

Inspection report for Sunnydays Children's Centre

Local authority	Southend-On-Sea
Inspection number	384124
Inspection dates	27–28 September 2012
Reporting inspector	Priscilla McGuire

Centre leader	Sarah Mitten
Date of previous inspection	Not applicable
Centre address	Eastwood Primary School Rayleigh Road Leigh on Sea SS9 5UT
Telephone number	01702 520979
Fax number	01702 520947
Email address	smitten@eastwoodprimary.southend.sch.uk

Linked school if applicable	Eastwood Primary 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.

Report published: October 2012



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 2011



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 centre staff, senior leaders and managers from the local authority and the co-located school, representatives of the steering group and from partner organisations. They also met parents. They observed the centre's work, and looked at a range of relevant documentation.

Information about the centre

Sunnydays Children's Centre is a phase two centre in Essex. The centre was set up in 2008 and shares its site with Eastwood Primary School and Nursery. The centre meets its core purpose. Services offered either directly at the centre or via referral arrangements with other centres include health services, employment support, early years learning and adult learning and training. The governing body of Eastwood Primary and Nursery School has lead responsibility for the centre and the steering group acts as an advisory board.

The area served by the centre is one of relative affluence with pockets of deprivation. Most families live in privately owned accommodation although some live in local authority owned housing. Unemployment rates are low in the area. Around 8.3% of children aged 0–4 live in households that are dependent on workless benefits. The most recent data show that take-up of formal childcare by low-income families in Southend is around 17.1%. The majority of families in the area are of White British heritage. On entry to early years provision, children's skills, knowledge and abilities are in line with 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

Sunnydays Children's Centre is a good centre. It is warm and very welcoming and has some outstanding features. 'The centre makes children feel special and families always welcome,' was the comment from one parent which reflects the high value families place on the centre.

Services are well planned to reflect local needs and priorities. The centre works collaboratively with other centres and also with a range of partners to plan and review provision. Staff also use good-quality data and detailed evaluations of outcomes to monitor the centre's overall impact. However, the centre cannot yet systematically obtain and use health data that are specific to the reach area. This limits its ability to fully demonstrate, with reference to data, the local impact of health provision.

Overall outcomes for families are good. Health is well promoted and parents give good examples of how the centre has enabled them to improve their families' health. The educational achievement and development of parents and children are also good. Families thoroughly enjoy attending the centre and it makes a positive difference to their lives. 'I would not be as good a parent as I am without Sunnydays,' said one parent. This view was typical of others and illustrates well the positive impact of the centre's parenting programmes.

Through their representation on the steering group, parents make an excellent contribution to decision making. They volunteer their skills and talents in a variety of other ways to promote enjoyment and achievement for families and the wider community. Parents also act as strong ambassadors for the centre. They are regularly consulted by centre staff about improvements, and their views are highly valued. Through consultations and participation in the 'Family Forum', children and parents make an excellent contribution to the development of services. User engagement is, therefore, outstanding.

The centre's work with disabled children and their families is exemplary. Staff are sensitive to the needs of disabled children and their families and take a 'whole family'

approach to inclusion. As one parent explained: 'When you notice something different with your child, your world closes in – Sunnydays opens it up again.' Staff use detailed analysis of data to monitor and promote the participation of different key target groups such as fathers and minority ethnic families.

Outreach work is effective but is mainly carried out through partnership arrangements with health professionals and also a local authority based family support worker. This limits the centre's ability to closely monitor the impact of outreach work. However, the centre has recognised this as an area for development and has appointed an outreach worker.

Leadership and management are good and performance management is effective. Evaluation is a thorough process which identifies key strengths and areas for improvement. Detailed qualitative and quantitative evaluations of activities and of impact are carried out to ensure provision is effective. As a result of the good-quality leadership and management and the effective evaluation of provision, the centre's capacity for sustained improvement is good.

What does the centre need to do to improve further?

Recommendations for further improvement

- Pursue a range of strategies to ensure local health data are systematically collected and used to monitor impact
- Strengthen the quality of outreach provision by ensuring closer monitoring and recording of its impact

How good are outcomes for families?

2

Overall outcomes for families are good. The centre successfully promotes the emotional and physical health of families. As a result, parents have developed a good understanding of specific actions they can take to improve their families' health. For example, one parent said: 'Since attending one of the courses at the centre, I know how to read food labels and now look at the fat and sugar content of food.' The centre makes a good contribution to maintaining the low obesity rates in the reach area. Many parents have also improved their mental and emotional health as a result of attending courses such as stress management. Breastfeeding rates at six to eight weeks are low but improving. Parents receive good support to persist with breastfeeding.

Parents and children feel very safe at the centre. Activities such as training sessions from the fire service and parenting courses successfully develop parents' understanding of home safety. Parents have also applied learning from first-aid training courses to keep their families safe during emergencies. The number of children subject to child protection plans is very low in the reach area. Nevertheless, the centre provides good support to the few families who have children subject to

child protection plans. In conjunction with staff from the Early Intervention Service, the centre makes appropriate use of the Common Assessment Framework to identify and respond to safeguarding concerns. This is particularly helpful to those families whose circumstances make them vulnerable.

Children in the reach area achieve well educationally. They also develop good skills for the future such as communication and social skills. Data show that the percentage of children who achieve 78 points across the Early Years Foundation Stage profile has improved significantly since 2009 from 74% to 89% in 2012. Data also show that the achievement gap between the lowest achieving 20% and the rest is narrowing. Children's transition to school is good as a direct result of the centre's work. Observation of activities such as 'Stay and Play' demonstrates how well parents and children enjoy learning together.

Parents also make good progress with their learning. Although unemployment rates in the area are low, programmes such as an accredited numeracy course have helped parents increase their work readiness. Other programmes such as an 'Adult Directions' course help parents to make informed choices about training and education. This links well to their long-term employment and career plans. In addition, parents benefit from employment and training guidance from a Jobcentre Plus adviser based at another children's centre. Tracking of outcomes shows that parents progress well from adult learning and training courses onto volunteering, further education or employment.

Parents make an outstanding contribution to the governance and management of the centre. 'As a parent they make your views feel important,' said one parent whose comments were typical of many others. Parents are very well represented on the centre's steering group and also contribute to decision making through their roles on the 'Family Forum'. Parents are also instrumental in promoting positive outcomes for all families. For example, they have worked with the co-located school to plan provision for parents who want to continue their learning after their children have left the centre. Other parents have demonstrated excellent enterprising behaviour by organising fundraising events at the centre. The behaviour of children is excellent and the centre very effectively helps parents develop skills to improve their children's behaviour.

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	1

positive relationships and parents, including those from target groups, contribute to decision-making and governance of the centre	
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	2

How good is the provision?

2

Centre staff have a good understanding of the needs of families. They make good use of data and local intelligence to assess needs and priorities. This ensures that provision is planned to enable families to achieve positive outcomes. Staff regularly participate in locality meetings such as 'Bright Start' and 'Success for All'. This enables them to keep abreast of local priorities and plan provision accordingly. Data show that participation rates across all key target groups such as lone parents, families with disabled children, fathers and minority ethnic groups are good. Outreach work is undertaken in conjunction with health partners and an externally based family support worker. It is effective in reaching families whose circumstances make them vulnerable. However, this work is mostly carried out by external workers. As a result, monitoring of the impact of this work is not as detailed as other monitoring carried out directly by the centre.

Purposeful learning is promoted well for both children and adults. Activities for children are well planned to ensure explicit links with Early Years Foundation Stage outcomes. The centre also works closely with the co-located school to plan provision for children. This contributes to their good educational achievement. Centre staff work productively with partners to meet the specific needs of key target groups such as disabled children. Provision for adults is equally well planned. The centre works well with a local adult learning provider to plan good-quality programmes such as 'healthy eating on a budget' and 'CV writing'. Initial assessment and individual learning plans are used on adult-learning programmes to ensure learning for parents is purposeful.

Parents feel very well supported by the centre. During times of crisis, they feel confident enough to turn to the centre for help. Personal testimonies from parents confirm that the support offered by the centre makes a positive difference to their lives. As one parent said, 'Without the centre, I wouldn't be here.' As a result of the support and care they receive, parents feel better equipped to cope with challenges and crises. They gain confidence, develop resilience and also the independence to manage problems whenever they arise. Information and guidance for parents are of good quality and parents are signposted as appropriate to external agencies for guidance.

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 quality of leadership and management is good. Governance is also effective. Staff have a good understanding of their roles and responsibilities, and lines of accountability are clear and well understood. Staff are well managed and passionate about doing their very best for families. They use data effectively and carry out detailed evaluations of individual activities to monitor outcomes. However, most health data are provided at borough-wide level, and analysis of trends based on local health data remains a challenge for the centre.

Overall self-evaluation is effective in providing leaders and managers with detailed qualitative and quantitative analyses of the quality of services. This is used in conjunction with effective performance management tools such as the annual conversation to drive improvement. The centre works in close collaboration with other centres to provide and share resources. For example, other centres in Southend signpost families with disabled children to the centre. Likewise, the centre makes effective use of resources by signposting families to other centres for specialist support and guidance when appropriate. Satisfaction rates from families are high and overall outcomes are all at least good, therefore, value for money is good. Centre staff work productively with a range of partners from the voluntary, private and statutory sectors to plan services. Through their representation on the steering group, partners contribute well to the self-evaluation process. As a result, the centre meets its core purpose and services are well integrated not just within the centre but with other centres.

The centre's promotion of inclusion and equality is outstanding. It has 100% engagement with all the disabled children in its reach area. Staff take a whole family approach to their work with disabled children and consider the needs of their siblings and parents when planning activities. They work exceptionally well with portage staff to ensure the needs of disabled children are well met. The centre has also invested well in resources to make sure disabled children can participate in a wide range of indoor and outdoor activities at the centre. Equality impact assessments are used effectively by staff to monitor the impact of the centre's equality work. Strategies to increase the participation of fathers and minority ethnic families have also been successful.

Statutory requirements for safeguarding and safer recruitment are well met. All

necessary recruitment and criminal record checks are carried out on staff, volunteers and workers from external agencies. Safeguarding and safety policies are comprehensive. They are implemented effectively to ensure families, such as, those whose circumstances make them vulnerable, are well safeguarded. Assessments of risk are carried out appropriately and staff are well trained in different aspects of safeguarding. Multi-agency work is productive, and information sharing and referrals are used well to ensure families are safe. Emotional health is promoted actively as is support for families affected by domestic abuse.

Centre staff view parents as partners and plan provision with them, not just for them. As a result, satisfaction rates are very high. Parents and children are regularly consulted about services and make an excellent contribution to the operation of the centre. Questionnaires, surveys and the 'Family Forum' are also used exceptionally well to capture the views of children and adults.

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	2
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	1
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	1

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

None

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 Sunnydays Children's Centre on 27–28 September 2012. We judged the centre as good overall.

Many thanks to those of you who spent time talking to us during the inspection. We feel privileged to have met so many of you during our visit.

We appreciate your honesty in talking to us about how centre staff have helped you to overcome various barriers and also enabled you to move on with your lives. The quality of the support and care offered to families who use the centre is good. Staff work well with other organisations to make sure families receive the best possible care, support and guidance. However, we would like staff to be able to monitor even more closely the support and care that are given to families who for various reasons do not yet attend the centre. This is why we have asked staff to monitor more closely the work that is done with these families.

You told us that you and your children feel safe at the centre. Some of you also gave us examples of how you were able to keep your families safe at home as a result of what you have learnt from first-aid training courses. Many of you have also benefited from the good-quality parenting courses that are organised by staff.

We were pleased to see from our observations and our look at statistics how well your children are doing with their education. Centre staff work hard to plan activities that you and your children can enjoy. We were also pleased to learn that so many of you have benefited from courses offered for parents, such as the stress management course. We know that it has been a constant challenge for staff to get hold of local health statistics but we've asked them to keep trying. We believe that, in the long term, this will improve the quality of the health activities that are organised.

One of the really outstanding strengths of your centre is the work that is done to support families with disabled children. You and staff from external organisations told us about the exceptional work of staff to make sure disabled children and their families are welcomed at the centre. Your centre views equality and inclusion as top priorities. This is evident from the way staff work hard to ensure families from all sorts of backgrounds and circumstances can enjoy activities at the centre.

During our visit, we were able to meet some of you who are involved in the steering group and the 'Family Forum'. We were very impressed with your enthusiasm and commitment to the centre. For example, we heard about your plans to work with the school to provide more adult learning opportunities for parents. We also heard about some of the fundraising activities that some parents have been involved in. Your contribution to the running of your centre is exemplary.

Once again, we want to thank you for your contribution to the inspection and we wish you and your families the very best for the future.

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