

Inspection report for East Hastings Children's Centre

Local authority	East Sussex
Inspection number	383669
Inspection dates	2–3 November 2011
Reporting inspector	Jo Caswell HMI

Centre leader	Tracey Rose
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected
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Linked school if applicable	Not applicable
Linked early years and childcare, if applicable	Carousel Nursery (EY335943) Bexhill and Battle Under Fives Crèche (EY406749)

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.

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.

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 group, frontline staff, parents and partner agencies.

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

Information about the centre

East Hastings Children's Centre is one of nine children's centres in the Hastings area managed by the same area coordinator. It is a phase one centre which was designated in 2006 and covers two distinct areas of Hastings – Broomgrove and Old Town. The centre serves one of the 30% most deprived areas in the country. There are 71% of children aged under five years using the centre that live in the 30% most deprived areas. Hastings is ranked as seventh in the country for levels of worklessness with almost 25% of people claiming out of work benefits. Homes consist of social housing, rented accommodation and privately-owned homes. Services operate from both the children's centre building and a nearby community centre. Full daycare is provided by a private childcare provider offering care for children aged under five years, Monday to Friday from 8.00am to 6.00pm, 51 weeks per year. Crèche services are offered through a commissioned service. East Hastings is less ethnically diverse than other parts of the town with the majority of families of White British heritage. Children's levels of skills and understanding on entry to school are often lower than those expected for their age.

East Hastings Children’s Centre provides the full core offer services and has health professionals, such as health visitors and midwives, operating from the centre. Governance arrangements are provided by the local authority. An advisory group is in place and membership includes partner agencies and a range of stakeholders.

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

East Hastings Children’s Centre is an outstanding centre as it understands and serves the needs of the local community exceptionally well. The support, commitment and total dedication of all staff ensure the life chances of the most vulnerable and disadvantaged families living in the area improve at a rapid rate. Families overcome major barriers to success through the targeted, persistent and sensitive support of all centre staff.

Provision is exemplary. The linked nursery provides outstanding levels of care and Early Years Foundation Stage practice. The critical work of the Family Outreach Service is highly successful in supporting families most in need. Staff form extremely positive and trusting relationships with all parents and children. One parent reflected this by stating to inspectors, ‘The centre has saved my life.’ Partnership working between all agencies is exceptional and plays a fundamental part in the effectiveness of the centre. Swift referrals and detailed exchange of information between all services result in rapid intervention and early preventative work. This results in rapidly improving outcomes for the most vulnerable families.

The local authority and centre management consistently reflect on practice and strive for the highest standards. Comprehensive data are analysed meticulously to ensure services target families and individuals most in need. The centre’s robust data show the centre is currently reaching, and actively supporting, almost 90% of families living in the reach area. Of these, 92% are from the most disadvantaged areas. Extensive tracking is used to ensure long-term evaluation of the impact of the centre’s services. This is particularly well developed for tracking the progress of individuals. The centre has recently enhanced this to implement methods for the

long-term measure of families' improvement over a longer period. This is still in its early stages.

Self-evaluation is particularly robust and is fully embedded at every level. The centre demonstrates exceptional commitment towards reflecting on its effectiveness. This is exemplified through the centre's partnership working with the University of Brighton and the commissioning of the parents' research project. This has involved in-depth, searching analysis of the centre's services in reaching the families most at risk and assessing the impact of all areas of provision. As a result, services are consistently adapted to meet local need. This has led to significant improvements in the numbers of families continually accessing the centre's services. The reach to all targeted groups is rapidly improving. For example, the number of fathers actively using the centre has increased from 139 in May 2011 to 219 in October 2011. The ongoing determination and strong commitment shown by all staff and the local authority in providing the highest standards of provision to meet the needs of families are commendable. As a result, the centre's capacity to improve is outstanding.

What does the centre need to do to improve further?

Recommendations for further improvement

- Further embed the identified procedures for long-term impact measuring to ensure families who have received targeted support continue to progress in all outcome areas.

How good are outcomes for families?

1

Parents are extremely positive in reporting how the centre has helped them at times of difficulty. One parent summarised the view of many by telling inspectors, 'I don't know what I would do without the centre.' Many parents praised the sensitive way in which staff help them raise their aspirations about their own future and that of their children. For example, the numbers of parents completing training and receiving support in helping them return to work are impressive. The centre's data show in October 2011, 192 parents were supported in preparing for, and gaining, employment. A very large proportion of these were lone parents. Case studies provide extensive examples of parents undertaking accredited training and achieving formal qualifications. This supports them in accessing higher education and securing employment, consequently leading to improved financial security and economic well-being for families.

Children's welfare and family health have significantly improved as a result of the excellent integrated services. Teenage parents are particularly well supported through the Family Nurse Partnership and the enhanced midwifery services. Young parents receive excellent support through the Fun, Young and Informative group. Obesity levels in school-aged children are reducing rapidly as a result of targeted support. Parents develop an excellent understanding of nutrition and recognise how

to cook healthy, cheap meals. Physical activity is strongly encouraged and parents have frequent opportunities to become active with their children, through music, swimming and many other forms of physical play. Many parents told inspectors how much they enjoy meeting other families in the centre's Chill-tern Café. This offers an extremely friendly, relaxed environment where families benefit from home-cooked, nutritional meals and snacks at affordable prices.

All parents confirm how safe and secure they feel at the centre. Staff offer an extremely welcoming atmosphere and this makes parents feel at ease and able to ask for help. Excellent partnerships with the local police and emergency services successfully build positive relationships between families. Exceptional support within the home plays a significant part in reducing the numbers of accidents. Parents receive specialist advice on making the home safe and undertake an extensive range of parenting courses to improve relationships with their children. As a result, the numbers of children requiring hospital treatment are reducing. Looked after children and those subject to a child protection plan or Common Assessment Framework processes are monitored closely and families receive intensive support through highly effective multi-agency working. As a result, extensive early identification and exceptional preventative work help keep children safe and closely monitors those most at risk.

Families thoroughly enjoy using the centre's services and parents report how well their children achieve as a result of the support they receive. Early Years Foundation Stage data show children make outstanding progress in their learning from their starting points. Parents benefit from the exceptional range of opportunities which help support their children's learning and development. For example, one parent told inspectors she had learnt new ideas for storytelling to make it more fun. Regular toy libraries and extensive drop-in groups provide outstanding early years provision and are expertly planned to support children's learning. Extensive targeted support to improve children's language development has been particularly successful.

Parents and children develop excellent relationships and are fully involved in the decision-making process within the centre. There are extensive opportunities for parents and children to share their views and they do this confidently. As a result, many of the centre's services and activities are adapted as a result of centre users' feedback. This empowers parents to frequently evaluate the centre's services and ensures the centre is a focal part of the local community.

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	1
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	1

and social development	
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 centre offers an exceptional range of services which are intrinsically linked between all partner agencies. The work of the family outreach service is highly commendable. Home visits and rigorous assessment of individual need ensure all families receive the highest levels of support. The significant levels of unemployment within the area are successfully addressed by the centre. An extensive number of parents are inspired to undertake training and build their knowledge and skills, with a view to returning to education and training. The learning and development programme is exceptional, with high quality crèche services provided.

There is extensive support given to parents applying for employment and success rates are high. Young parents are inspired to return to training and undertake formal qualifications. Many of these parents have been successful in starting university and gaining employment. For example, one young parent is working towards her goal of becoming a midwife. Staff take every opportunity to fully assess any barriers which may prevent parents from accessing services to ensure the most vulnerable families, and those most at risk, are fully supported. For example, sensitive support is given to parents with disabilities and/or learning difficulties to adapt learning programmes to meet individual need. Extensive opportunities are provided to assist families who speak English as an additional language to ensure their needs are fully assessed and all families are fully included within all centre activities.

The care, guidance and support offered to families are exceptional. Parents describe the care shown to them by staff as 'amazing'. Many parents told inspectors how they had received extensive support from staff which had led to improvements in their financial security, housing issues, employment prospects, health advice and preparing children for school. All centre staff demonstrate total commitment, passion and dedication in seeking out the best possible outcomes for all families within the local area.

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

Governance and accountability arrangements are clearly embedded and are highly effective. Excellent monitoring and evaluation procedures are in place at all levels and used systematically to drive improvement. The advisory group meets regularly to review services and reflect on the needs of the local community. All commissioned services are frequently reviewed and the centre has commissioned external agencies to carry out research into the centre's effectiveness. The outcomes of this feed systematically into action planning, performance management and target setting. The local authority has thoroughly revised its processes for collating data. As a result, the centre has an exceptional awareness of the demographical and economical needs of the local area and is highly successful in reaching the most vulnerable families.

Systems to measure the long-term impact of the centre's services are fully embedded to monitor the progress of children and parents. Following robust evaluation, the centre has recently implemented a new format to further enhance the process and is now starting to evaluate the impact of the centre's services over a longer period of time on individual families. This will provide an holistic overview of the impact of the centre's services from a family's first contact with the centre through to the child starting school and beyond. At present, it is too early to assess the full impact of this and the centre has already identified this as an area for development.

The centre's area coordinator and her management team work exceptionally well together to drive the centre forward and continually raise standards. They are inspirational leaders with a shared commitment towards delivering outstanding services. Concerted action is consistently taken to ensure the centre successfully meets the needs of the most vulnerable families. There are excellent links between strategic planning, self-evaluation and target setting to ensure a fully cohesive range of services.

Data are scrutinised meticulously to ensure the centre reaches families who are most in need and that no target groups are excluded. The centre's reach to the most disadvantaged families is impressive and continually improving. Resources are deployed extremely effectively and are highly responsive to changing needs. All services are continually implemented efficiently in order to ensure long-term sustainability. Staff development is given high priority and all staff benefit from

professional training. Staff are highly motivated, fully engaged and totally committed towards meeting the needs of the local families. As a result, the centre demonstrates outstanding value for money.

Safeguarding procedures are exemplary as a result of outstanding partnerships between all agencies. Disabled children are supported extremely well through specialist services. Staff have expertise in identifying the issues of local families and provide highly effective targeted support. Exceptional provision helps parents at times of crisis and those families facing domestic abuse. Comprehensive training and improved awareness help parents understand how to seek help and empower them to make significant changes to their lives to improve outcomes for themselves and their families. One centre user told inspectors, 'The training saved my life.' Robust policies and procedures ensure all families are protected by appropriately checked staff. Health and safety arrangements are excellent throughout the centre.

The inclusion of all families is integral to the work of the centre and is fully implemented in all centre activities. The achievement gap between the most disadvantaged and the rest is continuing to close and is below the county-wide average. Meticulous planning ensures all groups achieve equally and this is closely monitored to quickly identify any slippage. The centre is strongly regarded as a community service and this is reflected in the excellent management of the centre's Chill-tern Café which is provided in partnership with an adult social care commissioned service. As a result, community relations are improving significantly. This is exemplified by the centre's recent participation in the Ore Valley Festival which played a significant role in drawing together many services for families within the local 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	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 groups	1
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

<p>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</p>	<p>1</p>
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Any other information used to inform the judgements made during this inspection

The early years provision, Carousel Nursery, was inspected at the time of this inspection and judged to be outstanding overall. The report is available on our website: www.ofsted.gov.uk.

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Summary for centre users

We inspected East Hastings Children’s Centre on 2 and 3 November 2011. We judged the centre as outstanding overall. We would like to thank all of you who took the time to talk with us about your experiences and involvement with the centre. It was a pleasure to meet you and your children and it was very helpful to hear what the centre means to you and the difference it has made to your lives. It is clear to us that you are extremely happy with the centre’s services.

The centre staff have an exceptional understanding of the needs of local families. We consider the work of the family outreach service to be superb. Staff are totally aware of the community’s needs and adapt services to address these. Centre staff are exceptionally dedicated and totally committed towards supporting you and your families and reaching those of you who are most in need. We were particularly impressed with the numbers of families using the centre and benefiting from its excellent range of services.

The partnerships between all agencies who work at the centre are exceptional. This means that families receive excellent levels of support from a number of different services. All staff are extremely passionate about ensuring families are safe and well cared for. As a result, families receive exceptional levels of support at times of crisis or when they are most vulnerable. Many of you told us about how much the staff had helped you during challenging times.

The learning and development opportunities within the centre are outstanding. There is an excellent range of courses and training provided, enabling all families to develop their skills and knowledge and be successful in returning to education and employment. The number of parents, particularly lone parents, who have been supported in returning to employment, is commendable. Many of you told us how

the centre staff had raised your aspirations to succeed and had given you inspiration to undertake training and seek employment opportunities.

Children make outstanding progress in their learning and development too. The nursery provision within Carousel Nursery is outstanding. Centre staff deliver an exceptional range of high-quality early years services, such as crèches and extensive drop-in groups which enable children to benefit from quality play experiences. This helps you understand how to interact with your children positively and support their learning through play at home. As a result, we noted from the centre's data that children are making outstanding progress when they start school.

Safeguarding arrangements are excellent within the centre. All staff provide a very friendly and welcoming environment and develop very trusting relationships with all families. Parents told us how much this helps them to seek help and advice when they need to. Children and families are kept safe as staff help parents become aware of safety issues within the home and confidently recognise how to reduce the numbers of accidents. All staff work together exceptionally well to ensure any issues concerning children's welfare are identified early and relevant action is taken to keep all children safe.

Family welfare issues are improving strongly as the centre provides an exceptional range of health services. Midwives, health visitors and other professionals are readily available within the centre for you to approach for help and advice and this means children's development is closely supported. As a result of excellent courses and support from staff, children benefit from healthier lifestyles. Family welfare is supported extremely well too with an excellent range of courses and support available to improve the emotional well-being of parents.

The centre's management team is exceptional. The area coordinator is an inspirational leader and she is supported by an excellent team. All managers share a commitment towards providing the highest standards and delivering services which local families need. The centre's management and the local authority continually review all services and frequently ask for your feedback to ensure services are matched to local need. We noted the centre uses comprehensive measures to track the progress of all children and parents to demonstrate how well the centre has supported them. New procedures have just been introduced to track the progress of families over longer periods of time and we have asked the centre to develop this further.

Thank you to everyone who took the time to come and speak with us. We are very grateful and wish you and your families every success for the future.

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