

Inspection report for Sheringham Children's Centre

Local authority	Newham
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Linked school if applicable	Sheringham Nursery School
Linked early years and childcare, if applicable	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 an early years inspector.

The inspectors held meetings with senior managers from the centre, frontline staff, parents, partners, members of the advisory board and a representative of the local authority linked to the centre.

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

Information about the centre

This is a phase two centre, located in the north east of Newham. The centre was developed around an established maintained nursery school, and was designated in December 2007. The nursery school and children's centre moved into a new building in June 2010. The centre has been developed as an integrated model, with the school headteacher also responsible for the children's centre. As manager, the headteacher oversees the work of the centre's coordinator who is responsible for the day-to-day management of the centre. The centre is governed by the school's governing body, which has a children's centre sub-committee. Governors include parents, the associate headteacher of the primary school, and a representative from the local authority. The centre collaborates closely with its near neighbour, Susan Lawrence Children's Centre, and also works closely with the Manor Park soft federation of schools.

The centre serves part of the Manor Park/Little Ilford area of Newham and has a relatively small reach area. The largest ethnic groups are of British Asian heritage, predominantly Bangladeshi, Pakistani and Indian, with some Black and other minority ethnic groups also resident in the community, and a small population of White British or White European families. There is little social housing in the reach area; many families live in overcrowded, privately-rented flats. There is a high birth rate and there is significant population mobility. The proportion of children subject to Interagency Child Protection Plans for more than two years is twice the national

average. At 3.6% the proportion of children under five living in a household that receive the Job Seekers' Allowance is above the local average. Newham has one of the highest rates of child poverty in London and is one of the top ten most deprived boroughs nationally. Children's skills, knowledge and abilities on entry to early years provision across the reach area are below those expected for their age.

Inspection judgements

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

Overall effectiveness

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

2

Capacity for sustained improvement

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

2

Main findings

Sheringham is a good children's centre that meets the needs of local families well. The staff are very committed to promoting the good well-being of families, and the support and guidance they provide are much appreciated by users of the centre and have a positive impact on improving their lives. One parent captured the sentiments of many when she remarked, 'I feel really valued here because the staff go out of their way to do what they can to support me.' Levels of trust between centre staff and families are high; as a result, parents are confident in talking about most issues that worry them. The wide range of provision is of good quality and, as a consequence, outcomes are good overall.

Over the past three years there has been a steep rise in the volume and depth of the centre's engagement with families in the reach area. The large majority of families now benefit from the centre's good services and many of these belong to ethnic groups that the centre is targeting specifically based on its needs analysis, for example Pakistani, Bangladeshi and Somali families. Most families speak English as an additional language and many of these are at the early stages of English language acquisition. Through home-based programmes, such as Bookstart, and the regular social activities organised at the centre, such as Tea and Talk, both children and adults are given good opportunities to develop their language and communication skills. As a consequence, more families have been able to access other targeted programmes offered by the centre with confidence.

There has been some success in promoting the learning and development of parents, so that they can obtain necessary skills and qualifications to access further training and opportunities for employment. However, the centre is not yet fully successful in

addressing all of their needs and the numbers participating in courses have been relatively small. Although self-evaluation is sound and leaders have a good understanding of the strengths and weaknesses, the centre does not evaluate this aspect of its work with sufficient rigour.

There are many effective opportunities for parents and their children to play and learn together successfully, for example through the Parents as Partners in Early Learning (PPEL) programme. Effective partnerships have been established with a wide range of agencies and organisations and these make a strong contribution to identifying the needs of target groups, for example children with special educational needs who in consequence receive extra support with developing their speech and language skills.

The centre benefits from the committed leadership of the headteacher and children's centre coordinator. There is a clear vision for the centre's further development that is widely shared by staff and partner agencies. However, development planning lacks clear, measurable targets against which the performance of the centre can be evaluated more sharply. The draft action plan which will be implemented in September is not yet sufficiently developed in these areas. The local authority provides good strategic data on a regular basis which are being used by the centre to focus more closely on targeted groups, such as Pakistani families, fathers and teenage mothers. The centre has an impressive track record of bringing about substantive improvements across most areas of its work, demonstrating good capacity for further sustained improvement.

What does the centre need to do to improve further?

Recommendations for further improvement

- Ensure that action planning involves the setting of clear, measurable targets in all areas so that the performance of the centre can be evaluated more sharply, for example in increasing the participation of White British and White European families in the reach area.
- Extend parents' opportunities to participate in further training to enhance their employability skills and track their progression into further education, volunteering or employment.

How good are outcomes for families?

2

Families benefit from a good range of activities to promote a healthy lifestyle. For example, the Cook and Eat sessions have targeted families effectively and improved their practical understanding of how to prepare low cost nutritious meals. Support for breastfeeding is particularly good and, as a result, the proportion of mothers breastfeeding in the reach area is above the local average. Although the level of obesity among children of Reception age is slightly above average, it has decreased

significantly over the last three years. The centre’s promotion of a healthy diet and a more active lifestyle, for example through the daily, well-attended Stay and Play sessions and regular health checks, has made a good contribution to this improvement.

Families are confident in seeking help, which is often provided on an individual basis. The centre uses Every Child Matters (ECM) in place of the Common Assessment Framework to assess specific needs. The regular ECM meetings are used well to establish levels of need and the centre works closely with a range of agencies to ensure appropriate provision is made. Currently there are no children on the child protection register. The most vulnerable families, including those where children are on the Children in Need register, are well supported by the centre through home visits and one-to-one help, as well as through partnerships with other agencies. Incidents of possible harm are quickly picked up and managed effectively with the active involvement of parents to secure children’s safety and well-being.

Children’s achievement in the linked nursery provision is good, and those children who have had sustained engagement with the centre achieve significantly better than those who have had no contact. Many parents have completed a range of positive parenting courses. As a result, parents’ confidence in their parenting skills has improved, particularly their understanding of how children learn and develop and of appropriate activities to support this. The centre has very good links with its network of 11 childminders who provide 23 childcare places. The centre supports them in sharing ideas about young children’s development and approaches that build their childminding skills.

There is good representation from all target groups of parents on the governing body and the children centre’s sub-committee (advisory board). Formal evaluations of all programmes and activities give parents a clear voice in shaping the centre’s strategic direction. The centre hosts a new parent-led support group for families who have a child on the autistic spectrum. This group is enabling these parents to make contact with each other and offer mutual support.

Families are offered support to improve their economic position when needed, for example advice on benefits and tax credits. The employment adviser has run workshops to improve the skills of parents in writing good curriculum vitae. When parents embark on courses such as English for speakers of other languages (ESOL) and information and communication technology (ICT), their progression to further education, volunteering or employment is not systematically tracked and, as such, the centre has no way of knowing how effective its interventions have been.

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	2

concerns are identified and appropriate steps taken to address them	
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 knows its families well and makes good provision for them, including those in most need of support. Health staff, such as health visitors and midwives, are frequently in the centre which supports very good partnership working. Centre staff also work very closely with other partner agencies, for example the local authority early intervention team, children's social care and the network of childminders in the reach area. As a result of knowledge gleaned from home visits, from working with families in particular events and activities, and from the improving data supplied by the local authority, the centre develops a good understanding of the needs of target groups. These needs are increasingly being met through targeted events as well as through universal provision. For example, expectant fathers in the community have clearly benefited from attending the monthly DADI (Dads Are Doing It) antenatal classes, with a focus on how to support their partner during labour and when breastfeeding.

The centre is particularly good at helping parents understand how their children learn and in ensuring that activities provide opportunities for children to develop their skills across a wide range of areas of learning. The well-landscaped multi-sensory outdoor area promotes children's learning and development effectively. Care and support are real strengths for disabled children and those with special educational needs. For example, the sensory room ensures that these children are stimulated and specialist equipment enables their full participation. The toy library is a hive of activity with a good range of stimulating resources for parents and children to borrow. Many Pakistani families are engaging with the centre and women from this targeted group are gaining in self-confidence. Although an increasing number of targeted families are accessing the good services provided, the centre is not yet reaching enough parents in the small minority of White British and White European families in its reach area.

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

The centre runs efficiently on a day-to-day basis and management is effective. The centre staff are skilled and well motivated, keen to develop the centre further to meet the needs of families in the reach area. For example, centre leaders have responded well in planning services that meet the needs of the increasing Somali and Pakistani families in Newham. The provision of good universal and targeted services has ensured deeper levels of engagement with these important target groups. As a result, parents are more confident and children are better prepared for the next stage of their learning and development.

Lines of accountability are clear and well understood. The advisory board has been an important source of support for the centre and has helped set a clear strategic direction. The action plan for the centre's further development builds appropriately on what has been achieved already. However, as a tool for evaluation by the centre's leadership, including the advisory board, it is a blunt instrument because of the absence of measurable outcomes.

Safeguarding arrangements are good, with all necessary policies and procedures in place. Staff work very well with other agencies to protect children's welfare and levels of care are highly effective. Concerted effort ensures that early intervention successfully responds to the needs of the most vulnerable families. All activities, as well as the buildings and the outdoor areas, are carefully assessed for any possible health and safety risks to families and staff. The centre places a high priority on including all families in activities, demonstrating a strong commitment to promoting equality and celebrating diversity. Staff routinely provide additional support for targeted families, for example picking them up from home and accompanying them to the centre so they can engage with the work of the centre. This includes families with children with special educational needs who receive good assistance in gaining any extra support needed, for example the provision of specialist equipment and resources.

Strong partnership work has resulted in improving the health and well-being outcomes for the large majority of families, particularly those who are most vulnerable and targeted for additional support. This, coupled with the effective deployment of the centre's frontline staff, ensures that the centre provides good

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	2
The effectiveness of evaluation and its use in setting ambitious targets which secure improvement in outcomes	3
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

The linked nursery school has registered early years provision for 180 children and works in close partnership with the centre under one governing body and one leader. Information from its most recent inspection (February 2011) has been taken into account when writing about early years provision and outcomes for children in the report.

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Summary for centre users

We inspected the Sheringham Centre on 4 and 5 July 2012. We judged the centre as good overall.

Thank you for your help and contribution to the inspection. Those of you we spoke to told us how grateful you are for the support you receive from the centre and the difference it makes to your lives. We read your comments in the many evaluations about the courses you have attended and services that you use. We agree that Sheringham provides you with good-quality care, guidance and support because the needs of each individual child and family are given high priority. For example, the very competent and caring centre staff assess needs swiftly and put together a tailored package of support for every referral made. This early intervention approach has resulted in significantly improved outcomes in, for example, children's and parents' physical and mental health.

Family support and outreach work and the centre's links with many other agencies are giving you the skills and confidence to overcome difficulties you are experiencing. The centre signposts you towards health improvement courses, such as Cook and Eat, and provides parenting skills courses, such as Triple P, both of which you enjoy and gain much benefit from. Although English for speakers of other languages (ESOL) courses continue to be delivered and information and communication technology (ICT) training was provided at the centre last year, the centre does not provide sufficient training programmes to help enough parents gain the skills they need for future employment. In contrast, the centre provides a good range of activities that effectively promote the learning and development of children. Stay and Play, Sheringham Shakers and activities in the sensory room with specialist equipment and resources are all effective in developing children's good social and communication skills. The network of childminders in the community is particularly well supported by the centre through, for example, the regular provision of information, advice and guidance. In addition, the centre takes great care to ensure that you and your children are safeguarded and that the centre is a safe place to be.

The centre manager and centre coordinator lead and manage the centre well. They listen to your views carefully to ensure that the provision meets your needs and that everyone is fully included in activities. They know what the centre needs to do to improve and are keen to help your representatives on the advisory board (the children's centre subcommittee of the school's governing body) carry out their roles as well as they can. The centre receives good data from the local authority on a regular basis and these help the centre to target its actions and resources more precisely, particularly to the most vulnerable families in the community. However, the centre's action plan does not show clear and measurable targets, making it difficult to evaluate its performance more sharply. We have, therefore, asked the centre to address this by doing further work on its action plan and monitoring the progress

made, especially to try and increase the involvement of families from the White British and White European communities.

Significant improvements have been made over the last few years with the number of families engaging with the centre trebling over that period of time. With such a strong track record the centre has good capacity to improve further.

Thank you to everyone who took the time to come and speak to us, we are very grateful and we wish you every success for the future.

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