre is good at involving fathers and other male relatives and carers. The centre asks for

your views on activities and courses and some of you are involved in helping to manage the centre.

The acting centre manager meets the parents' forum regularly to ensure that the services the centre is providing meet your needs and interests. The centre staff listen to your views and use this information to make improvements. They are aware that more could be done to involve more families in the life of the centre. They also know that it would be very useful if the local authority helped them to decide what to do to make the centre even better.

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