

Inspection report for Sunshine Children's Centre

Local authority	Warrington
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Date of previous inspection	Not applicable
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Linked school if applicable	Beamont Community Primary School URN135161
Linked early years and childcare, if applicable	Kids Planet – Beamont EY397450

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 one early years inspector.

The inspectors held meetings with staff and senior leaders, parents and members of the advisory board. They met with a range of partners, observed the centre's work, and looked at a range of relevant documentation.

Information about the centre

Sunshine Children's Centre is a phase two centre which was designated in 2008, although it only became fully operational in June 2009. The centre is located in a refurbished building on the same site as Beamont Community Primary School and Kids Planet - Beamont. The linked provisions are subject to separate inspection arrangements. The school was last inspected in July 2012 and the childcare was last inspected in February 2010. Beamont Wasps Link Club, URN 315285 also operate a breakfast and after school service on the campus. The reports of these inspections are available on our website: www.ofsted.gov.uk. Within the centre reach area there are a further four primary schools all offering maintained nursery provision.

The centre serves the Fairfield and Howley communities and is located close to Warrington town centre with easy access to public transport and shopping outlets. The centre provides the full core purpose and a range of supporting services including health support, adult courses and educational workshops. A range of services are delivered directly from the centre, however, some services are delivered off-site and in association with other organisations.

Families living in the reach area come mainly from a White British heritage background with 87.7% of families in this group. The next largest group are of White Eastern European heritage at 3.9%.

The percentage of families with young children identified as living in poverty is 26.8%. The proportion of children attending school in the area known to be eligible for free school meals is above the national average. There are 108 lone parents registered at the centre in receipt of benefits. Currently 9.5% of families benefit from the childcare element of working tax credit. The area has a mixture of housing although the majority are rented properties. The majority of wards that make up the reach area are within the 30% most deprived in the country.

Currently, 1479 children under the age of five years live in the centre's reach area and of these 1163 are registered with the centre. Children enter early years provision with lower abilities than those expected for their age.

Warrington Local Authority is responsible for governance of the centre. The centre has an advisory board made up of representatives from the local community, parents and professional agencies.

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

Sunshine Children's Centre is a good centre. The manager, senior leaders and staff are passionate about improving life chances for families within the reach area which results in good outcomes for users. There is a clear vision of the centre's priorities for development and extremely accurate self-evaluation with good accountability and governance arrangements in place. The centre's success demonstrates good capacity for sustained improvement.

The care, guidance and support available for families, especially when they most need it, are good. The ready availability of inter-agency working ensures all family needs are met well. A range of robust strategies ensures that the health and well-being of all families improve. However, although sustained breastfeeding rates are improving year-on-year they are still below the national average and further work is required with health partners to increase rates, especially at the antenatal phase of pregnancy.

Good provision meets the needs of the large majority of families well, including those with circumstances that make them most vulnerable. Engagement with target groups has increased year-on-year as a result of effective targeted activity by the centre.

Staff at the centre strive to improve the education of children and parents through a variety of activities. As a result, the centre has successfully reduced the gap between the lowest achieving 20% in the Early Years Foundation Stage Profile and the rest. However, the centre recognises that more work is required to improve the range of physical and learning development provided for children, by building on existing good partnerships, that will better prepare them for their transition to school.

Safeguarding arrangements are good with careful attention to risk assessment for every activity. Children and other users are kept safe in the centre. Equality and diversity is good. Families from different backgrounds and with differing needs get along well together and say how much they enjoy the centre's warm, friendly and inclusive ethos. All of these features ensure that the centre's overall effectiveness is good.

What does the centre need to do to improve further?

Recommendations for further improvement

- Work with parents, schools and other local providers of childcare to better prepare children's readiness for school by further developing the range of activities which promote their physical skills and learning development outcomes.
- Improve sustained breastfeeding rates by working closely with health partners, especially during the antenatal phase of pregnancy, to develop strategies that encourage women to breastfeed.

How good are outcomes for families?

2

Health outcomes for families are good and improving steadily. A large majority of families in the area are engaging well with appropriate health services who offer many clinics at the centre. Healthy eating and oral hygiene are constantly woven into all activities involving parents and children. Parents are confident when talking about changes in their families eating habits. As one mother put it, 'I've lost two stones in a couple of months and all I've done is change to a healthier diet'.

Close partnership working ensures the centre is having a good impact on community health. Initial breastfeeding rates are improving rapidly from a very low starting point. The rate of sustained breastfeeding at six-to-eight weeks has improved steadily from 33.9% in 2010 to 37.2% in 2011, although positive, this remains below the national average of 45.7%. Obesity rates for children in Reception Year are improving quickly and are currently just above the national average at 10.8%. The centre works well with the health workers to encourage families to live healthier

lifestyles and recognises the need to continue to build on recent improvements. Both health workers and centre staff are keen to forge closer working arrangements, especially at the antenatal stage, to influence women's choices regarding breastfeeding their children.

The behaviour of children is very good and they behave in ways that are safe for themselves and others. Staff skilfully encourage parents to use strategies they have been shown on courses that result in positive parenting. All users at the centre are kept safe due to the high priority given to all safeguarding matters. Staff are vigilant and safe working practices are constantly reinforced by detailed risk assessment of activities. Families from target groups and those experiencing change, challenge or difficulties in their lives are particularly well integrated into group activities. All parents report that they feel safe at the centre. Staff monitor all families and children carefully, including those subject to a child protection plan and looked after children, and use the Common Assessment Framework (CAF) process effectively. As a result there is good evidence of improved outcomes for these families.

Children and parents enjoy and achieve well and make good progress from their starting points. The centre is extremely well resourced and is able to access the support of a highly qualified and experienced early years consultant. As a result staff are using very effective teaching strategies to improve the attainment of children. Parents are sensitively shown how to be the first educator for their children. As one parent said, 'I didn't know learning could be fun as well, my child is coming on leaps and bounds'. The centre has introduced many very good initiatives such as 'Wellie Walks' 'Ready Steady Books' and 'Chatter Box' with partners from the library service and also all primary schools in the reach area. Despite this the range of activities with partners which promote the development of children's physical skills and their impact on wider learning in readiness for school are less well developed.

Users make a positive contribution to the running of the centre, for example, through their feedback on the quality of activities. The parents' forum is vibrant and active, meeting frequently and influencing decisions made by the centre. Parent representation on the advisory board is good and the newly appointed chair is a local parent. The development and use of parents as volunteers within the centre and also during outreach activities is particularly effective.

Activities offered at the centre to promote the economic well-being of parents are good and improving significantly. Effective strategies are in place to support individuals working towards qualifications and in gaining employment. Adults benefit significantly from the work of a member of staff specifically employed to support adults seeking employment. Very effective, targeted support for 16-19 year olds who are not in employment, education or training, is offered through a mentoring scheme. The scheme is currently being piloted although the local authority plans to increase the use of the project.

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	2

How good is the provision?

2

The large majority of families within the reach area access centre activities. The centre is located in an excellent position within the community, making it very accessible for example, by the adjacent high-rise tenement blocks. Centre staff make very good use of comprehensive data and know the reach area very well. Registrations have doubled since the centre became operational in 2009 and are now at 79%; this year all new born babies have been registered with the centre. All families receive careful and sensitive assessment of their needs by staff at the first point of contact. Parents have confidence when discussing issues with centre staff. As one parent put it, 'I know I will find a solution here'.

The learning and development opportunities provided for children are well planned and as a result they make good progress. The centre is full of brightly coloured works of art produced enthusiastically by children. Staff have high expectations of all users who flourish as a result. Activities are well organised with all staff clearly committed to helping families succeed. Participation rates and attendance levels on all courses are good. The centre's outreach workers are very effective in working with specific groups such as, teenage mothers and minority ethnic communities. Although there is no specific fathers group, men are encouraged to participate in all activities and do so in increasing numbers. One father is an active member of the parents' forum. Achievement is always celebrated, for example, some parents are soon to attend an award ceremony at the town hall where they will be awarded their certificates by the Mayor of Warrington.

Managers, visiting agencies and staff strive to ensure that everyone who enters the centre is encouraged to participate in all it has to offer. From the moment a person first enters the centre discreet assessment of the needs of every individual takes place. Information, advice and guidance are clearly available and visible on helpful

display boards located throughout the centre. Staff confidently give advice and guidance to families. Appropriate referral to other agencies ensures that users receive the best of advice. Families receive very good support in times of crisis as staff are confident when dealing with the complex needs of families and work well with a variety of partners to support families in most need. Information recorded on CAF documentation is particularly detailed and helpful.

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 new centre manager is clearly focussed and enthusiastic about the work of the centre. She is well supported by the local authority and the advisory board. Managers are very effective at maintaining morale amongst staff and supporting them to perform well in their various roles. Well qualified staff feel valued by senior managers and there are robust procedures in place to ensure their continuous professional development. As a result governance and accountability arrangements are effective.

The centre's self-evaluation is accurate and staff and partners are clear about the centre's strengths, weaknesses and future priorities. The resulting action plan identifies ambitious targets which are clearly linked to the priorities identified by the centre. User engagement is very effective. The parent forum, and parent involvement in the advisory board, as well as the good use of evaluations following all activities ensures that users are fully involved in shaping activities at the centre. This demonstrates the centre's good capacity to continually improve.

The centre provides good value for money. Effective use is made of the wide range of resources available. The centre maintains high staffing levels and makes good use of funding from a variety of sources to continually improve provision. All activities offered are run to capacity and there are often waiting lists. Careful planning ensures that some events are run in outreach venues to encourage attendance by families from target groups. All activities, including commissioned services, are evaluated and monitored to secure high-quality provision.

Equality of opportunity is good with services meeting the needs of the majority of users well and enabling good and improving outcomes. The centre is effectively narrowing the achievement gap of children and adults and has numerous initiatives planned with partners to continue to close the gap. The centre has a warm and

friendly environment and all users feel included and at home. As one parent put it, 'It's great here, no matter who you are, you are welcome'. Equality for all is clearly promoted on notice boards and during activities. Diversity is celebrated often and through a variety of events such as 'Polish Day' when children and parents took part in a range of activities to celebrate Polish traditions. Resources and provision for disabled children and those with special educational needs ensure they are fully included in all activities.

Partnership working is good and users benefit from the many activities being run at the centre. Staff are confident when directing users to other agencies, knowing that their needs will be addressed. Service level agreements are robust and reviewed on a regular basis. Safeguarding is good and all legal requirements are effectively adhered to. A single central record provides evidence of rigorous vetting and recruitment procedures. Staff training is appropriate and up-to-date. Robust risk assessments ensure all activities conducted are run safely. Families with circumstances that make them most vulnerable receive good support during times of crisis through the effective use of the Common Assessment Framework process. Staff's knowledge of safeguarding ensures that families receive the support they need at the time they need it most.

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	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 inspection of the children's centre was informed by the findings and judgements of the most recent inspections for the linked school and childcare provision.

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Summary for centre users

We inspected the Sunshine Children's Centre on 19 – 20 November 2012. We judged the centre as good overall.

As part of the inspection we visited a number of activities, looked at the centre's documentation, and talked with a range of children and adults including parents, staff, and partnership representatives. We were pleased to speak to some of you about the centre's work and to listen to your views. We really enjoyed talking to you at the centre and in the various activity sessions you were engaged in. You expressed your views very clearly and we appreciated you telling us how things really are.

We were delighted to hear how you have benefited from coming to the centre, increased your confidence and become involved in the many worthwhile activities available to you. It was pleasing to see such an active parents' forum and that some of you are involved in the advisory board and in volunteering at the centre.

The centre is working well with health partners to improve the health of you and your families. We were pleased to see that obesity rates for children entering Reception Year has reduced year-on-year but the centre knows they still need to reduce rates further. The centre offers a range of good support to encourage new mums to breastfeed so that their babies have the best start in life. So, we are pleased that an increasing number of you are breastfeeding your babies. However, we have asked the centre to work more closely with health colleagues to encourage still more of you to sustain breastfeeding for six-to-eight weeks and preferably beyond.

The centre is effective at helping you to increase your knowledge about how your children learn through the many play activities and parenting sessions on offer. We noted how much both you and your children enjoy learning and were pleased that the centre always celebrates your success. The skills children have when they enter school are good and improving. Even so, we have asked the centre to work more closely with parents, schools and other childcare providers to ensure that they can help all children to reach their full potential physically as well as intellectually in readiness for school.

The new centre manager is clearly focussed and enthusiastic about the work of the centre. She is well supported by senior managers from the local authority. Centre staff work very hard to make the centre as good as it can be. They have innovative ideas to improve what they do so that more families can benefit from its activities. Centre staff make very good use of information about families living locally, in fact every baby born in the reach area this year has been registered with the centre.

The advisory board act as an effective critical friend and challenge the centre to do even more for you and your family. The centre sets clear targets in order to improve services for you. It is pleasing to find that you feel welcome at the centre. The inclusion of all children and families is good and the centre is a pleasure to visit. All of you, regardless of background, aptitudes or other differences, have equal access to the activities and services on offer.

The centre makes good use of risk assessments and ensures all activities are safe for you and your children. As one parent said, 'The centre is somewhere to bring my children and I know it's safe'.

It was also good to learn about how those of you who have undertaken training have increased your confidence and developed your skills, which should help you find employment in the future.

Thank you once again for your welcome and your willingness to share your views with us. We can see why the staff enjoy working with you so much and wish you every success in the future.

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