

Inspection report for Ventnor Children's Centre

Local authority	Isle of Wight
Inspection number	384195
Inspection dates	22–23 May 2012
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Centre leader	Kathy Whitewood
Date of previous inspection	Not applicable
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Linked school if applicable	Not applicable
Linked early years and childcare, if applicable	Not applicable

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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 an additional inspector and an early years inspector.

The inspectors held meetings with the children's centre manager, staff, parents and carers, representatives of professional staff working with the centre, a representative from the local authority and a manager from Spurgeons.

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

Information about the centre

Ventnor Children's Centre is a phase 1 centre that opened in October 2005. Since April 2010, it has been led and managed by the national charity organisation Spurgeons. The centre uses its Core Offer Monitoring Group in the role of an advisory board. The centre is in a stand-alone building in the town centre. Most core purpose services are fulfilled from the centre, including its extended rural outreach programme that offers services to the surrounding rural communities. The centre serves a predominantly White British community, with less than 10% from minority ethnic heritages. Of the families, 26% are from households in workless homes and dependent on workless benefits. Children enter the Early Years Foundation Stage in Reception with development levels that are broadly in line with 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

Ventnor Children's Centre is outstanding because of its high-quality provision and excellent targeting of services to families. It is particularly successful in engaging with 100% of children in its reach area. The centre has engaged its target groups especially well, including teenage parents, lone parents, fathers and families from the more rural and isolated parts of its reach area. High-quality provision is based on robust self-evaluation, including the very effective use of data gathered by the centre, together with that provided by the local authority. The centre places great emphasis on gaining feedback from its users and there are numerous examples displayed around the centre of the very positive feedback from families. The centre's own analysis of feedback shows a satisfaction rate of 100%. Comments, such as 'really friendly centre' and 'the parenting courses are brilliant – have really improved my parenting skills' and 'excellent advice on sleeping and weaning' are typical of many. Additionally, 'really wonderful crèche service whilst visiting counsellor' and 'invaluable resources' are examples of the positive feedback the centre receives. Although parents are highly supportive of the centre, express their views through a wide range of opportunities and enjoy highly respectful relationships their participation in the Core Offer Monitoring Group is currently underdeveloped.

A significant strength of the centre is the way in which it engages parents and children in all of the requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage for children aged from birth to five. It is particularly successful in developing the understanding of parents from minority ethnic heritages of the importance of early years education and how it works in practice. Throughout the centre, there are high-quality resources and displays that promote most successfully parental awareness of the six areas of learning, including a very strong focus on communication, language and literacy.

The centre is extremely effective in ensuring that parents and children are exceptionally well safeguarded and looked after successfully at the centre.

Relationships with all users are particularly strong. The use of modern technology, including text messaging and the use of social networking, has proved particularly successful in engaging teenage parents in the centre's activities. Outcomes for families, including those most in need of support, are improving strongly, including a significant increase in the proportion of children completing the Early Years Foundation Stage at nationally expected levels. While staff are skilled and well trained in the vital task of supporting smoking cessation, they are frustrated by the lack of resources provided to the centre to support parents who wish to give up smoking.

The centre manager, supported by highly-skilled staff, provides outstanding leadership and management. The centre's Service Plan is a detailed document, with specific and measurable targets aimed at improving outcomes for families, especially those in its target groups. Strengths in leadership and management are evident in the success of the centre as an integral part of the community it serves where all health and social services are available to families.

Because the centre demonstrates an excellent track record of improving outcomes for families and take-up rates of services and levels of parental satisfaction are exceptionally high, the centre provides outstanding value for money. Its capacity for sustained improvement is outstanding.

What does the centre need to do to improve further?

Recommendations for further improvement

- Work with the Chamber of Health to ensure that the centre has readily available resources to support parents who wish to stop smoking.
- Encourage even more parental involvement in the Core Offer Monitoring Group.

How good are outcomes for families?

1

The centre is very effective in engaging families in activities that develop their awareness and understanding of healthy lifestyles. Participation rates are exceptionally high with the centre reaching 100% of children in its reach area. The take up of sustained breastfeeding is 50% and on a rising trend; it is above the local authority average. Parents speak highly of the quality of support for breastfeeding, including the benefits of peer support. The number of children entering primary school who are obese is 12% and falling more slowly than the centre would like, despite its excellent promotion of the importance of healthy lifestyles. The centre is aware that it needs to do more to reduce rates of smoking. However, it currently has difficulty in providing packs to support parents who wish to give up smoking. In the last three years, the number of families engaging in activities to promote healthy lifestyles has risen from 8% to 62%.

Staff work most effectively with the CAF (Common Assessment Framework) coordinator from Children's Services in using the CAF to monitor the well-being and

safety of families who may be vulnerable. Equally, the centre provides very effective support for families in cases of domestic violence and where children are subject to child protection plans. Parents greatly value the support given by the centre in helping them to keep their children safe at home, for example in the centre organising the professional fitting of stair gates or child-proof locks for windows and cupboards.

Over the last three years, the percentage of children leaving Reception classes with the expected 78 points in communication, language and literacy and personal, social and emotional development across the Early Years Foundation Stage Profile (EYFSP) has risen from 47.5% to 71%. This is a significantly higher rate of progress than the local authority average. The centre is effective in narrowing the gap between the lowest achieving 20% in the Early Years Foundation Stage and the rest. Staff effectively engage members of minority ethnic heritages in the centre's activities, especially in raising their awareness of the importance of early years education.

The centre works tirelessly to improve the economic well-being of parents. A representative of Jobcentre Plus visits the centre on a weekly basis and staff signpost parents to job vacancies throughout the week. One parent said how much she valued the support from the Jobcentre Plus staff in moving successfully from full-time to part-time employment and so enriching her family life. The centre provides parents with increased confidence in applying for jobs, through for example providing workshops on writing a curriculum vitae. There are telling examples of how the centre has worked to support parents, for example a dad who started as a volunteer in the centre who went on to take a degree in early years education and who now specialises in the benefits to children of sand therapy. There are very good examples of parents who volunteer to run courses in the centre, such as first aid and cookery, which are highly valued by users. Parents contribute very effectively to the life and development of the centre and express their views freely through an excellent range of opportunities. However, their contribution to governance matters is not developed to the highest level.

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	1

stability and independence including access to training and employment	
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How good is the provision?

1

A significant strength of the centre is the way in which it analyses data on families in its immediate and wider reach areas in order to direct high-quality support, especially for its target groups. For example, it has identified those parents that would benefit most from attending the 'Baby Massage' sessions that promote stronger family bonds. For all activities, the centre establishes a baseline assessment of confidence and then sets clear and measurable outcomes for activities and then assesses the impact. The centre staff are highly skilled in using the on-site antenatal and health visitor clinics as a means by which they can engage and with families and signpost them to centre activities or those provided by other agencies.

The centre is highly effective in promoting its services for all families, including those most in need. A significant strength is that all advertised activities are linked to the six areas of learning within the Early Years Foundation Stage curriculum. As a result, parents' knowledge and understanding of the importance of their children developing key skills, especially in communication, language and literacy, is developed strongly. Staff engage parents effectively in planning how to support their children in relation to the Every Child Matters outcomes, including the benefits to healthy lifestyles of preparing and cooking fresh vegetables. Parents benefit from the mathematics courses which enable them to achieve qualifications in the subject and/or help them support their children's mathematics homework.

The quality of care, guidance and support is exceptional. Staff build excellent and trusting relationships with families both in the local and wider reach area. The provision of bus fares for parents living in isolated communities to access the centre's services is one of many examples of staff going the 'extra mile' to engage all families in its reach area. Support programmes for bilingual families and those with little or no English are highly effective, for example in reducing any sense of isolation and signposting them to training opportunities. Staff are highly skilled at supporting families in times of crisis and immediate need.

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 centre is highly effective in monitoring its performance. Self-evaluation is robust, detailed and focused on measurable outcomes for families. The Children's Centre Service Plan is a high-quality document that focuses closely on the needs of all target groups and providing sharply-defined measurable outcomes linked to the Every Child Matters agenda. Day-to-day management is excellent, with staff playing a significant role in assessing the impact of all the centre's activities on the lives of families. The Core Offer Monitoring Group is an effective body with members representing all services in Ventnor, including a town councillor. Parent representation on this group is more limited, primarily because of a reluctance to serve on what they perceive as a 'formal committee'. Staff morale is high and the team works exceptionally well together and with all the agencies that are an integral part of the centre. Governance is outstanding. Spurgeons and the local authority provide very effective support and challenge, particularly in providing high-quality data, measuring outcomes and parents' satisfaction of the services provided. In the past year, there was a 100% satisfaction rate. As one parent wrote, 'I think you do an amazing job at making children happy and content.'

Working in partnerships with other agencies is a significant strength, especially as many are based in the centre, for example the health visitor and midwifery service. The integration of all services is highly effective in meeting the needs of families. Through high-quality data, resources are directed towards those target groups identified as most in need, such as teenage parents. The use of text messaging and social networking has proved highly successful in engaging this target group in the centre's activities.

The centre is very inclusive and promotes equality and diversity exceptionally well. Although a relatively small group, the centre celebrates the diversity of families from minority ethnic heritages. It has been highly successful in supporting individual families, for example in times of crisis. As one parent said, 'I have moved here from another country and the staff here have made us feel so at home and offer an outstanding service for me and my son.'

The highest priority is given to safeguarding. Early intervention to support families, together with highly effective multi-agency links, is a significant strength. All staff are exceptionally well trained in safeguarding and child protection procedures. All staff are vetted fully through the Criminal Records Bureau and robust recruitment procedures before starting work at the centre. Children and parents feel exceptionally safe at the centre because of the robust attention given to health and safety matters, including the secure outdoor play area.

Taking into consideration the exceptionally high levels of parent satisfaction and engagement, the excellent provision and outcomes for families, the centre provides outstanding value for money.

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
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 Ventnor Children's Centre on May 22 and 23 May 2012. We judged the centre as outstanding overall.

We would like to thank all of you who took the time to speak with us and give your opinion about the service you and your children receive from the centre.

The centre has many excellent features. It is exceptionally well led and managed by senior staff and there is a very strong commitment from all staff and others who work with the centre to provide the best possible service to every family in the local community. There are high-quality links with a range of agencies, such as social care, health visitors, child minders and educational professionals who work very effectively with centre staff to provide a service that meets the individual needs of

families and children exceptionally well. Centre leaders and staff are constantly looking for ways to further improve and adapt the services provided and are very effective in responding to the feedback from parents and carers. We have asked the centre to work with the Chamber of Health to ensure that the centre has readily available on site products to help those of you who wish to give up smoking. This is the one area linked to healthy lifestyles where rates are too high.

Those parents and carers who spoke to us said that the centre is a very pleasant and welcoming place where everyone from all different backgrounds is valued, including lone parents and parents who move from the mainland. Some of you told how the centre made you feel less isolated and how you have made lasting friendships. Staff are trusted by parents and carers to give excellent advice, support and guidance, especially when times are difficult. Parents and carers said that their children are safe in the centre. This is because all staff are exceptionally well trained in child protection and safeguarding procedures and everyone has been fully vetted before working in the centre. Supporting families to improve their understanding of the importance of the Early Years Foundation Stage curriculum for their children is an area where the centre has been exceptionally effective. As a result, the centre is exceedingly effective in helping children get off to an excellent start in their education.

Courses to help parents and carers gain qualifications and get ready for work are very well planned and delivered. A particularly good example is the mathematics course which is improving your numeracy skills. Parents told us how much they value having a representative from Jobcentre Plus in the centre on a weekly basis.

The governing body (Spurgeons), that is responsible for the centre, provides excellent support and challenge to the centre. The Core Offer Monitoring Group, made up of different partners from the services run in the centre, and representatives of the local community, provides valuable advice to the centre. We have asked the centre to encourage more of you to join the Core Offer Monitoring Group in order to make your contribution to the centre even stronger than it already is.

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