

# Inspection report for Westgate and Newburgh Children's Centre

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<b>Local authority</b>	Warwickshire
<b>Inspection number</b>	383848
<b>Inspection dates</b>	14–15 June 2012
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<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	Not applicable
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<b>Linked school if applicable</b>	Newburgh Primary School Westgate Primary School
<b>Linked early years and childcare, if applicable</b>	Not applicable

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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**Report published:** June 2011



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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 one of the co-located/partner primary schools, Newburgh Primary School, was carried out at the same time as the inspection of the centre under section 5 of the Education Act 2005. The report of this inspection is available on our website: [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk).

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

The inspectors held meetings with the cluster manager, the centre manager, staff, parents, and representatives from Action for Children, the local authority, the strategic group, the steering group and partner organisations.

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

## Information about the centre

Westgate and Newburgh Children's Centre is a phase two children's centre which opened in April 2008. The centre occupies two facilities situated about a mile apart, one on the site of Westgate Primary School, the other on the site of Newburgh Primary School. Although classified as one centre, the two facilities operate as separate children's centres run by one team of staff. When one of the facilities is open for activity, the other is normally closed. The day-to-day management of the centre is the responsibility of the centre manager. The centre is part of a cluster of six children's centres in the Warwick District which are managed by a cluster manager.

The local authority has commissioned the charity Action for Children to manage the cluster of six children's centres, but still maintains regular oversight of the centre's work as the appropriate authority. A strategic group provides advice, guidance and

governance for the cluster, and a steering group undertakes a similar function for the centre. A wide range of partners and parents are represented on both groups.

The centre has a relatively small team of part-time staff which includes the centre manager, two project workers, a play development worker and three administration support workers. Some part-time support is provided for financial administration and speech and language therapy by staff employed centrally by the cluster. The centre fulfils its core purpose by commissioning a range of services for parents and children from a wide range of partners and by working in partnership with health visitors and midwives. Crèche facilities are provided when needed to enable parents to attend activities, but the centre does not provide full- or part-time childcare services.

The centre serves a wide catchment area, which spreads from the centre of the town of Warwick to surrounding rural areas. The large majority of the 1018 children under the age of five within the centre's reach area live within the catchment areas for Westgate and Newburgh Primary Schools. There are five other primary schools, mostly in rural areas, which draw children from the centre's reach area. Socio-economic circumstances within the area vary. Some parts are relatively affluent, but there are pockets of deprivation, particularly near the centre of town and the Westgate base, where the proportion of children living in homes which are dependent on workless benefits is around 20%. In other parts of the reach area, levels of unemployment and the proportion of families on benefits are broadly average.

A large majority of families in the area are White British, but there is a growing number of families from minority ethnic backgrounds, particularly from Eastern Europe.

Evidence indicates that children's skills, knowledge and abilities on entry to early years provision vary. Overall, they are similar to those expected for their age, but the level on entry to Westgate Primary School is below that expected.

## 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

Excellent leadership, rigorous and comprehensive governance arrangements, excellent working relationships with a wide range of partners and a small but knowledgeable and dedicated team of staff combine really well to provide services which are highly successful in improving outcomes for families who live in the area.

The centre makes very effective use of the expertise provided by a proactive local authority and by its governing body, Action for Children. A skilled and insightful cluster manager concentrates on securing efficient working relationships with other organisations which benefit all children's centres within the cluster. Efficient governance through the strategic and steering groups ensure that the centre maintains a focus on issues of national importance as well as on local issues. Parents have a strong voice through these two groups and contribute their views through evaluation of the services they use. The day-to-day management of the centre is streamlined and efficient, which enables a worthwhile service to be provided at the centre's two facilities.

The outstanding working relationship with the health visiting team is a model of best practice. Weekly 'Family Matters' meetings, attended by the centre's staff, health visitors and other professionals, ensure that information about families living in the area is shared and actions are agreed which make best use of the available resources. As a result, the centre has an excellent understanding of the needs of families within its area. It plans a wide-ranging programme of universally accessible activities and specific programmes to meet the needs of targeted groups, and offers personalised help for those in most need of support.

Outcomes in almost every area are above or well above the county and national averages, a result of the centre's proactive engagement with families and preventative work which limits the escalation of problems. Parents are unanimous in their praise for the centre. They feel exceptionally well supported and comment effusively on the open, friendly and helpful manner of the staff. Many comment on how the centre has been instrumental in changing their lives for the better, others on how it has been a lifeline for them in times of difficulty. The comment of one parent, 'Westgate Children's Centre is fantastic – it has been a wonderful place for support and development,' was echoed in many of the conversations with the inspection team.

Managers have a very good understanding of the centre's strengths and constantly seek to bring further improvement. Through the quality of the service provided and the impact which it has on the lives of families as reflected in the outstanding outcomes, they demonstrate that the centre has excellent capacity for further improvement. Many of the centre's partnerships are exceptionally fruitful. The partnership with midwifery services is developing well, but has yet to reach the same level of excellence as that with health visitors. Working relationships with the two co-located primary schools are excellent, but those with primary schools situated at some distance from the centre are not as fully developed. A number of parents have taken part in a community leadership programme and some provide voluntary help

with some of the centre's activities. However, the centre has not yet fully tapped this source of additional support for the centre and development of key skills for adults.

## What does the centre need to do to improve further?

### Recommendations for further improvement

- In order to provide the centre with greater capacity for managing activities and to provide parents with a wider range of personal development opportunities, increase the training and opportunities available for parents to act as volunteers in running and managing activities at the centre.
- Build on the model of excellent partnership working with health visitors and the centre's co-located primary schools to provide a similar level of excellence with midwifery services and other primary schools within the reach area.

## How good are outcomes for families?

<b>1</b>
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Parents say that the centre has had a very beneficial impact on their families. The support provided for families, particularly in times of crisis, has helped parents to develop their parenting skills and make better provision for their children. One parent said, 'Counselling has helped me pick myself back up, start providing for my children and given me the energy and patience to be a better mother to them both.' The understanding of the staff and their attention to individual needs ensure that families feel very safe at the centre. One parent with particular concerns said, 'It was the only place I could take the children and feel totally safe.' Others comment on how much the centre has affected their children's development, for example, 'She became more talkative and more confident with other children.' Some parents are delighted that the centre has enabled them to gain further qualifications. One parent said, 'In the long run it has helped me. I have gained a qualification which will help me in the future when I go to college or go to get a job'.

Outcomes for being healthy and keeping safe are excellent. Staff have a very good awareness of health issues and how to deal with them. Almost every baby is immunised before its first birthday and every new parent within the area attended clinics held at the centre. At 4.6%, obesity rates in five-year-old children are half the national average. The take-up rate for breastfeeding is 80% and, although a significant number have stopped by the time their babies are aged six to eight weeks, the proportion which continue, 38%, is well above the average for the local authority. A sleep clinic, baby massage sessions and individual counselling sessions cater extremely well for the well-being of parents and children. The proportion of children admitted to accident and emergency services is among the lowest in the county. Information on safe sleeping, water and sun safety and the dangers of scalding complement courses such as 'Save a Baby's Life', raising families' awareness of safety issues. Regular sharing of information between professionals, early identification and preventative action mean that potential problems rarely escalate into major crises but, on the rare occasions that it is needed, the Common Assessment Framework is used effectively. The fact that there are very few child

protection plans for children under five, and none lasting more than two years, indicates that the centre's preventative actions are highly effective.

The centre makes a major contribution to children's social and emotional development and their communication skills. Over the last year, a mix of universally accessible and specifically targeted 'Chatter Matters' sessions has engaged the families of 125 different children. The gap between the lowest achieving 20% and other children is reducing across the reach area and is significantly lower than the national average. It has reduced most significantly from 42.3% to 24% in the area of greatest disadvantage where children have the highest levels of engagement with the children's centre. The proportion of children achieving 78+ scale points by the end of Early Years Foundation Stage is rising, and at 75% was well above the national average in 2011. A wide variety of courses has helped many parents improve their parenting skills and has led to literacy and numeracy qualifications for some. Those experiencing financial difficulties have improved their financial awareness by attending 'Money, Money, Money' sessions run in partnership with Citizens Advice.

Children are well behaved at the centre because the activities provided interest them. Parents are becoming increasingly involved, both as contributors to the strategic advisory group and the steering group, and as volunteers. Some work each week at the Newburgh 'Play Together', others help with the weekly food cooperative. Two have become speech and language ambassadors and another two work as breastfeeding peer supporters. The experiences of the volunteers have been positive. However, opportunities to volunteer are not yet as wide-ranging as the centre would like, and a number of parents spoken to during the inspection said that they, too, would like the opportunity to work as volunteers and extend both their skills and the work of the centre.

These are the grades for the outcomes for families

<b>The extent to which children, including those from target groups, are physically, mentally and emotionally healthy and families have healthy lifestyles</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The extent to which children are safe and protected, their welfare concerns are identified and appropriate steps taken to address them</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The extent to which all children and parents, including those from target groups, enjoy and achieve educationally and in their personal and social development</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>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</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>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</b>	<b>1</b>

## How good is the provision?

**1**

The centre meets the needs of all target groups within its area extremely well because it is thorough in the way that it gathers information and assesses needs. It provides an excellent range of activities to meet those needs. It maintains a range of universal services, such as 'Play Together' and 'Breakfast at Westgate', but targets most of its resources to support families most in need. Various 'Chatter Matters' sessions, 'Small Play' and 'Coffee Plus' are open to parents by invitation. Sessions such as 'Baby Zone', 'Baby Massage' and the 'Breastfeeding Group' meet the specific needs of new parents very effectively. Wherever the centre perceives there to be a need, it endeavours to provide the appropriate support. The centre removes barriers to attendance by providing crèche facilities for children, running some activities in other locations and providing some outreach work in surrounding villages. Health visitors provide the mainstay for the flow of information to the centre, ensuring that the needs of almost every family with young children within the area are known and catered for. A large majority of families are registered with the centre and the area in which there is the greatest deprivation sees the highest level of engagement of families with the centre, at 81%. Collaboration with other children's centres enables the centre to broaden its activities even further.

Opportunities for learning and development are excellent. One parent commented, 'The activities are always varied, well thought out and interesting for the children. The staff are friendly and have a lovely manner with the children.' Staff are rigorous in identifying the key purposes of each activity and measuring the impact of the activities they provide. There is, therefore, always a strong focus on learning and development.

The outstanding quality of care, guidance and support provided by the staff is greatly appreciated by parents. Some describe the centre as 'a lifeline'. Others refer to it as their 'second home'. All comment on the friendliness and helpfulness of all the staff, and say that there is always someone who is ready to listen. What sets the centre apart is the depth of insight which enables staff to provide individually tailored support to meet specific needs. Staff are also perceptive in spotting warning signs and taking preventative action. They use their time well during activities to provide advice and guidance on a whole range of family matters and, because staff are so approachable, parents feel free to ask questions and seek advice.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

<b>The extent to which the range of services, activities and opportunities meet the needs of families, including those in target groups</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The extent to which the centre promotes purposeful learning, development and enjoyment for all families, including those in target groups</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The quality of care, guidance and support offered to families, including those in target groups</b>	<b>1</b>



## How effective are the leadership and management?

1
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Governance arrangements are particularly strong and ensure not only that the centre benefits from the best possible advice from expert sources, but that leaders are held to account for the services provided. The centre's self-evaluation is accurate and shows great insight into the needs of the reach area. It analyses very well the impact which the centre's actions are having on families and identifies actions which would help the centre to improve even further. The centre uses the views of users to improve existing services and provide new services which meet users' needs. Participation rates are high, especially from areas where there is the greatest need, demonstrating that the centre is highly effective in engaging families.

The centre's leaders have established a strong and dedicated team of staff who work well together and are highly effective in meeting the needs of families. The flexibility and willingness of the staff, careful timetabling and excellent management enable the centre to overcome the difficulties of managing two facilities. Resources are used extremely effectively and efficiently, and the achievement of such good outcomes with such a small staff team indicates that the centre provides excellent value for money.

The centre is extremely successful in promoting equality and tackling discrimination. Services are provided for all families within the area, but the bulk of the centre's resources are directed to the areas of greatest need. Staff ensure that activities do not inadvertently become socially exclusive. They are good at encouraging parents to engage in activities which give them new skills and develop their confidence. The centre has been instrumental in helping families who have moved to the area to integrate and find friendship. During the inspection, parents from the Ukraine, Greece, South Africa, Sweden and other parts of the United Kingdom all stressed how much the centre had helped them to settle and had provided them with invaluable support. Parents commented on how safe they feel within the centre. This is as a result of excellent safeguarding arrangements and the staff's highly effective efforts to provide a safe environment for both adults and children. Risk assessments for all activities are thorough. The greatest contribution to families' safety, however, comes through the regular sharing of information between partners which enables the centre to pick up and deal very quickly with any concerns which may affect a family's safety.

The partnership arrangements with other agencies are outstanding. The centre's management structure allows for thorough negotiation with partners and ensures that there are very clear service level agreements. The contribution of a wide range of partners, such as Citizens Advice, the food cooperative, speech and language therapists, the neighbouring pre-schools and other children's centres, is an integral part of the children's centre's programme. There is a strong commitment to maximising the use of everyone's time. Health visitors, for example, find their workload eased and really appreciate the help which the centre provides for families who are referred to it for specialist help. In its turn, the centre could not function anywhere near as effectively as it does without the feedback from health visitors.

The partnerships with midwifery services and with some of the outlying primary schools are developing, but are taking longer to establish.

These are the grades for leadership and management

<b>The extent to which governance, accountability, professional supervision and day-to-day management arrangements are clear and understood</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The effectiveness of evaluation and its use in setting ambitious targets which secure improvement in outcomes</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The extent to which resources are used and managed efficiently and effectively to meet the needs of families, including those in target groups</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The extent to which equality is promoted and diversity celebrated, illegal or unlawful discrimination is tackled and the centre fulfils its statutory duties</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The effectiveness of the centre's policy, procedures and work with key agencies in safeguarding children and, where applicable, vulnerable adults</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>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</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>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</b>	<b>1</b>

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

Inspectors took into account the preliminary findings of the team which was inspecting Newburgh Primary School concurrently with the children's centre's inspection. Inspectors also took into consideration the inspection report for Westgate Primary School, which had been inspected three weeks before. Here, provision and outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage were found to be outstanding.

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## Summary for centre users

We inspected the Westgate and Newburgh Children's Centre on 14–15 June 2012. We judged the centre as outstanding overall.

We realise that many of you identify very closely with the centre which is on the site of Westgate Primary School, while others of you may only visit the centre based at Newburgh Primary School. Because the two centres receive a joint budget and are run by the same team of staff, they are regarded by the local authority as one joint children's centre. References to 'the centre' in this summary, therefore, apply equally to Westgate Children's Centre and to Newburgh Children's Centre.

We should like to thank the many parents who came to speak to us during the inspection and who told us of their experiences of working with the centre. Your views and comments were extremely helpful and influenced many of the judgements we made about the centre. In addition to talking to as many parents as we could, we spent time talking with the staff at the centre and a wide range of people who work with the centre or provide services for you. We observed the activities which took place at the centre while we were there.

Everyone we spoke to had a very high opinion of the centre which is reflected in the judgements we made. We feel that every aspect of the centre is outstanding. The main purpose of children's centres is to improve the lives of families and children. Your centre is very successful at doing this. Many of you told us how much the centre has helped you, particularly in times of crisis or when you were feeling particularly low. For many of you, the staff have helped you to understand the needs of your children and learn how to engage with them so that they make good progress in their learning. For some experiencing postnatal depression, the centre has been a source of comfort. For others facing financial difficulties, the centre has provided advice and help which have improved your circumstances.

One of the reasons the centre is so successful is because it works very effectively with a wide range of partner organisations. There is a particularly close working relationship with health visitors which benefits everybody. As well as providing essential help and checks for new parents, health visitors inform you of the work of the centre. They also relay information to the centre so that it can identify activities and courses which will meet your needs. Sometimes, the centre acts on this information to invite individuals to a specific course or one of the staff might visit you in your home. Everyone we spoke to made it very clear that you greatly appreciate the help and support which the centre provides you. Many of you have attended a whole range of courses, all of which you have found interesting and helpful.

Another of the reasons for the centre's success is because it is well managed, both at a local level and by those who are responsible for overseeing its work. The local authority has appointed a charity, Action for Children, to take overall responsibility for managing the centre, but still maintains an active involvement. Because Action for Children manages many other children's centres in the country, it brings a level of

expertise which is not always available to an individual centre. Your centre also works closely with a cluster of other children's centres, which enables the centre to run more efficiently and to share some of their resources and activities. Two groups of people, the strategic group and the steering group, also provide good advice to the centre and make sure that the centre is carrying out its role as it should.

The most important factor contributing to the centre's success lies in the quality of care, guidance and support provided by the small, but very dedicated team of staff which is expertly led by the centre manager and the person responsible for managing the cluster of children's centres in Warwick District. Everybody commented on how friendly, approachable and helpful the staff are. We experienced this for ourselves and also saw that they have a very good level of expertise which enables them to answer your questions and provide you with good, helpful, timely advice.

The centre is constantly striving to improve. We know from the comments we received that it has become much more effective over the last year or two, and that there is now a good balance of activities taking place on the two sites. We have suggested to the centre that it should strengthen its partnership with midwifery services. Relationships are developing well, but are not as strong as those with health visitors. Similarly, we have asked them to strengthen relationships with the primary schools which are further away from the centre but still lie within the centre's catchment area. We know that a number of you volunteer to help at the centre, for example, as breastfeeding buddies, speech and language champions or as helpers at 'Play Together'. The volunteers we spoke to said how much they enjoyed helping out. The centre certainly appreciates the work of volunteers as it enables them to offer more services to the community. Some of you said that you would really like to help as a way of repaying what the centre has given to you. We have, therefore, asked the centre to increase the training and opportunities for you to act as volunteers.

Through what it has achieved so far, the centre has shown that it has excellent capacity to maintain and improve the services it offers to the community. We hope that you will continue to enjoy the services offered by the centre, and we wish you all the very best for the future.

The full report is available from your centre or on our website: [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk).