

Inspection report for Weston Sure Start Children's Centre

Local authority	Southampton
Inspection number	383738
Inspection dates	28–29 September 2011
Reporting inspector	Denise Blackwell HMI

Centre leader	Amanda Kelly
Date of previous inspection	Not applicable
Centre address	60 Foxcott Close Weston Southampton SO19 9JQ
Telephone number	023 8043 7866
Fax number	
Email address	

Linked school if applicable	Weston Shore Infant School
Linked early years and childcare, if applicable	Weston Park Community Nursery

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 centre leaders and frontline staff, health professionals, local voluntary and community groups, local authority officers, headteachers, Jobcentre Plus and parents.

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

Information about the centre

Weston Sure Start Children's Centre is located in one of the 30% most deprived areas of the country. It is a phase one children's centre that was designated in April 2006, though it was initially opened in December 2000 as part of a Sure Start Local Programme. The centre is managed by the local authority and is located in the grounds of Weston Shore Infant School. Activities are also run in local venues at Weston Park Infant School Community Room and Weston Adventure Playground. The majority of housing, including six tower blocks of flats, is owned and managed by the local authority.

There are 722 children under five in the reach area, with the birth rate increasing by 10.2% since May 2005. Most families in the reach area are of White British heritage, with small minorities from Black and Minority Ethnic backgrounds and Other White backgrounds. Lone parent households make up 11.6% of the reach area, compared to 7.4% in the city, with high numbers of teenage parents relative to the population of Weston. Unemployment rates show the number of families in receipt of both in and out of work benefits is increasing. Children's levels on entry to early years provision is significantly below those expected for their age.

Inspection judgements

Grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Overall effectiveness

The effectiveness of the children's centre in meeting the needs of and improving outcomes for families

1

Capacity for sustained improvement

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

1

Main findings

Strong well-established partnerships underpin the success of this outstanding children's centre, resulting in excellent and improving outcomes, especially for those most in need of support. Services are fully integrated so that families receive a seamless service that meets the widest possible range of needs. Everyone who works at Weston has the welfare of families at the heart of what they do. 'We all want families living in Weston to be proud of their community, where people help and support each other,' states one partner, 'and this centre is making it possible. It is the hub of this community.' This is also seen in the activities facilitated by the centre to share good practice and support the involvement of a range of early years and community providers, further enhancing opportunities for families to improve their outcomes. As a result, the centre has outstanding capacity to improve.

Centre leaders and local authority officers work together to identify priorities and set ambitious targets, ensuring a clear focus on what needs to be done. Measurable targets are included in staff's performance objectives and progress is reviewed at supervision and team meetings. All partners, including families, are involved in self-evaluation and identifying ways of removing barriers for those in most need of support. Clear trend data provided by the local authority are rigorously monitored and analysed, resulting in a clear link between evaluation of services and priorities set in the business plan. The plan describes the qualitative outcomes needed to evidence the centre's impact. When asked, leaders and partners show they are fully aware of measurable targets where relevant. However, the business plan does not explain the baseline from which progress will be measured or include measurable targets recorded elsewhere. Although achieved outcomes are recorded, the date on which they are achieved are not included in the plan.

The extremely effective partnership with health services ensures that the large majority of families are engaged with, and benefitting from, services that help them understand how to keep themselves healthy. Staff know that more needs to be done to improve the incidence and duration of breastfeeding in the area and to reduce childhood obesity, and they have made both issues a clear priority in the centre's work. This resulted in a 'turn the curve' exercise, facilitated by the head of centre. 'It

really helped to know where everyone is coming from, to realise you are not alone and that by working together, we will achieve much more,' states one health professional. As a result of the breastfeeding action plan, all centre staff, including reception staff, have now been trained in breastfeeding support, fathers attend antenatal groups to support their partners to breastfeed, and a rolling training programme has been put in place so that mothers who express an interest in acting as a peer supporter are quickly involved. The same searching analysis has been applied to other health priorities, resulting in clear targeted action plans to which all partners are signed up and which are already securing improvement.

What does the centre need to do to improve further?

Recommendations for further improvement

- Develop the business plan as a working document so that it includes
 - baselines and measurable targets, where these are appropriate
 - the dates on which the desired outcomes are achieved.

How good are outcomes for families?

1

Home safety checks and the provision of home safety equipment, supported by outreach and family support, are helping parents to develop an excellent understanding of how to keep themselves and their children safe. Almost all families involved with statutory services where children are subject to a child protection plan are involved in centre services and activities. The use of the Common Assessment Framework (CAF), pre-CAF and Team Around the Child (TAC) meetings ensure that families experiencing challenge or difficulties in their lives are provided with opportunities to improve their confidence and parenting skills. Case studies clearly show where the centre has supported the hardest to reach and most vulnerable families, enabling children in care to be returned to their parents. Parents say they are confident to share concerns with centre staff; 'If it was not for the centre, I don't know what I would do,' is a typical comment from parents. Young parents say the centre has helped them to gain confidence and make new friends. 'Our weekend routine means my son knows when it is Sunday and he starts to get excited about going to the centre the next day,' says one young mother.

Parents play an active role in governance through 'Sure Ideas' and the parents' forum, and through representation on the advisory board. All 157 lone parents in the reach area participate in centre activities to some extent. The 'Work Focused Services Pilot', part of the National Child Poverty Work, has had exceptional success in the centre in supporting this group to improve their employability skills and prepare them for the world of work, though partners are realistic about the impact of the current economic climate and the effect this has on the availability of employment. That said, the pilot still shows strong evidence of improved skills and outstanding educational and personal development, with all targets for the pilot being exceeded. By being based full-time in the centre, the Family Advisor is gaining a clear understanding of the barriers families face and this is also helping to target those most in need of support. Parents who have used centre services have gained 45 qualifications in the last year, including in literacy and numeracy, some are

involved in volunteering and some have managed to gain employment in the local community, with a few setting up their own businesses. With the support of the centre, some very vulnerable mothers who did not initially engage well with centre services are now asking to do some volunteering in the community nursery linked to the centre. 'My child has come on in leaps and bounds since we first went to the centre. With their help, I am calmer and both of us are happier, now I would like to do something in return,' says one parent. The nursery manager is thrilled with vulnerable parents' desire to volunteer in the nursery and works closely with the centre to ensure continued and well-targeted support.

Tracking in the nursery and learning journeys of children show that children make outstanding progress from their starting points. This is supported by data that shows Early Years Foundation Stage profile results are steadily improving and the gap is narrowing between the lowest achieving and the rest. Records of children's activities when attending crèche facilities in the centre for one-off or short events help staff and parents to identify children's preferences and support the next steps in their learning. Regular meetings between the centre and childcare providers ensure that centre staff are fully aware of progress or issues for any children referred by the centre and enables providers to identify to the centre families who may benefit from some additional family support. Learning journeys for parents clearly show personal targets and progress towards them. There are many opportunities for families to play together through activities and one-off events, recognising that not all families are comfortable attending groups. The development workers in the centre ensure there is adequate and appropriate support for the most vulnerable families, enabling them to access services and develop relationships.

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	2
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 children and parents, including those from target groups, 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 parents, including those from target groups, contribute to decision-making and governance of the centre	1
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	1

How good is the provision?

1

The excellent and sensitive assessment of need results in an outstanding range of quality services that meet the needs of almost all families using the centre. However,

it is the excellent partnership working, with a clear understanding of individual families' needs, that ensures assessment is rigorous and well informed. Over 90% of families in the reach area with children under five years of age are registered with the children's centre and data show that most of these families actively participate in centre services and activities. Outreach services are particularly effective in engaging those who are most in need of support, by creatively adapting services to meet individual needs. For example, parenting training has been delivered on a one-to-one basis in the home and caseholding midwives are now delivering the second antenatal appointment at the centre to introduce very vulnerable families to centre services early in pregnancy. This helps families to gain in confidence and ensures interventions are successful in improving outcomes.

Personal development and achievement are celebrated through awards ceremonies with several newspaper articles highlighting where centre users have gained qualifications or contributed to the centre's success. For example, following support from the centre, some parents have started their own business and some have started a 'Friends of Weston Children's Centre' parent and toddler group for families to access the provision in another area of the estate.

The centre can evidence where effective personalised support and guidance has been provided for families experiencing domestic violence. As a result, the centre is known as a place of safety and because of the desire of all partners to work together, they have also ensured there is a safe place for families who need it when the centre is closed. Some universal preventative services such as sexual health advice have recently moved to another purpose-built healthy living centre. However, because of the extremely strong partnerships, parents are still very effectively encouraged to use these services. Smoking cessation sessions take place in the centre twice a week and are available to all who live in Weston, not just families with young children, thereby broadening the reach and strengthening practice in the community.

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	1
The extent to which the centre promotes purposeful learning, development and enjoyment for all families, including those in target groups	1
The quality of care, guidance and support offered to families, including those in target groups	1

How effective are the leadership and management?

1

The outstanding performance of this centre is supported by a strong management team, high quality supervision for staff and a shared sense of purpose from all partners. Although there have been some changes in the advisory board structure, all those involved are clear about governance and accountability arrangements and

their role in monitoring and challenging the centre. To ensure parents can play a full part, a pre-board meeting is arranged for them so that they are confident that they know what will be involved in advisory board meetings and how they can contribute. All services are very well used and reviewed on a regular basis to ensure they continue to meet needs and are engaging those in target groups. Team meetings and away days ensure that staff are aware of each other's roles and how they are interlinked. This ensures there is appropriate staff cover during absences and also enables staff to develop their knowledge and expertise, making services more sustainable.

Families using centre services fully reflect the community it serves. The centre has identified a very small minority of European families with a range of home languages. The centre works with other children's centres to identify staff who speak other languages, resulting in effective outreach support for target groups. Disability audits ensure services and activities can be accessed by all regardless of any disability and identify where individual support may be needed. Children with special educational needs and/or disabilities are provided with effective personalised support in the centre and in the linked childcare setting. An opportunity group has been established in the locality, following discussions with parents, and most also continue to access universal services at the centre such as 'Come and Play' sessions. Equality impact assessments are carried out when any changes to services or activities are suggested, to ensure key target groups will not be disadvantaged by any changes.

Safeguarding is given the highest priority and is enhanced by the robust implementation of policies and procedures. The TAC meetings ensure that all partners, especially those working directly with very vulnerable families, share information and identify the most suitable person to act as key worker for each individual family. All required checks are completed and clearly recorded so that the centre can easily keep track of who has completed training and when Criminal Records Bureau checks need to be repeated.

The families who live in Weston are central to all the centre does. Users' views are sought regularly through evaluations of services, discussions with staff and 'Sure Ideas'. The satisfaction survey shows 99.2% of families are satisfied with the services they receive. Children's views are sought through play activities from skilled and knowledgeable play workers. As a result, the centre is engaging extremely well with target groups and those most in need of support.

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 effectiveness of evaluation and its use in setting ambitious targets which secure improvement in outcomes	1
The extent to which resources are used and managed efficiently and effectively to meet the needs of families, including those in target	1

groups	
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 partnerships with other agencies ensure the integrated delivery of the range of services provided by the centre to meet its core purpose	1
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	1

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

None

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 Weston Sure Start Children's Centre on 28 and 29 September 2011. We judged the centre as outstanding overall.

Thank you to those of you who spoke to us to give us your views on the children's centre. Your views were very useful in helping us make our judgements. Like you, we found your children's centre to be very welcoming and friendly. It gives a high priority to your safety and welfare and that of your children. Professionals work extremely well together to make sure that they understand what you need and that you get the right support quickly. This is having a very positive impact on your lives and those of your children.

The strong partnership the centre has with health services ensures you are provided with a seamless service that is helping you to develop healthier lifestyles. However, all those who work in the centre know that more still needs to be done to improve breastfeeding rates, reduce childhood obesity and increase smoking cessation rates. They have action plans in place and these are starting to secure improvement. You and your families are developing a very good understanding of how to keep yourselves and your community safe, through the advice and guidance provided by the centre. The centre wants you and your children's first experience of the centre to be a positive one and works with partners to ensure that any additional support you

need is individualised. This is one of the reasons why this centre is so successful in engaging families who are very vulnerable and in need of help and support.

The centre and its linked nursery are helping your children to make progress in their learning and development, and you are effectively learning how to support them through parenting courses and guidance. Some of you told us how the centre has helped you to develop personally and educationally. Those of you who volunteer get good support and gain valuable skills that will be useful to them in the future. Many of you are making use of opportunities to improve your education and skills, so that your future prospects of employment are improved. Some of you have been successful in gaining qualifications and gone on to gain employment, or start your own business.

Centre leaders provide many opportunities for you to tell them what you think about the services provided, through 'Sure Ideas' and representation on the advisory board. They ask you to evaluate the activities you attend and use your feedback to plan what activities and services the centre needs to provide you with. Many of you told us how well your centre has supported you in times of crisis. Those of you we spoke to thought very highly of the centre development workers. More than one of you told us how centre workers had supported you to attend the centre. We agree that the quality of support provided by the centre is excellent. Centre staff and other professionals with whom they work closely care a great deal about you and are committed to improving your lives.

The centre is exceptionally well led and managed. An extremely effective inter-agency management team is supported by dedicated and knowledgeable staff. All views, including those from a wide range of professionals, parents and carers are carefully considered and contribute to the centre's excellent overall effectiveness. This arrangement reflects the outstanding ambitions and the high expectations that centre leaders have of themselves and the impact of the work of the centre on users' lives. Leaders are very ambitious and set clear and challenging targets that are based on a good understanding of the needs of the reach area.

The centre wants the best for its families and is determined that nothing but exemplary services will be delivered by the centre. They work with local early years providers to ensure your children have the best start in life. Business plans clearly show the targets for the centre; however, we have asked them to develop these as a working document so that they clearly show the baseline for improvement, measurable targets, where appropriate, and dates on which outcomes are achieved.

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