

# Inspection report for North Walsham Poppyland Sure Start Children's Centre

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<b>Local authority</b>	Norfolk
<b>Inspection number</b>	383787
<b>Inspection dates</b>	27–28 June 2012
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<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	Not applicable
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<b>Linked school if applicable</b>	North Walsham Nursery and Infant 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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## 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 additional inspector and one early years inspector.

The inspectors held meetings with representatives of the local authority, centre staff, advisory board members, health professionals, voluntary and statutory partner organisations, one local headteacher and parents. They observed the centre's work and looked at a range of relevant documentation.

## Information about the centre

Co-located alongside North Walsham Infant and Nursery and Junior Schools, North Walsham Children's Centre is one of four in the Poppyland Sure Start Children's Centre cluster. It is a phase two centre and offers a full range of health, educational and social services that are provided on site, in the home and in local community venues. The centre serves the rural communities of North Walsham, Swanton Abbot, Worstead, Scottow and surrounding villages. Parts of North Walsham are among the 20-30% most deprived wards in the county. The economic position of families is mixed. The issues affecting the families suffering from some form of deprivation are the mixed economy of the area, rural isolation and poor access to services due to lack of transport.

Nearly all families are White British. A very small number are from Eastern European backgrounds. Out of the 519 families registered with the centre from the reach area, 14% are lone parents, 13 are known to be from families with children or adults with some form of disability and 55 are fathers. The centre has 763 children under the age of five, out of which 26% are from workless households. On entry to early years provision, children's skills, knowledge and abilities are below those expected for their age.

North Walsham shares a staff team with three other centres. This includes the programme manager and the deputy centre manager who are responsible for the

day-to-day operational running of this and the other centres in the cluster. The local authority contracts out the leadership and management of services to Action for Children, whose contract at the time of inspection had just come to an end. This has resulted in a period of uncertainty about future plans for the service and for the team structure as they prepare for the transfer of some centres in the cluster to a new service provider. The governance of the centre is supported by a partnership advisory board.

## 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
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### Capacity for sustained improvement

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

2
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## Main findings

The centre’s overall effectiveness is good. It provides a cohesive package of seamless integrated services for children and their families in ‘a very welcoming environment’, as one satisfied user stated.

Outcomes for both children and adult users overall are good. With the exception of smoking cessation, health outcomes are good, especially for breastfeeding. Centre staff and health professionals promote healthy lifestyles and safeguarding through centre-based sessions, outreach work in the home and special support groups.

The centre provides a wide range of enjoyable and purposeful learning activities which develop users’ personal and social skills extremely well, contributing to positive relationships and a better quality of life. Adults make good progress in their parenting and children develop good communication and social skills. The centre provides an excellent package of support to families most in need. For families experiencing difficulties, including parents with mental health issues, support is offered through group and one-to-one intervention. There are some valuable opportunities for family learning but the service recognises that it needs to further widen its provision for adult learning programmes in order to develop users’ functional and employability skills.

The centre is led and managed well, and teamwork is very effective. Governance is good and staff are held to account for the centre’s performance. Self-evaluation is accurate and monitoring is used well to inform target setting. At a course level, users’ views are highly valued and used by the centre to shape its provision.

However, the centre does not involve parents and other stakeholders as fully as it should in evaluating its services or in the work of the advisory board. The centre places a strong focus upon the promotion of equality of opportunity and the celebration of diversity, as revealed by its informative displays. Safeguarding is extremely well embedded in all aspects of the centre's work. Good cooperation between all agencies ensures integrated services meet users' specific needs extremely well.

The centre provides excellent value for money with highly skilled staff working across the cluster area. Staff development opportunities are excellent and resources are used very efficiently. Good leadership, improving outcomes and the accuracy of self-evaluation demonstrate the centre's good capacity for sustained improvement.

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

### Recommendations for further improvement

- Continue to improve healthier outcomes for users, especially those linked to smoking cessation by offering more opportunities to smokers to enable them to give up smoking.
- Further develop the adult learning programmes provided by the centre to include more courses and learning opportunities covering literacy, numeracy, English for speakers of other languages (ESOL), information and communication technology and employability training to respond more fully to the needs of users.
- Increase the involvement of users and other stakeholders in the annual review and planning cycle so that they contribute more fully to the governance of the centre and to determining and shaping services.

## How good are outcomes for families?

<b>2</b>
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Overall health outcomes have improved and in particular the take-up of breastfeeding is good. There has been a significant increase in the number of women breastfeeding from birth, from 27% to 42% this year. Out of the families registered with the centre's services, 99 mothers are still breastfeeding at four months. This is partly due to the support provided by the staff, all of whom have completed the UNICEF breastfeeding management course and the different strategies being used. These have included the breastfeeding support group 'Baby Cafe', and the lending of breastfeeding electric pumps and cushions. However, outcomes relating to smoking cessation are proving harder to improve for the centre. It does not currently run formal programs to encourage and support smokers to give up.

The centre has been successful in promoting healthy lifestyles through the 'Change for Life' course and sessions where users are taught how to cook healthy recipes.

'Friday is the highlight of my week,' said one delighted mother attending the 'Young Parents Group,' where users learn about the benefits of healthy eating, while enjoying a healthy lunch together. The centre's good focus on encouraging physical activities is much appreciated by the children and their parents taking part in the enjoyable 'Sporty Tots' sessions that the centre offers in conjunction with the Norwich City Sports Foundation.

All users interviewed reported that they feel exceptionally safe in the centre. The staff work very effectively to raise adults' awareness about how to keep their families safe. Through the toy library, users are able to access safety equipment to use at home, such as electric socket covers and stair gates. The needs of vulnerable children and their parents are assessed effectively using the Common Assessment Framework (CAF) when necessary. Family support and social care workers work extremely well together to devise individual plans for children subject to a child protection plan to ensure that those most at risk receive well-targeted support at an early stage.

Outcomes for children are good and improving, with a good level of enjoyment demonstrated by all users. For instance, the highly popular 'Stay and Play' sessions in particular provide a good opportunity for parents, grandparents and children to play, have fun and learn together. After taking part in a wide range of purposeful learning activities and courses that are enjoyable, users speak highly of the new knowledge and skills they have gained especially as parents. There has been an increase in the percentage of children gaining at least 78 points across the Early Years Foundation Stage Profile scales with at least six points in each of the scales for personal, social and emotional development, communication, language and literacy. Similarly, the percentage gap between the lowest achieving 20% in the Early Years Foundation Stage and the rest has improved.

There is good celebration of achievements via displays of children's 'Learning Stories' and users' comments. One parent, a new arrival in the country and attending the 'International Group' sessions, happily described in the 'comments book' her experience of using the centre's services, 'Looking back now my daughter and I have achieved so much'.

Many parents become volunteers, thus enabling them to make a positive contribution to the centre's work and to the wider community at large. While one parent volunteer contributed her skills successfully by working in a charity shop, another parent informed the inspectors of her successful venture in setting up a new support group. She said, 'After receiving support and advice, I set up a breastfeeding group in another area'.

The 'Beyond the Bump' group for teenage mothers delivers effective advice and support around playing and learning with their children and provides good support networks to enable many to get back into education.

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>2</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>2</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>2</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>2</b>

### **How good is the provision?**

<b>2</b>
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The centre provides a good level of universal and targeted services responsive to changing local needs. Participation rates for users across the range of services have increased over the last year. Apart from centre-based learning sessions and activities, the centre provides good outreach services which benefit many families in the cluster reach areas. This includes the toy library which has been extremely valuable in engaging with families who for whatever reason have not been able to access the centre.

The 'Feel Good Group' has helped to restore many parents' self-esteem and significantly promoted the feeling of well-being. As one parent informed the inspectors, 'Now I have a better social life and can manage my children's behaviour'. Another parent reflected positively on her overall improved parenting skills, saying that she was 'Getting more enjoyment from being a mum'. Through its positive relationship with Jobcentre Plus, the centre signposts users to relevant courses at local colleges and to job vacancies. There is some adult education provision but the centre recognises the need to widen its offer of accredited learning opportunities that will further enhance users' language, literacy, numeracy, computing and employability skills. The assessment system the centre uses enables staff to work together to track the progress of families against personalised learning and development targets.

The care, guidance and support offered by the centre are outstanding. The level and quality of support is transformative in making a positive difference to the lives of many families whose circumstances make them vulnerable. All centre staff are aware of each family's particular needs. They respond with great sensitivity at times of crisis and provide practical help to overcome users' barriers to learning and help them get back into work. Family support workers provide excellent support to those parents who have been subject to domestic violence and abuse.

The centre provides a wide range of very helpful information and advice on such topics as sexual health. Similarly, the centre gives parents of disabled children and those who have special educational needs excellent guidance in accessing services available from a wide range of sources that enables their children to be fully integrated into the centre's activities. One such parent expressed her gratitude by saying, 'The centre has done so much for me.'

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>2</b>
<b>The extent to which the centre promotes purposeful learning, development and enjoyment for all families, including those in target groups</b>	<b>2</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?**

**2**

The governance of the centre and the way staff are held to account are highly effective. The local authority provides a clear strategic lead for the centre. Quality assurance arrangements are robust and audited by Action for Children and by the local authority. Good supervision and annual performance reviews are supported by the Action for Children performance management procedures. The use of data has improved and informs target setting and the planning of services. Annual conversations and monitoring of the annual business plan with the local authority feeds into the planning and development cycle. Self-evaluation is accurate but currently parents and some stakeholders are not sufficiently involved in the centre's self-evaluation process.

The centre provides excellent value for money. It uses its resources to best effect and staff are both highly skilled and well qualified, some having gained masters degrees. They readily share a wealth of experience and expertise. For instance, the programme manager has recently been awarded an Order of the British Empire award for his services to the children's centres under his management. All staff work as a cohesive team to provide effective support for children and their families. A clustered approach to running the four centres has ensured that breadth and depth of services available across the area has been sustained in the context of reduced funding.

The promotion of equality and diversity is good. The 'International group' is very effective in promoting inclusion and community cohesion. One parent commented on how important this group was in making her feel welcome. She said, 'I am new to the UK and it's lovely to meet other mums from different countries and share the same experience. It's fantastic.' Although most of its users are White British, the centre's wall displays providing information, celebrate diversity by using images from



different minority groups. Gender issues are tackled well in the 'Boys Course' for fathers, focusing on the differences between boys and girls in terms of behaviour. The centre pays careful attention to the needs of disabled children.

The safety of children and users is given a very high priority. Safeguarding arrangements are excellent and monitored rigorously. The centre actively promotes the safety of service users and staff. Health and safety risk assessments are excellent and regularly reviewed. Every member of staff attends mandatory safeguarding training within three months of their appointment. Staff clearly understand their responsibilities and regular updates ensure everyone is clear about national and local requirements. Procedures for making referrals to other agencies are outstanding and accidents are recorded and evaluated thoroughly.

The centre's working arrangements with health agencies are particularly strong. Close links with the Early Years Foundation Stage settings support the smooth transitions for children into pre-school provision and school. Similarly good partnerships with Jobcentre Plus, the lone parent advisor and the Citizens' Advice Bureau's debt advice service have helped families experiencing financial difficulties and young parents to find jobs.

The centre's open-door ethos and feedback sheets for every activity offered encourage users to express their views about what they enjoy and any improvements they would like to see. Users state that they are extremely happy with the services, and the level of care and support. However, in this transitional stage of takeover by a new contractor, the Parents' Forum has been suspended and, thus, there is no active parent representation on the advisory board, resulting in a missed opportunity to engage users and make the most of their views to shape services.

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>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness of evaluation and its use in setting ambitious targets which secure improvement in outcomes</b>	<b>2</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>2</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</b>	<b>2</b>

<b>meet its core purpose</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>2</b>

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

The findings from the recent inspection of the North Walsham Nursery and Infant School were taken into consideration in reaching judgements.

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## **Summary for centre users**

We inspected the North Walsham Poppyland Sure Start Children's Centre on 27–28 June 2012. We judged the centre as good overall.

We are glad to learn that many of you regard the centre as a very safe, warm and welcoming environment, with staff 'who are great' as one of you told us. Similarly, we are delighted to know that the centre has made a positive difference to the lives of all of you who we spoke to. For example, some of you teenage mothers make good progress in your personal development and, due to the centre's excellent support, most are enabled to return to education or better able to look after your children. You told us about the progress that you, your children and grandchildren have made in learning new skills as well as gaining knowledge especially about safety and health matters. The centre has been very successful in making you aware about healthy lifestyles and cooking healthy meals for your family.

The broad range of activities that the centre offers are very well matched to your needs. They are run by highly skilled and dedicated staff, including those who visit you at home. From these activities, you have learnt about parenting, budgeting, self-empowerment and how to deal with domestic abuse, and gained information about jobs or benefits. Parenting courses in particular have helped you to learn about improving family relationships and how to support your children's learning and to deal with difficult behaviour. We are pleased that many of you have taken up breastfeeding successfully and benefited from the support provided for you in the 'Baby Cafe' sessions.

Some of you told us how the centre provides you with outstanding support in the centre or at home. This includes help with childcare, information, borrowing of toys and safety equipment from the toy library, help with personal crises, showing you

how to cook a meal, or even to provide a taxi service to help you to access its services. Families with children who have special educational needs and/or disabilities feel very well supported in finding the right provision for their children's learning and development. The centre also gives you good advice on how you can prevent accidents in and around your home and helps you to keep your children safe.

Your centre is led by a good team of managers and workers. This includes the health professionals who offer their services from the centre, including the baby clinics. The advisory board members and the local authority representatives are proactive in effectively monitoring the services to ensure that they meet your needs. We found that the centre offers outstanding value for money, in the way it supports you in so many ways and the extremely effective way it uses its resources, including staff.

We have asked the centre to do more to improve your health, especially by providing more help in stopping smoking. Similarly, we have asked the staff to become more pro-active in offering or signposting you to more adult learning programmes in literacy, numeracy and computing for you to improve your skills and become more successful in finding work. The centre staff value your opinions very much. We have, thus, asked the managers to engage more of you parents and some partners like the local headteachers in evaluating the centre's activities and in decision-making by becoming members of the advisory board.

We would like to thank everyone who contributed their ideas, came to speak with us and told us how much you love using the centre and appreciate the work of the staff.

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