

Inspection report for West Newport Children's Centre

Local authority	Isle of Wight
Inspection number	383333
Inspection dates	5–6 July 2012
Reporting inspector	Kath Beck

Centre leader	Suze Keynes
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected
Centre address	Wellington Road Carisbrooke Newport Isle of Wight PO30 5QT
Telephone number	01983 537390
Fax number	01983 537390
Email address	westnewportchildrenscentre@childrenssociety.org.uk

Linked school if applicable	Carisbrooke Church of England Controlled Primary School Christ the King College
Linked early years and childcare, if applicable	Carisbrook "Clever Cloggs" Day Care

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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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

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

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Introduction

The inspection addresses the centre's contribution to:

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

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

An inspection of the co-located Christ the King College for students over 11 years of age 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 the centre manager, early years and project workers employed by the centre, the headteacher of the co-located primary school, and the programme and inclusion managers from The Children's Society. They also met with representatives from the families in the area, the local authority, the Jobcentre, the local adult further education college, and health and social services.

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

Information about the centre

West Newport Children's Centre is a phase two centre located on the same site as Carisbrooke Church of England Controlled Primary School and Christ the King College. It serves the wards of Mountjoy A and B; Carisbrooke East A and B, Carisbrooke West A and B, and Parkhurst A and B. Levels of deprivation across the reach vary but include areas that are among the 30% most deprived nationally.

Families live in privately owned homes, rented accommodation, social housing and flats. Approximately 23% of lone and workless families are on benefits. This is above the national average. The reach includes approximately 740 children under five years of age. The large majority of families come from White British backgrounds; others come from a diverse range of cultures. Some families live a significant distance from the centre. Public transport is limited. Children's knowledge, skills and abilities on entry to early years provision are below those expected for their age.

West Newport Children’s Centre opened in a purpose-built building in September 2008 and was designated with its core purpose in September 2009. The local authority delegated responsibility for the centre to The Children’s Society in April 2010 and the current manager took up her duties in January 2011. At that time staffing at the centre was reviewed and re-structured to place emphasis on targeted work. Also at about that time the local authority implemented a new structure and arrangements for working with social services. The centre provides early childhood education, family support, jobs advice, and child and family health services, and is overseen by a Core Offer Monitoring Group. There is no on-site nursery. The centre operates outreach services in Nine Acres Primary School. Its provision in its link primary school and others in the reach has been interrupted until building work following their reorganisation into primary schools by the local authority is complete. Employment opportunities in the locality are limited.

Inspection judgements

Grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Overall effectiveness

The effectiveness of the children’s centre in meeting the needs of and improving outcomes for families

2

Capacity for sustained improvement

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

1

Main findings

West Newport is a good centre. When the new provider and leadership team took over they brought a clear determination to pursue excellence in all aspects of the centre’s work. Under the skilled, knowledgeable leadership of the centre manager it finds innovative ways to engage all target groups and to give them the confidence to make important decisions about their lives. The centre manager said: ‘There are no barriers to improvement. It is up to us to find ways to get around difficulties that are in the way. No-one is hard to reach if we make it as easy as we can for families to engage with us.’ This determination has led to notable improvements in provision and outcomes in the face of significant changes in the locality linked to schools, to social services, the arrangements for safeguarding, to employment, finance and transport.

Staffing changes in the centre have resulted in a much sharper focus on targeted provision for those most in need. The number of families, living in and beyond the reach, who attend the centre has risen significantly in two years from a low point to almost three quarters of those registered. Through a wide range of partnerships,

including those with pre-school providers, health and social services, an exceptionally coherent approach to safeguarding children subject to the Common Assessment Framework process or a child protection plan has been established. Provision for families separated from their children to enjoy supervised visits is highly regarded. The centre has gained the full confidence of its partners, and all the families who attend, and who responded to the survey, are pleased with the services it provides.

The reorganisation of local schools led to the temporary withdrawal of two venues used by the centre within the reach. This restricted access to the centre's services, especially for lone and workless families who live some distance away. Negotiations, in conjunction with an early years provider, about provision in one venue in the most deprived area of the reach to re-open in September 2012 are at an advanced stage. Plans to utilise another are at an early stage of development and depend on the completion of building work. A successful initiative whereby the centre takes its provision to outdoor areas within the reach is raising its profile, engaging more families and showing them how they can enjoy playing with their children outside whatever the weather.

Rigorous self-evaluation, robust analysis of data, feedback from partners and constructive performance management have brought about a shared sense of purpose about the key aspects to improve. Staff know the demographics and needs of all the target groups in the reach extremely well and are working together to secure further improvements. Governance, too, has significant strengths in driving the development of the centre across many aspects of its work, not only in the reach but in the wider community. The local authority, The Children's Society and centre manager are working with other centres and research groups to tackle issues that are common to them. Together they have agreed a programme, due to start very shortly, with health and other providers to raise the number of mothers who sustain breastfeeding beyond six to eight weeks, improve the rates of those giving up smoking, and recruit parents to the Core Offer Monitoring Group.

The universal and targeted programme of events for families attending the centre is bringing about good outcomes. The majority of families are improving their health and safety. Children and adults achieve well and make good contributions to the centre's work. A community project to obtain children's views about how to improve their lives has been particularly successful in influencing the centre's work. It is to be introduced across schools and childcare providers throughout the island. College courses raise skills in literacy and numeracy. The Jobcentre provides advice about vacancies in the area and carries out statutory interviews. However, advice about the availability of grants, benefits and debt management, especially for parents new to the benefits system, is not readily available. This is limiting opportunities for some families to improve their economic stability.

The centre's track record of improvement, understanding of the reach, and strong teamwork between staff and those responsible for governance and accountability give the centre its outstanding capacity to improve.

What does the centre need to do to improve further?

Recommendations for further improvement

- Increase the number of workless and lone families engaging with the centre by implementing fully the current action plan to extend its outreach work within the community, especially through its partnerships with schools and early years' providers.
- Help more families to improve their financial situation by making it possible for them to access easily the advice they need about benefits, grants and debt management.

How good are outcomes for families?

2

More families attending the centre are living healthier lifestyles. Obesity rates at age five have fallen significantly in the area from 16.7% in 2007 to 7.4% in 2011, and are now well below the national average. Those attending 'Cooking on a budget' said they had not realised how easy and cost effective it was to cook from scratch. Following feedback from children, opportunities have been built into the programme for families to cook and eat together. One family has been inspired to grow their own vegetables and says that it has transformed their child's eating habits. The number of families initiating breastfeeding is high. The number sustaining it beyond six to eight weeks, while rising, is not as high as found nationally. This matter is common across other areas on the island and is being tackled in cooperation with the local authority. Popular 'Buggywalks', activities in the garden and local parks promote strongly the physical health of families.

Staff work energetically with many professionals to safeguard the high number of children subject to the Common Assessment Framework process. They share their expertise with childcare providers so they contribute fully to the process. The promotion of safety in the home and when out in the community has helped to reduce the number of children admitted to accident and emergency by 60% from 18 to 12 over the past three years. Parenting classes, individual support, and advice to deal with domestic abuse improve parents' mental health. One parent said, 'I did not know which way to turn, but I came to the centre and staff gave me all the support I needed to change my life and keep my children safe.'

'Wiggle Bees' and 'Chatterpillars' provide fun ways for parents to enhance their child's skills in communication. A speech therapist attends sessions to discuss parental concerns. High quality resources and careful planning covering all of the areas of learning in the Early Years Foundation Stage enable children to make good progress in activities that promote their curiosity. Staff evaluate each session, and provide increasingly challenging activities. The centre works collaboratively with pre-school providers to improve further children's language skills, preparing them for a

smooth transition to school. This has contributed to a rise in the percentage of children gaining 78 points in their assessment at the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage from 48% in 2009 to 59.6% in 2011. The gap between the lowest-achieving children aged five and others has narrowed by 2% in the same period of time.

Frequent informal feedback enables families to contribute to decision-making in the centre. Recognising the unhappiness the withdrawal of a popular singing session would cause, senior staff met with a group of parents to present the options. Together they decided to replace it with 'Wiggle Bees,' run by staff, which is extremely popular. Parents make good progress in their parenting skills and in their personal development. The centre is successful in supporting teenage mothers in continuing their education. It raises aspirations so some parents are seeking qualifications in nursing, one is studying for a degree and five have become volunteers.

Data show that approximately 23% of children live in families that are workless households or in receipt of Working Tax Credits. This figure, despite the partnership with Jobcentre, is remaining similar over time. Through its analysis of the area, senior staff are aware of families in difficulty because information about grants, benefits and debt management is not easily accessible.

These are the grades for the outcomes for families

The extent to which children, including those from target groups, are physically, mentally and emotionally healthy and families have healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which children are safe and protected, their welfare concerns are identified and appropriate steps taken to address them	2
The extent to which all children and parents, including those from target groups, enjoy and achieve educationally and in their personal and social development	2
The extent to which children engage in positive behaviour and develop positive relationships and parents, including those from target groups, contribute to decision-making and governance of the centre	2
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	3

How good is the provision?

2

The centre makes good use of a wealth of data and its in-depth knowledge of the reach to provide universal and targeted services. It has devised an attractive programme of activities to meet the needs of different groups, and has been successful in engaging with almost three quarters of families in the reach. Some activities, such as Family Group or Homestart, are by invitation only to meet specific

needs identified by key partners. Timings of the activities vary during the day to take account of family routines or sleep patterns of the babies. 'Weigh, stay and play' is very popular, enabling mothers and fathers with young babies to seek advice from the health visitor, but also to socialise, play and enjoy quality time together. Once a month parent-craft programmes clinics take place in the evening as this time is most convenient for those attending.

Parenting courses help families to realise that the challenges they face are not personal to them. They help them to manage their time, and understand their child's development and behaviour patterns. In an evaluation following one course, a parent wrote excitedly, 'I have found time to have a bath!' Family project workers engage with families on an individual basis giving them the information and guidance needed to make informed choices. 'Twins group', 'Childminder drop in', 'Baby Club', 'Little Explorers,' 'Wiggle Bees' and 'Lunch Club' encourage fathers, grandparents, and families with children or parents with disabilities to participate in high quality activities. Literacy and numeracy classes held in the centre help parents to gain qualifications, but their achievements are not formally celebrated.

Case studies show that families turning to the centre in times of crisis receive substantial support to overcome their difficulties. One parent said, 'I came to the centre because I was confident that I would get help. I do not feel threatened when I am here.' Support is tailored to needs, in the centre and in the home.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The extent to which the range of services, activities and opportunities meet the needs of families, including those in target groups	2
The extent to which the centre promotes purposeful learning, development and enjoyment for all families, including those in target groups	2
The quality of care, guidance and support offered to families, including those in target groups	2

How effective are the leadership and management?

2

Rigorous evaluation of the centre's overall provision, and the context in which it works, by leaders and managers in 2011 led to robust decisions and a change of focus to targeted work. They also brought about rapid improvements in the quality of provision, the centre's profile within the community, partnerships with key agencies and its overall effectiveness.

Governance and accountability arrangements are clearly understood and the drive to provide integrated provision has been particularly successful. Targets in the centre's service delivery plan are challenging, easily tracked, and link to those in the local authority's long-term strategic planning. Performance management ensures that staff skills are deployed to best effect.

Safeguarding has high priority. Strong partnerships with key partners in safeguarding reduce the risk of harm to children. The local authority has established clear thresholds for referral. Roles, responsibilities and the needs of families subject to the Common Assessment Framework process or child protection plans are fully understood. Staff and volunteers have undergone checks with the Criminal Records Bureau for their suitability to work with children. Procedures and policies are robust. Families know the centre's responsibilities to safeguard children, and to avoid using cameras or mobile phones while in the centre.

Inclusion is at the heart of the centre's work. Families using it reflect the community it serves. Staff acquire assistance with translation for individual families from their partner centres. Parents wishing to attend sessions to enhance their academic skills, are assisted in finding good quality childcare in the locality, using the two year funding.

Finances are monitored carefully to ensure that the centre offers good value for money. The building is used almost to capacity. Parents enjoy attending because the centre is attractive, well maintained, has high quality resources, and staff who have considerable knowledge and expertise.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The extent to which governance, accountability, professional supervision and day-to-day management arrangements are clear and understood	2
The effectiveness of evaluation and its use in setting ambitious targets which 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	2
The extent to which equality is promoted and diversity celebrated, illegal or unlawful discrimination is tackled and the centre fulfils its statutory duties	2
The effectiveness of the centre's policy, procedures and work with key agencies in safeguarding children and, where applicable, vulnerable adults	2
The extent to which partnerships with other agencies ensure the integrated delivery of the range of services provided by the centre to meet its core purpose	2
The extent to which the centre supports and encourages families in the reach area to engage with services and uses their views to develop the range of provision	2

Any other information used to inform the judgements made

during this inspection

None

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Summary for centre users

We inspected the West Newport Children's Centre on 5 and 6 July 2012. We judged the centre as good overall.

It was a pleasure to meet you when we visited the centre. Thank you for talking to us and for making a contribution to the inspection. You mentioned that the centre has made a real difference to your lives and is a place you can go to for help, especially if you are really worried. One of you said, 'I did not know which way to turn, but I came to the centre and staff gave me all the support I needed to change my life and keep my children safe.'

As you probably know the staff at the centre want to make it the best it can be. Safeguarding your children is among its priorities. There have been lots of changes over the past two years in the schools, health and social services. The centre has developed strong partnerships with these groups to help you as much as it can to keep your families safe. There have also been changes in the staff at the centre and the ways in which it is helping more of you to make important changes to your lives. The centre manager told us: 'There are no barriers to improvement. It is up to us to find ways to get around difficulties that are in the way. No-one is hard to reach if we make it as easy as we can for families to engage with us.' As a result the centre has the full confidence of all the professionals it works with and all of you are happy with the services it provides.

As you know the reorganisation of the local schools has led to the temporary withdrawal of two venues used by the centre within the area. The loss of the venues prevented the centre helping as many people as it wanted to help. Some of you are already enjoying the activities the centre puts on in the parks for you to play with your children outside and in all weathers.

The centre is good at helping you to lead healthier and safer lifestyles. We were pleased to hear that some of you have started to grow your own vegetables and this has changed your children's eating habits. The advice about home and road safety has reduced the number of children going to accident and emergency. Through 'Wiggle Bees' and 'Stay and Play' the centre helps you to develop your child's early attempts to communicate. Its work on language development with childminders, speech therapists and pre-schools is helping your children do well in assessments at age five. Some of you are achieving well in improving your skills in literacy and numeracy to help your children. Jobcentre gives you advice about vacancies in the

area and carries out statutory interviews. However, advice about the availability of grants, benefits and debt management, especially if you are new to the benefits system, is not readily available. This makes it difficult for you to feel financially secure. You make important contributions to the development of the centre with your views about the activities it provides. You also help others with your contributions of fruit when you come to the centre and your contributions to the foodbank.

The local authority, and leaders and managers are working together with other centres and research groups to tackle issues that concern them. These include helping more of you to sustain breastfeeding beyond six to eight weeks, to give up smoking, and helping more parents to contribute to bigger decisions about the centre.

We have asked the centre to extend its work in the community to help more of you, especially those who are not in work or who are single parents, to take part in activities nearer to your home. We have also asked the centre to make sure you can get the advice you need for grants, debt management and benefits easily.

We are sure you will support the centre when it makes more changes 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.