

Inspection report for East Cleveland SureStart Children's Centre

Local authority	Redcar and Cleveland
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Reporting inspector	Elizabeth Srogi HMI

Centre leader	Mrs Vanessa Newlands
Date of previous inspection	Not applicable
Centre address	Youth & Community Centre Duncan Place Loftus Saltburn TS13 4PR
Telephone number	01287 640523
Fax number	Not applicable
Email address	Vanessa.newlands@redcar-cleveland.gov.uk

Linked school if applicable	Not applicable
Linked early years and childcare, if applicable	953895 Leapfrogs

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Picadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
www.ofsted.gov.uk

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Introduction

The inspection addresses the centre's contribution to:

- facilitating access to early childhood services by parents, prospective parents and young children
- maximising the benefit of those services to parents, prospective parents and young children
- improving the well-being of young children.

The report is made to the local authority and a copy is sent to the children's centre. The local authority may send the report to such persons it considers appropriate and must arrange for an action plan to be produced in relation to the findings in this report.

This inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and an early years inspector.

The inspectors held meetings with the centre managers, staff members, advisory board members, members of the parent forum, partner agencies, parents and carers and the local authority strategic lead.

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

Information about the centre

East Cleveland is made up of a number of towns and villages and large expanses of countryside/agricultural land as well as coastline and woodland. East Cleveland Children's Centre is based in Loftus, a rural area of high deprivation in the east of the borough of Redcar and Cleveland. The centre covers a wide geographical area that encompasses the small town of Loftus and the villages of Easington, Liverton Mines, Carlin How, Skinningrove and Brotton.

The communities served by the centre are based within the wards of Loftus and Brotton. Whilst there are pockets of affluence to be found in Brotton and Loftus, Loftus ward consists of five lower super output areas, one of which is ranked within the top 1% on the Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) 2010. Brotton has five lower super output areas with two ranked within the top 10% most disadvantaged.

This phase one children's centre which provides such services as health, education and outreach support is a former 'trailblazer' local programme, attached to the local Youth and Community Centre. There are five additional satellite link sites attached to local primary schools; Hummersea Primary, Handale Primary, St Joseph's Primary, Whitedcliffe Primary and St Peters Primary School. On site registered Early Years Foundation Stage provision is

offered by 'Leapfrogs' pre-school care provision. This is subject to its own inspection and the report can be found at www.ofsted.gov.uk. Children enter early years provision with skills, knowledge and abilities below those expected for their age.

The centre serves a population of 875 children under five years of age; of these 66.5% (585) live in a 30% most deprived lower super output area with levels reaching to the most deprived 1% in the country. The majority of families served by the centre are White British.

Worklessness remains an issue for many families. In addition, the transport infrastructure and cost of travel contributes to social isolation and poor access to services and employment. Many business properties on the main high street are boarded up.

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

2

Capacity for sustained improvement

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

2

Main findings

East Cleveland Children's Centre is warm and welcoming to all who use its services whether they are in the centre, its satellite provision or in their own homes. Centre staff work very hard to meet the needs of the community and are effective in improving outcomes for those with whom they work. Inclusion is at the heart of the centre's work and permeates throughout all activities and services. Staff at all levels are determined to meet individual needs. They are committed to the centre's open door policy to encourage as many families as possible to use the centre and its services but also appreciate the need to work with their target groups and those identified as being in the greatest need. These include lone parents, teenage parents and those families involved with social care. For example, centre staff are actively involved in 37 of the 57 open social care cases involving children aged under five in the area.

A particular strength of the work of this centre is the way it involves parents and carers in its governance. Parents and carers have both informal and more structured methods to significantly contribute to the operation of the centre. For example, 'Parents Voice' is an informal activity which feeds successfully into the parent forum which in turn directly links with the advisory board. Parental feedback documentation, minutes of meetings and direct

feedback to inspectors all confirm how strongly parents and carers feel that they are listened to and how much they influence the running of the centre. There are currently five parents on the advisory board.

A significant strength of the centre is the outstanding quality of the care, guidance and support provided to children and families by enthusiastic, skilful and knowledgeable staff and partners. There is clear and compelling evidence which demonstrates how the centre takes every opportunity to provide the best guidance, care and support to users either directly, in conjunction with their partners or through signposting to other services. Parents' and carers' comments and case studies overwhelmingly show how the centre has helped them during times of difficulty and helped them improve their lives. One parent said: 'There is no need to put a face on it here as it is a non-judgemental place.'

Centre leadership at all levels is strong. The work of the centre is based on continuous evaluation, assessment and reflection. The centre has clear action plans in place that are regularly monitored and reviewed. However, not all actions identified in the plan have smart targets to aid measurement of achievement. The centre has significantly developed its access to and use of data. However, although it is detailed and used well, it does not always clearly reflect the full breadth of the engagement with children and families or the work being done by centre staff. Despite this, when data is combined with local information, it is evident that the centre is reaching the majority of those in its target groups.

Overall, the good leadership, the commitment and determination of all staff to 'make a difference' and the clear impact the centre is having on children and families, along with an appreciation of the centre's strengths and areas to improve, indicate that the centre's ability to improve is good.

What does the centre need to do to improve further?

Recommendations for further improvement

- Refine the centre's action plan so that all actions identified have clear and measurable smart targets.
- Build on existing work to collect data to ensure that it reflects the full impact of the centre's work in engaging with those in the reach area including target groups.

How good are outcomes for families?

2

The centre provides a wide range of activities often in partnership with others to promote positive outcomes for children and families. Healthy lifestyles are promoted at every opportunity and children have access to physical outdoor activities at the centre and at satellite venues used. Activities, such as 'introducing solids' and 'baby massage' are well attended and are greatly appreciated by parents and carers. They report increased levels of confidence in their abilities to raise their children. Feedback from parents and carers includes comments such as: 'It is a great place to share our experiences as mothers and

stops you feeling you are on your own.' Breastfeeding is actively encouraged and supported. Mothers were observed to be confident and comfortable when breastfeeding during centre activities. Breastfeeding rates in the area are improving and immunisation rates are said to be good.

The centre has a strong focus on promoting safety for children and families. Good preventative advice is given. Staff are skilled in bringing its promotion into their daily work and continually model good safety practice in activities. For example, in sessions observed, staff were heard talking to parents and carers about how to deal with burns and scalds and how to prevent them from happening. The centre has actively supported the Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents (RoSPA) safety scheme and in one three month period the safety of children in 138 homes in the locality was enhanced by the provision and installation of home safety equipment.

During the inspection parents, carers and children were seen to be thoroughly enjoying the activities on offer. The centre provides many universal and targeted activities and programmes where children and parents and carers not only have fun, play and learn together and separately, but where their self-esteem and belief in themselves is constantly encouraged. The integrated working of centre, local authority and partner staff provides activities that are of good quality for all and where activities for children are firmly based on the Early Years Foundation Stage principles. There are close links with local schools which together with sessions such as SPLINK, a joint transition programme set up to help prepare children for nursery or school, help children settle into school easier and faster. There is good take up of the targeted provision provided within the centre for two-year-olds. As a result of the collective actions of centre staff and partners, children make good progress and Early Years Foundation Stage Profile scores in the area are improving.

Children's behaviour throughout the centre is very good. A culture of trust and respect permeates throughout the centre and its services. Children and adults were observed in sessions to listen well to each other. Parents and carers specifically comment about how the centre significantly helps to cement friendships, combats isolation and promotes their mental health. They use exceptionally well-organised opportunities to successfully contribute to decision making and governance of the centre and both direct and indirect feedback to inspectors shows that they value these opportunities.

The centre effectively helps to promote economic stability and consistently works well with partners such as Jobcentre Plus, Money Tree Credit Union and Prior Pursglove College. These partnership arrangements enable parents and carers and those from the wider community to access training, secure benefits, advice and support to improve their financial circumstances and enter employment. The centre has a staff member from Jobcentre Plus based full time in the centre and she is an integrated and full member of the centre's workforce. All 24 adult learners from two courses who have successfully completed basic skills courses this year have progressed onto further training, volunteering or employment.

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	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	2
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.	2

How good is the provision?

2

The centre uses assessment well to identify individual needs and provide good quality services to meet those needs. Centre staff are trained and experienced in the use of the Common Assessment Framework (CAF) and use it effectively to ensure children and families have their needs appropriately met either within the centre or through outreach work. The fortnightly allocations and referrals meeting attended by centre staff and health visitors is an effective mechanism. It ensures that those who require targeted support including children on the child protection register and children in need are provided with very supportive and tailored services to meet their individual needs. All planning for support is outcome focussed and when targeted input is being scaled down, every case has a clear exit strategy.

Centre staff are active participants in meetings such as 'child well-being meetings' and 'child-in-need reviews' and are involved in the provision of supervised contact within the centre. The provision of a range of parenting courses, such as 'Mellow Parenting', 'Families Share' and a rolling programme which provides support to those who have experienced domestic abuse, which runs in partnership with 'Eva Women's Aid', contribute well to improving families' lives. Mothers have identified how attendance at such programmes has helped them identify changes they need to make in their lives and given them the confidence to make those changes.

Care, guidance and support are areas in which this centre excels. This can be seen not only in the quality and variety of information that is displayed throughout the building, but in the diligent way that staff take every opportunity to help families access services, make progress and build on their achievements. Photographs displayed throughout the building give testimony to the improved outcomes and successes of children and families.

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	2
The extent to which the centre promotes purposeful learning, development and enjoyment for all families, including those in target groups	2
The quality of care, guidance and support offered to families, including those in target groups.	1

How effective are the leadership and management?

2

Leadership and management arrangements at all levels are consistently good. There are very clear links between strategic planning, centre plans and service delivery. The centre manager's enthusiasm and determination to improve outcomes for users and to engage further with those who do not as yet use the centre's services is replicated by all staff. Staff supervision is well planned and supervision sessions are held regularly. These are complimented by the on-going commitment of managers to support and advise staff at all times. Staff have good access to training relevant to their roles and attend courses, such as 'Mental Health First Aid' and are supported to gain further professional qualifications.

The centre manager is held to account through regular meetings with the local authority, the advisory board and the parent forum. Minutes of meetings demonstrate a clear commitment to improve provision while taking into account current financial constraints. Throughout the centre there is a culture of continuous improvement. For example, at the end of every session a 'debrief' is completed which identifies what went well, what was achieved and what, if necessary, needs to be changed. Members of the advisory board, centre staff, partners, and parents and carers all confirm that they contribute to the self-evaluation report that is completed by the centre manager. The collection of useful data is an area that the centre and local authority has developed; however, it does not always sufficiently reflect the impact of provision. It is clear that action plans are well informed by data and local need and are used well to drive improvement; however, not all actions identified have sufficiently smart and measureable targets.

Effective working with a wide range of partners, including social care, health, Portage and schools is in place at all levels and is successfully promoting good outcomes for families. All staff and partners work in a closely integrated way to provide a seamless and effective service for children and families. Joint working is part of daily working practices. The best use of resources is always considered and staff and partners are conscious of the need to ensure the sustainability of services and work effectively together to provide good value for money.

There are strong procedures in place which cover the breadth of the safeguarding needs of families. All required clearances for staff, volunteers and partners are in place, are regularly updated and all staff and volunteers irrespective of their role receive safeguarding training.

Staff are confident that they have the skills and knowledge to act on any concerns they may have.

Equality and diversity are at the heart of all the centre's work and parents and carers of children with special educational needs and/or disabilities speak very highly of the support they receive. This and the success of the centre in promoting good outcomes for children and families are helping to narrow the achievement gap. The centre works continually to improve its contact with target groups and users report that the centre is the hub of the community. Overall, user engagement is good and many methods are used to ensure parents and carers can and do contribute their views and influence services and activities.

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	2
The effectiveness of evaluation and its use in setting ambitious targets which secures improvement in outcomes	2
The extent to which resources are used and managed efficiently and effectively to meet the needs of families, including those in target groups	2
The extent to which equality is promoted and diversity celebrated, illegal or unlawful discrimination is tackled and the centre fulfils its statutory duties	2
The effectiveness of the centre's policy, procedures and work with key agencies in safeguarding children and, where applicable, vulnerable adults	2
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	2
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.	2

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

The findings from the most recent inspection of Leapfrogs and local schools contributed to this inspection.

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Summary for centre users

We inspected the East Cleveland Sure Start Children's Centre on 6-7 December 2011. We judged the centre as good overall with two outstanding aspects.

As part of the inspection process we visited a number of activities, looked at the centre's documentation, and talked with a range of people including parents and carers, staff, partners and members of the advisory board and parent forum. Thank you for talking with us either in specific meetings or as we visited centre activities. We very much appreciate your sharing experiences and views with us. This helped us to make judgements about your centre.

I am pleased to tell you that we agree with your views. We found that staff at the centre work hard to provide the best for you and your families and are always there for you if you need help and do not judge you. We agree that the care, guidance and support provided to you are outstanding. You told us how the centre staff and their partners work together to help make things better for you and that many of you have made positive changes to your lives because of your involvement with the centre. We were very pleased to hear how because of your attendance at the parent forum and the advisory board, so many of you are contributing to the decision making in the centre. You told us that you feel confident that you are listened to and that changes can and have been made because of your feedback.

It was great to hear of your successes in obtaining qualifications, of how some of you are now doing further courses or have gone into employment and of the sense of achievement that this has brought to you and your families.

We saw how much you and your children enjoy the activities and programmes on offer and you told us how participating in activities, such as 'baby massage' and parenting programmes has helped you to become more confident parents. It is also clear that attending the centre has helped many of you to make friends and not to feel so isolated. The many good activities at the centre also help your children to develop. Both you and

school staff have said how attending sessions such as SPLINK has helped your children settle into school or nursery well.

All staff in the centre work very hard to identify how they can further help you to improve your lives and how to get others in your community who do not use the centre to come along and benefit as you do. Managers use data and action plans to help them do this. However, we have asked them to improve the way they use data to make sure it reflects all the work the centre does. We have also asked managers to ensure that action plans always identify how they will measure how well they are doing in improving things for you and your families and others in your community.

It was a pleasure to meet some of you during the inspection. We hope that you, your children and many more parents and carers and children will continue to enjoy and benefit from the services provided by the centre. Thank you for speaking to us.

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