

Inspection report for The Bays Children's Centre

Local authority	Isle of Wight
Inspection number	383834
Inspection dates	3–4 July 2012
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Centre leader	Jill Wade-Smith
Date of previous inspection	Not applicable
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Linked school if applicable	Shanklin CE Primary School
Linked early years and childcare, if applicable	Furzehill Childcare Centre

The inspection of this Sure Start children's centre was carried out under Part 3A of the Childcare Act 2006 as inserted by section 199 of the Apprenticeships, Skills, Children and Learning Act 2009.

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Introduction

The inspection addresses the centre's contribution to:

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

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

An inspection of the co-located/partner 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.

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

The inspectors held meetings with representatives of the centre's core offer management board, parents, and with the senior leadership team as well as a range of health service professionals. Other partnership agencies that are linked with the centre and members of the staff and users of the centre were also consulted. They observed the centre's work, and looked at a range of relevant documentation.

Information about the centre

The Bays Children's Centre is situated on the east coast of the Isle of Wight serving the districts of Shanklin, Sandown and Lake. It operates from two sites: one in the grounds of Shanklin Church of England Primary School and the other in a stand-alone building adjacent to the Sandown Bay Academy. It is a designated phase one centre offering full core provision. This includes early education integrated with childcare, which is run by the same provider on an adjacent site. In addition it provides family support and outreach to parents, child and family health services and adult education. The centre is managed and run by Furzehill Childcare Centre Ltd. on behalf of the local authority. The centre is in an area of considerable social and economic deprivation. There are 1,239 families with children of five years of age and under, and 1,167 children under five in total in the reach area. The percentage of lone parents at 20% is slightly above the Isle of Wight average. Around 20% of families are of minority ethnic heritage and this proportion is rising. Around 30% of children are living in households dependent on workless benefits and the centre serves one of the 25% most deprived areas nationally. On entry to early years

provision the majority of children’s skills, knowledge and abilities are below the levels expected for their age.

Among the range of activities offered by the centre are parenting, breastfeeding and weaning groups, local community baby clinics and health services as well as a grandparents’ group. The centre has links with community paediatric services as well as groups supporting those suffering from domestic abuse. It provides a range of adult education and courses both on site and through links with the local college, designed to support parents back into employment. The centre also delivers a range of services from other sites in the area, for example, baby massage, toddler groups, play days and the Incredible Years parenting group. The centre is open 50 weeks a year on weekdays, between 8.00am and 5.00pm.

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

The Bays Children’s Centre makes outstanding provision for its families. Both locations provide a vibrant and welcoming atmosphere and it is clear that families feel very relaxed and perfectly at home within its environs. All are made to feel special by staff and are treated as individuals. The centre’s feedback on services provided shows a 100% satisfaction rate. The many families spoken to were extremely positive about the centre and staff, saying: ‘They’re like a family to me’; ‘This place has been a lifeline to me’; and ‘They are fantastic and so supportive.’ Families feel comfortable with the centre staff; they know they can approach them at any time.

The key factors in the outstanding provision and excellent outcomes achieved are the leadership and management of the centre. The manager is passionate about her work. Her dedication and commitment are fully reflected by the senior leadership team and staff who fully share the aims and values of the centre. They have an excellent understanding of the reach area they serve and the challenges it presents. Excellent organisation and communication mean that the day-to-day running on both sites is extremely effective.

The outcomes for families are outstanding. There is an exceptionally wide range of activities offered covering a plethora of subjects. Children make exceptional progress in gaining the skills they need prior to starting school. There is a very wide range of courses for adults to gain the necessary skills they might need, whether it be in parenting or in gaining additional qualifications in preparation for a return to work.

The centre provides an extremely wide range of services. It meets the needs of the families exceptionally well because there is ongoing monitoring and evaluation of all activities offered. The centre has established excellent partnerships within the community and works very closely with other agencies. The use of the Common Assessment Framework (CAF) is widespread and helps to ensure that the best possible support is provided and helps avoid unnecessary duplication of provision. Inspectors heard first hand of many of the cases where the centre has helped turn lives around. It fulfils its aim to improve life chances for its families extremely well.

Supervision arrangements are excellent and highly effective in ensuring that provision is constantly monitored, analysed and evaluated. The Core Offer Monitoring Group meetings monitor and challenge effectively to ensure the continued positive impact of services and provision on families' lives.

Self-evaluation is rigorous and robust. It calls on the views of all families, including children. As a result amendments are made to provision to more accurately reflect current needs. Safeguarding procedures are extremely rigorous and ensure all of the families are kept safe. The centre has excellent relationships with parents and consults with them widely. Nevertheless, as yet they have little input into strategic decision making for the centre and are having limited influence on its long-term development for families.

The services provided and the excellent outcomes achieved are sustained well. This is because of the excellent relationships and partnerships between all services offered and the robust monitoring of all activities by the Core Offer Monitoring Group and the local authority. Development planning is of a high order and, as many staff members re-iterated during the inspection, 'We can always improve.' The centre has an excellent capacity to further improve.

What does the centre need to do to improve further?

Recommendations for further improvement

- Explore ways to further engage parents and families in strategic and long-term decision making.

How good are outcomes for families?

1

The centre provides an excellent range of activities which enable families to

understand the importance of a healthy lifestyle. As a result of a programme to address childhood obesity and promote the importance of breastfeeding the percentage of mothers sustaining breastfeed is significantly rising. This, together with a further emphasis on weaning support and healthy cooking, is having a positive effect on reducing childhood obesity figures. The excellent partnerships with community health services, for example health visitors and midwives, are all having an extremely positive impact on the lives and health of the families attending especially in relation to smoking cessation.

In speaking to inspectors, parents warmly praised the work of staff at the centre in always 'being there for us'. They provided examples of how the support provided had helped them cope with crises. Staff had helped them access the services they needed and many had requested help via the Common Assessment Framework (CAF) which had ensured that support was precisely matched to their current need, monitored consistently and ensured that children stayed safe.

Families feel very safe at the centre because of the very stringent checks and risk assessments that are carried out. Parents are made extremely aware of the need for home safety and value the provision of home safety packs and resources boxes which are full of information and practical guidance. Staff act swiftly in response to parents' concerns and requests and, for example, instigated a first-aid course in response to concerns over baby choking. This served to alleviate fears as parents gained the knowledge of how to prevent accidents and deal with them should they occur. Excellent support is provided for families who have been subject to domestic abuse and there are excellent arrangements to work with children subject to the child protection register.

The focus on helping children develop their early communication and language skills has contributed greatly to the significant narrowing of the gap between the lowest achieving 20% at the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage and the rest. While there is still a gap of just over 25%, it represents a significant improvement in four of the five schools served by the children's centre area. It is better than the island average and well on track to fall further.

The centre has excellent links with Jobcentre Plus who visit the centre on a regular basis. Work Club particularly benefits those who have been out of work for some time offering specific support in essential preparation and in applying for vacancies. Other courses help families learn how to budget efficiently, manage their money and access the benefits to which they are entitled. Through links with the local college, the centre helps families access courses which will lead to further qualifications and enhance work opportunities, thus significantly improving their life chances and economic well-being. Families provide a range of feedback to the centre on activities and the support provided. All of these are extremely positive and demonstrate how much the provision means to the families and the difference it makes to their lives. The volunteering programme at the centre is particularly successful. Parents are becoming more involved in the governance through the Core Offer Monitoring Group but as yet only have limited input to the longer-term and strategic decision making

processes.

These are the grades for the outcomes for families

The extent to which children, including those from target groups, are physically, mentally and emotionally healthy and families have healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which children are safe and protected, their welfare concerns are identified and appropriate steps taken to address them	1
The extent to which all children and parents, including those from target groups, enjoy and achieve educationally and in their personal 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 stability and independence including access to training and employment	1

1

How good is the provision?

The centre is highly successful in engaging families in their reach area. It has achieved a registration rate of 94% and there is a very high take-up of services offered particularly by those in its target groups. The centre continuously assesses the needs of families and the best ways of meeting these needs. Key Performance Indicators show that outcomes are extremely good and constantly improving. For example, breastfeeding initiation figures were high at 81.1%, but it had shown a decline after eight weeks to 36% in 2009/10. Actions taken to promote this have shown a significant increase of mothers sustaining breastfeeding to over 40% and rising. There is a wide range of parenting programmes to meet the needs of all age groups, for example M8tes and Incredible Years as well as the Grandparents' Group, which enables grandparent guardians to 'brush up' on parenting skills and meet others in the same position. There are excellent systems for measuring outcomes for all families.

There is a strong focus on helping children develop communication skills through such activities as Chatter Matters and the Early Communication courses and these provide excellent preparation for moving on into nursery and school. There is an excellent balance of outreach and in-house services. Support workers often use home visits successfully to signpost families to nearby outreach services available for them and from there many begin to access the centre independently. It was very evident during the inspection that drop-in groups provide young mothers, in particular, the opportunity to engage with support workers in a very friendly and relaxed way and also to meet and make friends with those in similar circumstances. The use of resource boxes means that families become familiar with the Every Child

Matters aims and outcomes in a stress-free way. Courses are carefully planned to focus on where the needs are greatest. Incredible Years enables parents to gain essential parenting skills and in some cases provides an essential stepping stone to moving from a placement in a hostel to their own accommodation.

Care, guidance and support are exceptional for all families especially those in target groups. Staff know their families extremely well and build trusting relationships with them. A real strength is the comprehensive, integrated and cohesive partnership working with an extensive range of agencies so that practical assistance and support are provided extremely quickly and efficiently and often bring about closure sooner. Highest quality guidance and support are always tailored to individual needs for however long they are needed. One parent commented very simply, 'The people here care and help you; they're always there for you when you need them.'

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

Although there are many new members of the Core Offer Monitoring Group they provide strong governance of the centre, because of the wide range of experience and expertise they share. In addition, three sub-groups ensure there is excellent supervision of the centre's services and the monitoring of these is highly rigorous and effective. Members challenge the performance of the centre robustly and have high expectations of the centre to meet the very demanding targets it is set. Supervision for all staff is of a high order and feeds into an excellent performance management structure. A health professional working from the centre told inspectors that there is 'enviable supervision we should all be aspiring towards'.

The centre's self-evaluation is robust, highly evaluative and analytical and feeds into an excellent service plan which focuses on the specific needs of all target groups. Every section deals extensively with the impact of services on outcomes for users and is supported by examples from case studies. The thoroughness with which it has been completed clearly demonstrates the commitment and dedication of all the centre staff. This emanates from the inspirational leadership provided by the manager of the centre, who is determined the centre should do its very best for all families.

The centre is very inclusive and totally committed to promoting equality and diversity. While the proportion of families from minority ethnic heritages is low the

centre has been highly effective in supporting them in times of crisis and providing or signposting them to services which will meet their needs. One parent said, 'I felt so alone being here on my own with none of my family to talk to, this place has been a lifeline to me.' The centre promotes inclusive practice for families and disabled children and children who have special educational needs, and the Kaleidoscope group provides a listening ear and an excellent resource for these families.

Safeguarding is of very high priority at the centre and excellent arrangements are in place. Rigorous checks have been made on all adults, staff and volunteers who work at the centre and staff receive comprehensive training in safeguarding and child protection. All policies and protocols are very clear and all records are kept very securely. Rigorous risk assessments are conducted which ensure the safety of families who use the centre.

The centre has established exceptionally effective relationships and partnerships with an extensive range of agencies. These provide high quality services which have an extremely positive impact on the lives of the families. Particular strengths are the links with the midwifery and health visitor services particularly in promoting and addressing the needs of teenage mums and young families. In addition, the excellent link with a local school and the conducting of an Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale (ECERS) survey by the manager have been particularly beneficial in aiding a more seamless transition to school.

A parental survey reveals 100% satisfaction with services the centre provides. Families often become involved directly in management or volunteer work. Resources are exceptionally well managed to ensure the greatest benefit for the centre's families. The centre has a highly positive impact on the community it serves. Through its ongoing monitoring and evaluations it is always looking to improve outcomes through adapting or modifying its excellent provision. 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

The inspection of Shanklin Church of England Primary School which took place on 2–3 July 2012.

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Summary for centre users

We inspected The Bays Children’s Centre on 3 and 4 July 2012. We judged the centre as outstanding overall.

Thank you for making us feel so welcome and contributing to this inspection by sharing your experiences of the children’s centre with us. Many of you told us how friendly and welcoming everyone is. You gave us a very positive picture of the centre and this was very helpful when we came to make our final judgements.

The centre is very successful because the leadership provided by the manager is very strong and she is highly dedicated to and passionate about her work. All the staff work together extremely well as a team and they all have highly effective relationships with their professional partners such as the health visitors and midwives. Everyone who works at, or out of, the centre communicates very well with each other and as a result there is an excellent understanding of your needs and of others in the community as a whole.

We can see how much you and your children enjoy and benefit from the many activities that the centre provides, for example, the BabyCafé or courses such as Incredible Years. We could see that centre staff make sure you have plenty of support if you need it and that children are making excellent progress in their learning and development.

Parents and children are all benefiting from the good provision made by the centre and you have excellent opportunities to feedback your views. However, we would like to see more parents involved in some of the longer-term decisions about the

strategic development of the centre. We have asked the centre manager to explore how this could be done.

We would like to wish you, your children and families who live in the Bays area the very best for the future.

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