

Inspection report for Isles of Scilly Children's Centre

Local authority	Isles of Scilly
Inspection number	407188
Inspection dates	2-3 October 2012
Reporting inspector	Lisa Williams HMI

Centre leader	Joel Williams
Date of previous inspection	Not applicable
Centre address	Carn Thomas, St Marys, Isles of Scilly
Telephone number	01720 423680
Fax number	01720 423163
Email address	jwilliams@scilly.gov.uk

Linked school if applicable	Not applicable
Linked early years and childcare, if applicable	Scilly Holiday Club

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.

Report published: October 2012



Corporate member of
Plain English Campaign
Committed to clearer communication

361

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, work-based learning and skills training, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for looked after children, safeguarding and child protection.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may reuse this information (not including logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence. To view this licence, visit www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/, write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk.

This publication is available at www.ofsted.gov.uk/publications/100080.

To receive regular email alerts about new publications, including survey reports and school inspection reports, please visit our website and go to 'Subscribe'.

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

No.100080

© Crown copyright 2012



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 of Her Majesty's Inspectors and an early years inspector.

The inspectors held meetings with the centre manager, representatives of the local authority and the community, partners, parents and frontline staff. They observed the centre's work and looked at a range of relevant documentation.

Information about the centre

The Isles of Scilly Centre was designated as a phase two centre in March 2010. It is run by the local authority and is the only one serving the island community. It offers a range of services, including family play sessions, parenting support and health and outreach services. Sessional day care is provided during the main school holidays. The services are provided in the main centre on the largest island, St Mary's, and in community bases on Bryher, St Agnes, St Martin's, and Tresco, which are known locally as the 'off islands'. Early Years Foundation Stage provision is available on two of the islands.

The islands are an area of outstanding natural beauty and lie 28 miles off the south west coast. The population of 2100 is almost entirely White British, with 95 children under five years of age. The proportion of retired people is above the national average and approximately 85% of working adults are in employment in the tourist industry. The proportion of children living in workless households is very low. Unemployment is also low; however, average weekly wages are persistently well below the national and regional averages. Living costs, including transport to, from and between the islands, are high and rising. There is a severe shortage of affordable housing. Children enter the Early Years Foundation Stage with skills typically 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

The overall effectiveness of the centre is good. Outcomes for children and families are good and children are well prepared for their next steps. Parents gain a good understanding of their child's behaviour and development and benefit greatly from activities which reduce the risk of social isolation. Targeted support for children with disabilities and additional needs and for families whose circumstances may make them vulnerable is good overall, and some is excellent. Parents have a say in decision making and help to evaluate the services they receive. Support for improving the economic well-being of families through training, seeking work and benefits advice has not been given a sufficiently high priority by the centre and its partners until very recently.

Provision is good. Programmes and activities are matched well to the needs and interests of children and parents, including those on the 'off islands'. The centre has an accurate understanding of the local community and regularly reviews and adapts provision. Children's emotional well-being, safety, learning and development are promoted effectively. The centre's focus on, and recognition of, parents' learning and achievements are not as well developed. Care, guidance and support are good.

Leadership and management are good. The centre, together with the local authority, has a strong vision, high ambitions and clear priorities for developing services. Insufficient use is made of robust data to underpin current systems for planning, monitoring and evaluation of the centre's work. Governance arrangements provide effective oversight and support for continuous improvement. Leaders and managers know the strengths and weaknesses of the centre well and the self-evaluation is accurate, honest and comprehensive. The centre has a successful track record of being creative in brokering additional support, training and expertise from the mainland, when needed, to enhance and strengthen practice. The centre's capacity to make further improvements is good.

What does the centre need to do to improve further?

Recommendations for further improvement

- Develop and implement a comprehensive strategy and an action plan that ensure effective collaboration and clear lines of accountability between partners for improving the economic well-being of families.
- Improve the collection, analysis and use of data to underpin current systems for planning, monitoring and evaluating the impact of the centre's work.

How good are outcomes for families?

2

Parents and carers are positive about their experiences and full of praise for the centre staff. Surveys and other evaluations show consistently high levels of satisfaction with the range and quality of services provided. Few children on the Isles of Scilly are obese and, while breast feeding rates fluctuate, they remain high. Regular sessions, such as ABC, support children, parents and mothers-to-be to develop their health and well-being effectively. However, the vacancy in the health support worker post and the absence of an island-based health visitor means that some important health-related work is currently on hold.

The centre provides a safe and secure environment for children and parents and carers. As one grandparent said, 'This is a place for the whole family'. Parents are supported well in keeping their children safe whilst enjoying the freedoms and outdoor opportunities which characterise island life. As a result of strong and effective safeguarding and preventative work, there are no children subject to child protection plans and no children under the age of five who need support as part of a common assessment framework. Outcomes for children with disabilities and additional needs are good and improving, because bespoke support, such as Portage and speech and language therapy, is put in place early.

Children enjoy attending sessions and gain confidence taking part in new and stimulating activities. For children from the 'off islands' in particular, this is a vital opportunity to socialise within a wider peer group. Parents gain good insight into their children's behaviour and development whilst enjoying time to socialise. Children make good progress and are well prepared for school. The proportion of children who achieve the expected level of development by the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage is above the national average. The gap between the lowest achieving 20% and the median for the cohort has narrowed substantially over the last three years.

The centre is a focal point in the community. Relationships between staff and centre users are good. New arrivals to the islands are contacted quickly, encouraged to attend and given a warm welcome. Parents participate well in the children's centre sessions and are confident in expressing their views. Families are encouraged to be active in the local community, for example in sports and recreation clubs. Many

parents have a good understanding of sustainability issues which underpin the daily experience of life on the islands.

National indicators of child poverty belie the economic reality of families living on low wages and part-time seasonal employment. The Scilly Works initiative, led by the children's centre manager, is aiming to improve economic well-being outcomes, but is at a very early planning stage. The centre enables almost all parents of two-year-olds to access their entitlement to free childcare and provides additional practical and financial support for families on the 'off islands' where this necessitates travel to St Mary's. Support and advice on training and returning to work are available on the islands, but the specific needs of parents have not been given a high priority by the centre and its partners until recently. Jobcentre Plus provides a limited service, including a free telephone line, but very little use has been made of this.

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	3
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

Provision is good because it meets the needs of children and parents. The centre knows the community well by drawing on its in-depth knowledge of individual children and families, as well as the detailed needs assessment undertaken by the local authority. Provision, including outreach work, is well targeted and adapted swiftly as needs and demand change, for example in response to seasonal employment and weather conditions which impact on travel. The centre maintains contact with almost all families and those who attend sessions regularly access high quality activities and services. Additional support is targeted effectively. The use of the centre and services by individual children and families is well known to staff, but is not always well documented or analysed to inform planning.

Sessions support children's learning and development effectively and are well planned, lively and usually well attended. Progress, achievements and 'wow

moments' are recorded and celebrated in children's learning diaries, which are also used in childminding and day-care settings. Diaries provide valuable information for parents and support transition to school where they are developed further. The centre's focus on, and recognition of, parents' learning and achievements are not as well developed.

Care, guidance and support for parents are good. Some of the targeted support to individual parents and families in crisis or at risk of social isolation is excellent. Families are confident in seeking support and advice. The commitment and 'family focus' demonstrated by staff are identified by parents and partners as a key features of the centre. Parents are referred appropriately and sensitively to specialist help, for example for post-natal depression or substance misuse, and staff recognise the need for strict confidentiality and discretion within the close island community.

Information, advice and guidance on benefits, managing finances and seeking work are limited and not well publicised. The centre has identified the need to improve the content and accessibility of its website.

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

Governance arrangements are clear and effective. The combined roles and responsibilities of the local authority's Children and Young People's Committee and the Children's Centre and Extended Services Strategy Group ensure good support, regular oversight and appropriate challenge which hold the centre to account. The centre's development plan sets out clear and agreed priorities. However, performance targets and measures are not consistently well defined. Data, including those from partners, are not used systematically to underpin the good use made of qualitative information to evaluate impact.

Day-to-day management of the centre is good. Team work is highly effective, with a small staff group responsible for a broader range of provision across early years, extended services and youth work than is found typically on the mainland. This breadth contributes to the seamless and coherent service that families receive, but can also lead to capacity pressures, particularly when the holiday club operates. Staff are well qualified and have good access to training and development opportunities.

Creative and effective use of external funding has extended and enhanced services and facilities. Advice and expertise from the mainland are used well to support improvement. Budgets are overseen routinely. Accommodation and resources are of high quality and well used. The centre provides good value for money.

Equality and diversity are promoted well. The commitment to inclusion underpins the centre's work and the approach of staff. The needs of families on the 'off islands' are systematically taken into account in service planning and development. Policies and procedures for safeguarding children, and safe recruitment practices which include Criminal Record Bureau and other checks are well established and effective. Joint work between the children's centre and the co-located social care team ensures that children who may be vulnerable receive bespoke and timely support. Wider partnership working, for example with health professionals, the school and the police, is good. The children's centre manager is leading partnership discussions to raise awareness of domestic abuse. Collaboration between the centre and local childcare providers ensures that parents continue to access good quality provision; however, places are in high demand.

Centre users have regular opportunities to provide feedback on services and most do so. Parents contribute to formal governance arrangements through the committee and the steering group. However, a few parents who met inspectors were not aware of how they could influence decision making. Consultations and case studies show high levels of satisfaction with the services provided. An active parents' and carers' group plays a key role in shaping provision for children with disabilities and additional needs.

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

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance *Complaining about inspections*, which is available from our website: www.ofsted.gov.uk. If you would like us to send you a copy of the guidance, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

Summary for centre users

We inspected the Isles of Scilly Children's Centre on 2 and 3 October 2012. We judged the centre to be good overall.

We very much enjoyed our visit and thank you for the time you gave to sharing your experiences of the centre. Parents' views helped to inform the conclusions we have come to about how well the centre is doing and what it needs to do to improve further.

We found that the children's centre on St Mary's and the bases on the off islands are an important focal point in the community. Everyone is welcomed and treated with respect. Relationships between staff and children and parents are good.

The centre provides a range of high quality programmes, activities and services. Particularly good support is there when people need it most or when children have disabilities and additional needs and require extra help. Play and other sessions are popular, well planned, lively and fun. They promote children's learning and development well. Learning diaries are used as a good way to record the 'wow moments' and are popular amongst parents. The centre's focus on parents' learning and achievements is not as well developed as it is for children.

The centre is led and managed effectively and the staff team works well together to deliver a good service. Close attention is paid to safeguarding all children and to promoting equality and inclusion. A number of partner agencies, such as social care, the school, police and health, work well alongside the children's centre team. There is good collaboration between the centre and local childcare providers so that parents continue to have access to high quality childcare, including the free places for two-year-olds, which are valued. Parents also told us that childcare places are in high demand at the moment.

The centre uses its resources well, for example funding travel by boat from the off islands which would otherwise be a major barrier for some families. It continually

seeks to achieve good value for money by making sure buildings and equipment are in good condition and well used.

Parents have opportunities to feed back to the centre, informally and formally, how they feel about the services and what could be improved. Very many of the comments and views are positive. A few parents are involved in committees and steering groups, but not everyone is aware of how they can influence decision making.

The centre does many things well, but we have made two recommendations to help the centre make further improvements. Firstly, we have asked the centre to work more closely with other agencies to ensure that advice on benefits and support for people to train and get into work or change jobs are readily available for everyone who needs them. This is very important in the current economic climate. Secondly, we have asked the centre to improve the way that it monitors and evaluates the work it does so everyone can be sure that it continues to make a difference for children and families on the Isles of Scilly.

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