

Inspection report for Butterflies Children's Centre

Local authority	Suffolk
Inspection number	406937
Inspection dates	26–27 March 2013
Reporting inspector	Godfrey Bancroft

Centre leader	Karina Irons
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected
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Linked school if applicable	Not applicable
Linked early years and childcare, if applicable	Sunshine Pre-School and Day Care Limited (URN: EY381938)

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 year's inspector.

The inspectors held meetings with the centre manager, the local authority locality manager, members of staff from a wide range of partner providers, local authority representatives, parents, the chair of the advisory board and front-line staff. They observed the centre's work, and looked at a range of relevant documentation.

Information about the centre

Butterflies Children's Centre is a phase two centre which was designated in 2007. It operates from purpose built premises next to the grounds of Sir John Leman High School (Lower School site). The centre meets its core purpose through a range of services offered directly at the centre or at outreach venues. It serves the town of Beccles and surrounding villages. Some families use the centre who live across the county boundary in Norfolk. About 1074 children below the age of five live in the reach area. A very large majority of families within the area served by the centre are of White British heritage. There a relatively small, but steadily increasing numbers of children who come from ethnic minority groups, mainly from Eastern Europe, whose families speak English as an additional language. The economic circumstances of families are mixed. The proportion of families claiming benefits, or those who are workless, is broadly average. The percentage of children living in poverty is relatively low. However, within the reach area there are pockets of significant deprivation. The percentage of children known to be eligible for free school meals is above the average for Suffolk. The centre is managed by Suffolk local authority. Governance is through an advisory board made up of representatives of partner bodies and parents. The centre manager oversees another children's centre in the town of Halesworth.

The centre does not provide early year's childcare, but the privately owned Sunshine Pre-School and Day Care Limited operates from the same building. This is subject to

a separate inspection. On entry to early year's provision, children's skills, knowledge and abilities 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

This is a good centre that is led and managed effectively by a dedicated team who are fully committed to its continued improvement. Improvements in many areas of the centres work, such as the rising proportion of mothers sustaining breastfeeding, point towards a good capacity for its sustained improvement in the future.

The centre provides well for children and their families, including those, who for various reasons may be vulnerable. Staff are highly effective in promoting equality, celebrating the diverse backgrounds of families and protecting them from all forms of discrimination. The centre's main aim is to raise the self-esteem of parents and enable them to become more confident to manage their lives effectively; for example, in the way it helps mothers to overcome post natal depression and helps other carers, such as grandparents to support their families.

The centre is highly successful in supporting those families who are potentially at risk. An example of this is the centres excellent work in supporting those mothers who have been the victims of domestic abuse and violence. Guidance and provision for child protection, safeguarding and ensuring the well-being of children and their families is exceptional. As a result children show excellent behaviour traits and form very positive relationships with adults.

The range of activities meets user's needs well and communication with parents about the available activities and services is good. Even so, not enough use is made of information and communication technology to make this process as easy as it might be. Similarly, modern forms of electronic communication are not used fully as a means for parents to access courses that lead to formal qualifications. Parents are very pleased with the quality of provision. There are excellent opportunities for them to comment formally and informally on the various courses and to explain how these have made a difference to their lives. Parents also feel the centre is particularly good

at listening to their needs and responding to their requests.

The centre works closely and effectively with a wide range of other providers, including health professionals. There is compelling evidence to show that families are leading healthier lifestyles than in the past. Even so, the proportion of parents who smoke, including those who smoke during pregnancy and the proportion of children who are obese remains stubbornly higher than that found in many other parts of the country.

Centre leaders make good use of statistical information to compare the performance of the centre with that of others locally and nationally. The conclusions drawn from analysing this information are used to identify possible areas for improvement and to plan how these improvements might be addressed and evaluated. The centre also evaluates its own performance critically. No one is complacent and staff are united in their commitment to continued improvement. The centre's advisory board does a good job with parent representatives making a particularly effective contribution. Parents have also formed 'The Friends of Butterflies Children's Centre.' Through the 'Friends' they raise substantial amounts of money to support the centre's work.

What does the centre need to do to improve further?

Recommendations for further improvement

- Explore ways of using information and communication technology to make it easier for parents to get information about courses and activities and use this as a means to introduce more ways for them to follow courses that lead to recognised qualifications
- Work closely with partners from the health services to reduce the proportion of parents who smoke, especially those who smoke while pregnant
- Work in partnership with colleagues from the health services and those who provide support and guidance about the importance of eating healthily and taking regular exercise in order to reduce the proportion of children who are obese.

How good are outcomes for families?

2

The centre works effectively to help children and their parents to follow healthy lifestyles. It provides a good range of courses that encourage healthy eating and regular exercise; often in partnership with other providers. For example, the centre provides effective programmes which focus on exercise, diet and general well-being. Many families recall with enthusiasm the visit by the exercise expert 'Sporticus', which resulted from the centre entering and winning a competition in which the visit was the top prize. Statistics show the centre is making inroads into reducing the percentage of children who are obese and the proportion of parents who smoke, including those mothers who smoke during pregnancy. However, there is more to be done as the proportions of children who are obese and the parents who smoke, especially during pregnancy, is still higher than in many other parts of the country.

A massive strength in the centre's work is the highly successful focus on promoting

good mental health and in helping parents to overcome mental health problems. Part of the reason why parents and their children gain in confidence is because they feel appreciated, valued and able to thrive. The foundation for this is laid by the welcome they receive whenever they visit the centre or whenever centre staff visit their homes. Staff respond to any welfare and safety concerns with care and sensitivity and every effort is made to overcome any problems. Typical of this is the exceptional quality of support the centre provides for parents who have been the victims of domestic abuse or violence. Common Assessment Framework (CAF) processes are used well to ensure that families are provided with early support from a range of agencies. Looked after children and those subject to child protection plans are very well supported by the centre.

Data held by the centre shows that on entering the Early Years Foundation Stage children go on to make good progress in all areas of their learning. By the time they join Year 1 at school their attainment is close to that expected for their age. The gap is also seen to be closing for those children identified as being in the lowest attaining group for their age. This was confirmed in discussion with the headteacher of a nearby school which many of the children go on to attend. The headteacher said, 'The centre gives excellent help to parents and provides children with a good start.'

The gains that parents make in terms of increased confidence and greater self-esteem mean they are enabled to make a good contribution to the work of the centre and help to steer the course of developments. This includes contributing to the evaluation of each activity and course, being part of a range of consultation and focus groups and having parent members of the advisory board. The centre is also adept at helping parents to manage their personal budgets and at signposting them towards courses and providers who can help them to gain qualifications and prepare them for starting or re-entering the world of work.

Many parents gain qualifications that enable them to mentor and support other parents; such as becoming a breastfeeding mentor or community parent. Others volunteer their services to help at the centre and some have graduated through the system to become highly effective part time or full time employees. Parents who have followed this pathway rightly speak with great pride about their achievements.

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	1

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 centre provides a good range of activities and courses which engage all target groups well. The centre reaches out to those parents who could easily become isolated in the more rural parts of its reach area. For example, transport is often provided for those families who would otherwise find it hard to get to the centre. Families who come from the rising proportion of minority ethnic backgrounds are also included well; with one parent commenting, 'The centre made me feel welcome from the very start.' The centre also embraces other groups of carers, such as grandparents. One grandparent said, 'Whenever I walk in, I feel young again.' Highly productive liaison with partner providers draws effectively on specialist expertise. For example, the Healthy Child Programme, the local library and Family Support group. This results in activities that make a positive difference to the lives of parents and their children.

For families who live in the most rural parts of the reach area or because of their circumstances are not able to get to the centre, staff are always ready to go the extra mile and make a home visit. Liaison with other partners is highly effective in referring those in need to the services they require. Centre staff and partner providers always work closely to ensure that what they provide is matched well to the needs of children and parents and that progress is monitored closely.

Parents are overwhelmingly positive about the ways in which the centre promotes their learning and about the degree to which they enjoy the activities provided. The centre is also good at drawing the attention of families to the available range of courses. This is achieved through the display of attractive leaflets and posters. The centre is also branching out into using social media sites as a means of raising the awareness of families to what is available. However, not enough use is made of the latest available electronic communication devices to get in touch with them. While many parents welcome the opportunity to attend courses and interact with others, opportunities to access courses at home through mobile telephones and computers are not used to their full potential.

The care, guidance and support that are offered to children and their families are of the highest quality. The centre provides accessible and highly effective guidance for parents about how to keep their children safe at home and when they are out and about. This advice comes in the form of attractive and prominent displays at the centre that capture parents' interest and easy to read leaflets which emphasise the key points of staying safe. The centre also provides a wide range of courses specifically designed to address safety issues. However, all courses draw parents attention to managing a safe environment whenever it is appropriate; for example, the cookery courses and exercise groups always draw user's attention to any relevant safety features. These courses are greatly appreciated by parents, with the

result that the number of children who suffer reported accidents or who are referred to hospital is low.

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	1

How effective are the leadership and management?

2

The advisory board does a good job in keeping an eye on all aspects of the centre's work and in providing support for the centre leader and staff. They are fully involved in evaluating the centre's performance and in planning for subsequent improvements. The centre, in partnership with the local authority, is particularly adept at using statistical information about the success of its work to make comparisons with other centres locally and centres across England. If any shortfall is identified in the centre's performance this become a focus for development, with clear targets set to measure subsequent improvements. It is part of the centre's current development plan to tackle childhood obesity and smoking amongst pregnant mothers. Challenging targets have been set with regard to improvements on these two issues.

There are good training opportunities for staff and centre leaders ensure that all essential training, such as safety related training and first aid is always up to date. A strength of the centre's work is that training opportunities are often extended to volunteers, who greatly appreciate the opportunities available to them. Families engage well with the full range of available services. Their voice is listened to through course evaluations, consultation and user groups and through membership of the advisory board.

Resources are used wisely leading to improving outcomes and good value for money. The centre leaders and advisory board keep a close grip on spending. Again, the success of initiatives is measured to check the improvements have been brought about and that value for money is achieved.

The effective promotion of equality of opportunity, the celebration of diversity and the elimination of all form of discrimination is at the heart of the centre's work. Families report feeling valued. They say that the centre gives them the confidence to thrive. The example set by staff rubs off on families, who show great respect for each other, no matter what their background or life experiences. The centre also trains parents to provide guidance and support for each other; a role which many are rightly proud to fulfil. The centre is particularly successful in supporting disabled children and their families. Children who are identified as being in the lowest

attaining group for their age also thrive. Records held by the centre, which relate to its links with Early Years Foundation Stage providers, show that these children are catching up with those in other groups and are not as far behind as they were in the past.

Arrangements to safeguard children, their parents and vulnerable adults are of high quality. Staff, volunteers and partnership workers are all checked to ascertain their suitability to work with young people and the potentially vulnerable. Record keeping with regard to child protection is meticulous and any actions taken firmly based on the information gained from consultation with the full range of stakeholders. Again, families are full of praise for the centres' work, especially the support provided for those who have been the victims of domestic abuse and violence. Much of this successful work is conducted in partnership with other providers; such as The Family Action – Rural Domestic Violence project.

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	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

The findings from the most recent inspection of the Early Years provision which shares the centre's site was used to inform the judgements made during the inspection.

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Summary for centre users

We inspected the Butterflies Children's Centre on 26–27 March 2013. We judged the centre as good overall.

Firstly, I would like to thank those of you who so kindly gave your time to speak with us and share your views about the work of the centre and how it has helped you. We were very pleased to hear how much you enjoy taking part in the activities provided by the centre. The centre is good at listening to your views and responding by providing activities that you find particularly helpful. For your part we learned that centre staff appreciate hearing from you about the skills you have picked up and how these have helped you to support your children and help them to develop. We are also pleased to learn that some of you are able to influence the centre's work by being members of the advisory board.

We are most impressed by the ways in which the centre involves other family members, such as grandparents, in helping you to bring up your children. As you know this work is much admired, to the extent that it was part of a television programme about good work with young children. One of the grandparents we spoke to said the best thing about Butterflies is, 'Whenever I walk in, I feel young again!'

Your centre leader and her team are dedicated to doing their best on your behalf. They are not the sort of folk to rest on their laurels. They are always trying, often by listening carefully to you, to make the centre even better. A good example of how the centre has improved is seen in the number of you who now keeping going with breastfeeding, compared with in the past.

The centre is excellent at taking care of you and your children. The staff make sure that you and your children feel valued. They help your children to behave well. From the very start staff do their best to make sure that you and your baby form a strong and loving bond. If you are feeling down for whatever reason they are always there to raise your spirits and to help you feel confident. The work of the centre in supporting parents who have suffered domestic abuse or violence is rightly admired. The centres work in helping mothers to come to terms with and overcome past natal depression is similarly well regarded.

We think the centre provides you with a good range of activities. The staff also provide helpful leaflets and use popular social media sites (You know the one that I mean?) to let you know what is going on. Even so, we think the centre should make more use of things such mobile phones and computers to keep in touch and let you know about activities and courses. We have also asked the centre to consider using

such devices to help you when do courses that result in gaining additional qualifications.

The centre does a good job in encouraging you and you children to eat sensibly and to recognise the value of taking regular exercise. Certainly the cookery courses are very popular and we are sure that many of you will remember the inspirational visit of 'Sporticus.' Even so, the proportion of children in the area who are overweight remains stubbornly higher than many other parts of the country and we are asking the centre to redouble its efforts to solve this problem. A similar picture can be seen when we consider the number of parents who smoke, including mothers who smoke during pregnancy. With this in mind are asking the centre to focus on making even greater reductions in the number of parents who smoke.

The centre is improving all the time. The advisory board, which has parents on its membership, is good at overseeing the centres work, checking on what is going well and at helping with developments. Most importantly the advisory board are rightly proud of the centre's work and support the staff by celebrating all the many things that are going well.

Finally, well done to the 'The Friends of Butterflies Children's Centre.' The fund raising support that you provide is a massive help to the centre. You are also one of the very few centres in the country to have formed a 'friends' group.

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