

# North Whitehaven SureStart Children's Centre

Hensingham Primary School Site, Main Street, Hensingham, Whitehaven, Cumbria, CA28 8QZ

<b>Inspection dates</b>	3–4 June 2015
<b>Previous inspection date</b>	Not previously inspected

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	<b>This inspection:</b>	<b>Good</b>	<b>2</b>
	Previous inspection:	Not previously inspected	
Access to services by young children and families		Good	2
The quality of practice and services		Good	2
The effectiveness of leadership, governance and management		Good	2

## Summary of key findings for children and families

### This is a good centre.

- A large majority of families, including those living in the most disadvantaged circumstances, regularly attend services and benefit from the activities provided by the centre.
- Family support work is focussed on helping those most in need. Strong partnerships and sharing of information result in services being joined-up effectively to provide a good level of individual care, guidance and support to families, particularly those who have suffered a trauma or bereavement.
- A good range of services are located at community venues across the area, which is a great benefit for many families who cannot easily travel to the centre. Highly-qualified, friendly and supportive staff work hard to build trusting relationships with families. They have a good knowledge of the varied issues facing families in their community.
- Most eligible local children benefit from access to free early years education. They are increasingly well prepared for transition into school and their attainment at the end of Reception Year is rising.
- Leadership, governance and management of the centre are effective in most aspects. The centre knows its strengths and weaknesses. The effective centre leaders are motivated and dedicated to improving families' lives. As a result, the quality of practice and services is continually improving.

### It is not outstanding because:

- Too few mothers continue to breastfeed at six-to-eight weeks and the centre does not always receive sufficiently consistent and accurate locality-based health information.
- The centre's service delivery and action plans do not always include sufficiently measurable locally defined targets to improve with clear timescales by which to achieve these.
- The advisory group, whilst supportive, does not yet provide the centre with sufficient challenge about its effectiveness and no local parents attend to share their views and help shape services.

### What does the centre need to do to improve further?

- Improve health outcomes for children and families by:
  - ensuring the centre has access to consistent and accurate key health information about families living in the area
  - increasing the number of mothers who sustain breastfeeding for at least six-to-eight weeks.
- The local authority should work more effectively with Howgill Family Centre, centre leaders and the advisory group to improve the monitoring and evaluation of the centre's work by:
  - strengthening the rigour with which the advisory group challenges the centre and holds it to account for its work
  - further improving the centre's service delivery and action planning so that all targets are precise to the reach area, measurable and include clear timescales in which to achieve them, strengthening the role of local parents in centre decision-making by increasing the numbers who serve on the advisory group.

### Information about this inspection

The inspection of this children's centre was carried out under Part 3A of the Childcare Act 2006 as amended by the Apprenticeships, Skills, Children and Learning Act 2009.

This inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors.

The inspectors held meetings with the children's centre manager, early help manager, business accounts manager, trustees of Howgill Family Centre and local authority representatives. They also held meetings with centre staff, parents, members of the advisory group and a number of partners, including health, education and children's social care professionals.

The inspectors visited a number of sessions including, 'Telling Tales', 'Learn To Relax', 'Come and Play' and the childminder group.

They observed the centre's work, and looked at a range of relevant documentation, such as the centre's self-evaluation document, action plan, a sample of case studies, parent evaluations, key policies and the centre's safeguarding procedures. Throughout the inspection they also took the opportunity to talk with adult and child users of the centre.

### Inspection team

Tara Street, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Qaisra Shahraz Ahmed

Additional Inspector

## Full report

### Information about the centre

North Whitehaven Children's Centre is a stand-alone centre situated within the grounds of Hensingham Primary School. The centre works closely with the four other children's centres in the Copeland area which share services, including staff, and one overall leader. It offers a range of services which include child health services, family play sessions, parenting programmes, adult learning and family outreach services.

There are approximately 948 children aged under five years living within the area, of whom 32.2% live in the top 30% most deprived areas in the country. Almost all families served by the centre are of White British heritage. Levels of unemployment are high, with 19.3% of children living in households dependent upon workless benefits. Most children enter early years provision with knowledge and skills that are below those typical for their age. Childcare provision is delivered by a range of providers in the area. These are subject to separate inspection arrangements and the reports are available on the Ofsted website: [www.gov.uk/ofsted](http://www.gov.uk/ofsted).

The centre has identified children living in poverty, families identified as in greatest need, families identified as in need of support under the troubled families' agenda (focus families), children of teenage parents and children with additional needs as those most in need of its support.

Governance of the centre is provided by Howgill Family Centre, which is a registered charity, on behalf of Cumbria local authority, in conjunction with a shared advisory group that includes providers, delivery partners and members of the local community that attend the centre.

## Inspection judgements

### Access to services by young children and families

Good

- Most families are registered at the centre and have access to good-quality services, information and guidance. Activities such as the, 'Pre-Birth and Beyond home visiting programme', and 'Bumps to Babies' sessions, jointly run with health partners, are effective at engaging expectant parents and those families who may be reluctant to do so.
- The centre staff know the community well and offer a good level of support to some families whose circumstances make them vulnerable. They target support and advice appropriately and effectively to meet the needs of these families, particularly those in need of intensive support. As a result, the large majority of families identified as in greatest need of support, children living in poverty, families identified under the troubled families' agenda (focus families), children of teenage parents and children with additional needs, are accessing the centre's services.
- Staff work hard to ensure that the centre is warm and welcoming to families. Typical comments from parents include: 'The centre is great, you meet new friends and staff are always there for advice' and 'staff listen to you, don't judge and are there to help you when you need it most'.
- Weekly allocation meetings and effective joint working with professionals enables the centre to provide good packages of individualised support and services for families, thereby successfully improving their health, social and economic welfare. For instance, children and families who experience trauma or bereavement receive highly effective one- to-one and group support through the, 'Time to Share', 'Apart from Me' and the 'Grandparents and Carers' groups. These families report a significant improvement in their child's behaviour, concentration, confidence and communication skills.
- Staff work hard to make sure that parents are aware of all the help which may be available to them, including their children's entitlement to free early years education. As a result, most three- and-four-year-olds take up their places. In addition, as a result of this work the large majority of two-year

olds also take up their places which have increased significantly in the six months.

### **The quality of practice and services**

Good

- A good range of well-located services is offered to children and families. A sensible balance is achieved between those available to everyone and those designed to support those families identified as in need of support. As a result, the take-up by families most in need is high.
- Knowledgeable and supportive staff provide very good support, care and guidance. The strategy to take services out into the community and to where they are needed most, such as local schools and libraries, is proving successful in helping improve the lives and well-being of families. The centre works successfully with parents to enhance their confidence, parenting skills and understanding about how to keep their children safe, thereby helping to reduce any inequalities.
- Helping prepare children for school has been at the heart of the centre's ongoing work with early years partners. For instance, 'Baby Bookworm', 'Telling Tales' and 'Come and Play' sessions effectively help to develop children's speech and language skills. In addition, centre staff encourage parents to continue their child's learning in the home. As a result, outcomes at the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage are improving and are above both the local and national average. Furthermore, the gap between the lowest achieving children and the rest is closing.
- The uptake of immunisations and child development checks is high, but not all of the centre's health-related aspirations are met. In particular, although increased since 2012, the proportion of mothers who keep breastfeeding for at least six-to-eight weeks has recently declined and is below the national average. In addition, the centre does not always receive consistent and accurate key health information about families living in the area, which hinders sharper evaluation of the impact of its services.
- Parents are - supported well to become volunteers and the centre, in partnership with the local college, provides a wide range of good-quality adult learning activities. For instance parents engage in courses such as, 'Learn to Relax' confidence building course, 'Family Numeracy', English, computer skills and 'Money Matters-'. They are also signposted to other agencies, including job search, to help develop their employability skills. As a result, many parents develop knowledge and skills that increase their chances of employment and of progressing to further education. In addition, the centre's finance officer is very effectively helping families to regain control of their finances, learn to budget and deal with debt.

### **The effectiveness of leadership, governance and management**

Good

- Governance, leadership and management arrangements are clear, well understood and overall effective. The local authority provides a good range of management information and data to the centre, which enables Howgill Family Centre trustees and centre leaders to monitor closely its ongoing performance. As a result, leaders have an accurate picture of the strengths of the centre and most of the areas for improvement. However, not all of the targets in the centre's annual review, service delivery and action plans are sufficiently precise to the reach area, or measurable with clear timescales to achieve these by. As a result, the centre is not yet in a secure position to demonstrate fully that it is making enough difference to the lives of families in the community.
- The advisory group, which is shared with three other local children centres, is attended by a wide range of committed partners who share information to help meet the needs of families. They receive an appropriate range of information about the centre's work and how well the performance of staff is managed. However, the trustees of Howgill Family Centre recognise that the advisory group do not yet sufficiently challenge, or hold the centre to account for its work rigorously enough. They do, however, demonstrate a clear commitment to addressing this issue in a timely manner.
- Howgill Family Centre trustees and the centre leaders work very well together. They are fully committed to improving the life chances and reducing inequalities for the children that live in the area. Centre leaders use regular supervision, training and appraisals well to ensure high quality

practice in all aspects of the centre work. The highly qualified staff team are passionate about their work and have access to a good range of training opportunities to support their continuous professional development. As a result, families have access to a good range of services and resources which are used well to meet their needs.

- Parents have an appropriate range of opportunities to put forward their views, to which centre leaders listen carefully and use to make changes to services. For instance, they contribute through session evaluations and a few attend the parent's action group. However, no parents from the North Whitehaven centre are directly involved in centre decision-making at a strategic level through attendance on the advisory group to ensure their voices are heard.
- Duties relating to safeguarding are taken very seriously. Policies and procedures are thorough and the Early Help Assessment Framework is used effectively in order to reduce levels of risk.
- Highly effective partnership and information sharing with social care staff, health and education professionals ensure that looked after children and those subject to a child protection plan receive high quality care, guidance and support. 'They keep families together, raise aspirations and self-esteem' and 'they are a trusted member of the community which is seen through the high number of self-referrals' are typical comments about the centre's work with families from partner agencies.

**What inspection judgements mean**

<b>Grade</b>	<b>Judgement</b>	<b>Description</b>
Grade 1	Outstanding	Practice consistently reflects the highest aspirations for children and their families and, as a result, inequalities are reducing rapidly and gaps are closing.
Grade 2	Good	Practice enables most children and their families to access good quality services that improve children's wellbeing and achieve the stated outcomes for families.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	Performance is not as good as it might reasonably be expected to be in one or more key areas.
Grade 4	Inadequate	The needs of children and families in its area are not being met and/or the leaders and managers are not providing sufficient challenge to bring about improvement to the quality of services.

**Children's centre**

<b>Unique reference number</b>	23724
<b>Local authority</b>	Cumbria
<b>Inspection number</b>	455034
<b>Managed by</b>	Howgill Family Centre on behalf of the local authority

<b>Approximate number of children under five in the reach area</b>	948
<b>Centre leader</b>	Patrick Leonard
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	Not previously inspected
<b>Telephone number</b>	01946 690067
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