
Inspection report for West Wight Children's Centre

Local authority	Isle of Wight
Inspection number	384209
Inspection dates	7–8 November 2012
Reporting inspector	Susan Mann HMI

Centre leader	Laura Villa
Date of previous inspection	Not applicable
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Linked school if applicable	Not applicable
Linked early years and childcare, if applicable	Not applicable

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

The inspectors held meetings with parents, staff and partners. They met with leaders and representatives from the local authority and The Children's Society. They toured the centre's catchment area and visited a local early years setting. They observed the centre's work, and looked at a range of relevant documentation.

Information about the centre

West Wight Children's Centre was designated in 2005 as a phase one centre. The centre changed its location and has operated from its current premises since 2009. Early years provision is delivered by a range of settings located within the centre's catchment area. The Children's Society took over management of the centre on behalf of the local authority in April 2011. There has been a reorganisation of the staffing structure and several changes in staff during 2012, including the position of centre manager, who has been in post since April 2012. The role of the advisory board is performed by the Core Monitoring Group.

The area served by the centre is largely rural. There is a very wide range of economic prosperity within the centre's catchment, with some homes in areas of great affluence and others in areas defined as being in the 30% most deprived areas in the country. The overwhelming majority of families come from White British heritage. Just over one quarter (26.19%) of all households with children aged under five years who live within the centre's reach are dependent on workless benefits, which is above local and national averages. Children's levels of learning and development vary widely but are typically average overall when children enter early years provision.

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

West Wight Children's Centre provides a good range of services that meets the needs of local families well. The relatively new staff team has established itself within the community: parents and carers trust their expertise and value their support. One parent shared a commonly-held view that, 'It is good that we have places like this for people like me that may need a bit of help.' The local authority and The Children's Society provide challenging leadership that drives improvement well. Accurate strategic evaluation supports strong development planning: leaders have developed procedures and delivery of services quickly in recent months. For example, there has been a successful increase in the proportion of targeted services and this has resulted in improved engagement of vulnerable families. Strong partnership working is the foundation of the good provision. Families benefit from high quality groups and support. As a result, outcomes for all families who use the centre, but especially those most in need, are good.

A particular strength is the exceptional focus given to keeping children and their families safe. Outstanding safeguarding procedures ensure child protection is very well managed and highly effective. The centre is held in very high regard by key partners, such as health and social care, because staff are proactive and tenacious in seeking action and ensure it is followed through. A consequence of exemplary safeguarding practice is that outcomes for staying safe are also outstanding.

Systems used to measure the direct impact of services are appropriate, and the progress made by families is clearly seen. This evaluation stems from very detailed case study evidence and the use of good quality data. The centre is developing further systems to provide more sophisticated and widespread measurement of outcomes to inform the planning of services further, although these are not yet implemented. Key partners, such as health visitor services and social care, are involved with this evaluation, but not every partner organisation is as fully involved in these processes.

In the recent past, there has been parent representation on the Core Monitoring Group advisory board, although there is none at present. Nevertheless, parents effectively influence provision through a number of other avenues. They give their views through session evaluations and discussions with staff. Staff proactively seek users' views, such as the recent telephone survey completed on the 'buggy walk' sessions, which resulted in a change of both time and format to suit families better. There are plans in place to develop a parents' forum from the volunteers' group, although this has not yet happened. Leaders have an accurate view of improvements that need to be made in order to enhance services further, and both recommendations are already identified by the centre in their own evaluations and development planning. These features demonstrate the centre's good capacity to continue to improve.

What does the centre need to do to improve further?

Recommendations for further improvement

- Develop effective systems to measure the outcomes of services so the impact of provision is clearly demonstrated and used to evaluate the success of the centre's work with families.
- Enhance opportunities for parents and carers to become more involved in governance so they consistently and routinely influence decision making and service provision.

How good are outcomes for families?

2

The overall well-being of children and their families significantly improves as a consequence of their involvement with centre services. Partnership working with health agencies is good. Partnership with the local health visitor is excellent, and this enhances healthy and safeguarding outcomes considerably because of collaborative working and superb communication. The health visitor runs weekly clinics from the centre to offer advice and baby weighing, and these are well attended. Data indicate that health outcomes for the area are generally good. For example, rates of sustained breastfeeding (at six to eight weeks) are better than the local authority and national averages and the proportion of obese children of Reception age halved from 2010 to 2011, from 10% to 5%.

Children and adults keep themselves very safe as a result of their engagement with the centre. All parents and carers develop an excellent understanding of safety in the home through attending first-aid sessions, and understanding the need for centre policies on the use of mobile telephones or hot drinks within the centre, for example. Victims of domestic abuse receive discreet and high quality emotional support and rapid practical help to protect them and improve their circumstances. Children at risk of harm or neglect are exceptionally well protected because staff are extremely knowledgeable about risk, and are dedicated to accessing expert services and support for families. The centre places children's well-being at the centre of all its practice, and this drives frequent evaluation of case by case progress so the very

best outcomes are achieved. Children subject to a child protection plan and looked after children make outstanding progress as a result of bespoke care. This includes individual sessions at home and attendance at parenting sessions that successfully promote positive strategies. One parent summarised her learning from this course, 'It is important that we meet our child's needs before anything else.' Contact visits maximise the opportunities for safe and valuable parent-child interaction, for example baby massage is delivered for very young children in these circumstances. Excellent use is made of the Common Assessment Framework to protect vulnerable children. Very good partnership working with social care services and honest dialogue with parents underpin the centre's work, and parents report they 'never feel judged' by staff.

Children and adults make good progress in their learning. Levels of enjoyment are high for adults and children alike. The recent (2012) user satisfaction survey reported the overwhelming majority of adults enjoy using the centre. Children in receipt of two-year-old funding do well in their development because settings make good use of the Early Years Foundation Stage to plan and assess each child's learning. Adults develop parenting skills well. Stay and play sessions focus on modelling how children learn through play, and parents report they learn a great deal from these sessions and take the ideas home with them. Parents and carers have developed their English and numeracy skills in the recent past, although the relevant partner agency does not have the capacity to deliver these courses at present.

Many families living in the local area face challenging financial circumstances; the majority improve their economic well-being through the use of services. Jobcentre Plus provides weekly appointments and advice which lead to many lone parents gaining work or essential benefits advice. Proactive advice about future welfare reforms is helping some parents to plan ahead and make amendments to their housing provision, for example.

The centre has a friendly and happy atmosphere. Sessions that are not targeted, such as stay and play, have attendance that represents the centre's local community well. The centre's central location and established partnership working facilitate good community links which help spread word of the centre's work further. Parents give their opinions on services through written evaluation forms, discussion with staff, notice board displays and the suggestion box. Children also give their views, using smiley face stickers for example. Staff adapt services according to the feedback received. The volunteer programme is very well organised by The Children's Society, and ensures thorough recruitment and supervision. There are currently five active volunteers at the centre, and they perform a valuable and enjoyable role within the centre. However, at present there is no parent participation on the Core Monitoring Group to contribute to formal governance.

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	1
The extent to which all children and parents, including those from target groups, enjoy and achieve educationally and in their personal and social development	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	2

How good is the provision?

2

Staff make good use of their links with local health services to contact new parents and those who have moved into the area. The number of registrations has increased rapidly over the past three years, and now 71% of eligible families use the centre. Families' needs are assessed well using links with partners such as health services and social care, and through competent use of good quality data. Using this data, the centre can demonstrate that all their target groups enjoy engagement. The large majority of families with ethnic minority heritage use the centre, for example, as well as almost all families who have a child with special educational needs or a disability. Those living in areas defined as economically deprived have the most frequent and sustained attendance. Priority is given to delivering services to those most in need, and this accounts for 70% of all provision. Much of this is delivered through sensitive and enabling outreach work, which leads to improved outcomes for both parents and their children. The care provided for families is good, and sometimes it is excellent. Families facing difficult times come to the centre for help because they trust staff. They receive prompt and kind support as well as practical assistance, such as food bank vouchers and housing. Staff are adept at involving a wide range of external agencies to meet the individual need.

Provision to help children and adults learn and develop is of good quality. Staff plan activities and services around individual need so they result in positive steps forward in their personal and educational development. As a result of the relevance and enjoyable nature of groups, both universal and targeted services are popular and well attended. Many parents are proud of what they achieve at the centre because staff build their self-esteem well through focusing on how outcomes have improved for their children. They remind them of their positive achievements and celebrate them together.

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

All strands of leadership work collaboratively to provide strong governance that is focused on improving services for those families most in need. The Core Monitoring Group lacks formal parent representation at present but otherwise it fulfils its role very well. It actively involves a broad range of partners and regular, challenging debate over data and centre initiatives promotes delivery and development of effective and improving services. The local authority has a good understanding of the strengths of the centre, and sets relevant targets that are routinely met. The Children's Society implements rigorous procedures that are focused on improving circumstances for children. These provide a robust framework for day-to-day management. Performance management, for example, ensures adults working with families are very able and supported well in their training and development needs to progress centre provision further. The centre manager has established an able and enthusiastic staff team quickly, and has addressed key priorities to produce rapid growth in the number of registrations and quality of services. As a result, the centre provides good value for money.

Evaluation is accurate and detailed. Leaders implement systems after testing them to gauge effectiveness. Systems for measuring the difference that services make have been identified, but are not yet being used. A wide range of partners work collaboratively with centre staff to enhance the range of provision and contribute to improved family outcomes. Relationships with all key partners, including health and social care services, are central to all aspects of the centre's operation.

Staff are very aware of the social and economic diversity that lies within its catchment and they promote equality and diversity well. They have been successful in evaluating attendance patterns and making consequent alterations to some groups so they are accessible to everyone. For example, the families who attend groups like Bumps and Babes and stay and play sessions are representative of the local community. Several fathers attend sessions and courses, and say they feel comfortable doing so. Families who have disabilities or difficulties as a result of alcohol or drug misuse receive good provision that is tailored well to their needs and keeps children safe. The centre makes good use of data to determine how different groups of users attend. However, evaluation systems are not yet sufficiently detailed to show the full impact of services on outcomes.

Safeguarding procedures are outstanding. All adults working with children and vulnerable adults are properly checked to ensure they are trustworthy. Staff are well trained and highly aware of their responsibilities with regards to child protection. Case files record detailed chronologies of action taken, and these demonstrate excellent pursuit of contact or action which is always rigorously followed up. Records and referral procedures are subject to an exhaustive audit process by The Children's Society to check that all necessary action is taken to keep children extremely safe and exceptionally well protected.

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	2
The effectiveness of the centre's policy, procedures and work with key agencies in safeguarding children and, where applicable, vulnerable adults	1
The extent to which partnerships with other agencies ensure the integrated delivery of the range of services provided by the centre to meet its core purpose	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 Wight Children's Centre on 7 and 8 November 2012. We judged the centre as good overall.

We would like to outline some particular strengths of West Wight Children's Centre that we found when we visited.

West Wight is a welcoming centre, and those of you who use it feel very strongly that it does its job well. We agree. The centre is well led and makes a noticeable and positive difference to families' lives. The local authority and The Children's Society work alongside the advisory board and centre manager to provide a good range of services, especially for those of you in need of extra help and support. The parenting group, for example, is leading to significant improvements for those who attend. An example of this is the way it helps parents to understand more about their children's behaviour and how to manage difficult situations successfully and calmly. A range of partner agencies, such as the health visitor and Jobcentre Plus, run sessions from the centre, and these are well attended and appreciated.

A particular strength of the centre is how well children are protected, and how well you and your families stay safe as a result of centre services. We judged both safeguarding and the outcome of staying safe to be outstanding, which means that these aspects are second to none.

We know that many of you enjoy your time spent at the centre, and we saw how much fun you and your children have at the stay and play group. You told us how approachable staff are and that you often give your opinions to help make services even better. Some of you are volunteers and many of you have contributed to recent staff recruitment procedures.

We have asked the centre to consider ways to improve two aspects of their work. The staff have already identified both issues as points for development and so are already working on them. Firstly, we would like some of you to have more involvement in how the centre is managed and run, to sit on the Core Monitoring Group or give views through some kind of forum. We have asked the centre manager to do this in the future. The second area concerns how staff measure the difference services are making to you and your families. They already do this to some extent, but we would like them to do even more so they have a very clear view of what works best.

Thank you for welcoming us to your children's centre when we visited recently. We greatly enjoyed meeting some of you and seeing some of the services provided by the centre.

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