

Inspection report for West Hove Children's Centre

Local authority	Brighton and Hove
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Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected
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Linked school if applicable	Not applicable
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.

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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, centre leaders, volunteers, representatives from a number of partner agencies and the local authority. They observed the centre's work and visited a number of groups including 'early birds' and 'positive play'. They also looked at a range of relevant documentation including case studies, the centre's self-evaluation and service improvement plan.

Information about the centre

West Hove Children's Centre is located at the site of West Hove Infants School. It works in partnership with the school but there are no links other than sharing the same site. It is a phase two centre which was designated in 2008, and is a gateway centre to Conway Court Children's Centre, which provides the full core offer. A part-time administrator is based at the West Hove centre; all other staff based at Conway Court, however, provide services across both reach areas.

Children's centres in the area provide an integrated approach with local authority staff and health services through a section 75 agreement. The local authority manages and delivers centre services through this agreement, including overseeing the governance arrangements, and delegates responsibility to the centre's advisory group.

The centre is open weekdays from 9am to 3pm. Due to limited space, a small number of services operate directly from the centre, but families are also signposted to Conway Court, which is located about a mile away and where more services are offered.

The centre's reach area is reasonably affluent, with small pockets of deprivation. There are 1,161 children under five within the reach area; around 8% of children live in households dependant on workless benefits and around 22% of children live in

families where adults are on a low income and in receipt of Working Family Tax Credits. Children's skills, knowledge and abilities on entry to the Early Years Foundation Stage are below those typically expected for their age.

The majority of families in the reach area are of White British heritage with an increasing number of families of Eastern Europe origin.

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

The commitment and passion of staff, coupled with very efficient targeting of services and sensitive care, guidance and support, contribute to making this a good centre.

Exceptional partnership working between centre staff underpins the effectiveness of the centre's early identification work and responsiveness to engaging and working with the most vulnerable children and families. Measurable outcomes for children are steadily improving and are outstanding in some areas.

Safeguarding arrangements are excellent and underpinned by appropriate policies and procedures. Staff model good practice and maintain their knowledge through training and sharing information. Risk assessments are routinely completed and parents report feeling safe at the centre.

The centre uses its resources extremely well to support the most vulnerable families. A number of parent-led groups also operate which effectively complement other centre services. All groups have specific aims and effectively engage target families, and as a result, the centre provides excellent value for money.

Parents contribute effectively to the centre in a wide range of ways, and feel that they have a voice and their views and opinions are valued. Parental representation on the centre's advisory group is excellent; the advisory group is beginning to be more involved in the governance of the centre.

The quality of the partnership working arrangements with partner agencies are variable; where they are highly effective, there is clear evidence of outstanding outcomes for families and the centre is able to effectively track families. However, where the links are not so well established and information is not shared, families do not make as much progress as the centre cannot track families' progress and accurately target services; this is particularly an issue for the centre in assessing parents' access to training.

Although newly established, the children's centre management team is highly focused and works well as a team, and supports staff well in undertaking their roles and encouraging them to develop professionally. Staff at all levels have a good understanding of the strengths and areas for development at the centre and how they will achieve them.

The centre's self-evaluation and service improvement plan are closely linked. Managers are aware that these documents could be strengthened by regular reviews and evaluations in all areas which would provide a more up-to-date picture of the centre and inform future targets. Managers are currently revising systems in order to undertake this work. Therefore, the centre has good capacity to improve.

The local authority provides a range of data which the centre uses to assess its performance, set targets and identify priority areas. The quality of this data has been variable recently and this has restricted the centre's ability to effectively monitor and set targets in some areas. Where robust data are available, they demonstrate the positive impact the centre is having on improving outcomes for families.

What does the centre need to do to improve further?

Recommendations for further improvement

- Further develop links with local partners, especially those who provide adult education and training, and ensure that information is shared in order that the centre can better support families in improving their economic and social well-being.
- Strengthen tracking and evaluation in all areas and use this information to effectively monitor progress, quickly identify priority areas and adapt provision in order to provide services that will further improve outcomes for families.

How good are outcomes for families?

2

Outcomes are at least good and are improving rapidly for a good proportion of families who access the centre. Children's health is outstanding as parents are given information which helps them to provide healthy lifestyles for their families. Groups such as 'baby buffet' promote healthy eating and give children opportunities to try

new foods. An allotment project provides opportunities for families to eat produce they have grown themselves. Breastfeeding rates are excellent and improving. Health visitors and early years visitors provide a comprehensive range of support for parents experiencing postnatal depression.

Some parents become volunteers at the centre and sit on the centre advisory group. Those who help at groups receive a good package of support, including access to regular supervision with the parent involvement worker. Parents have good opportunities to access education and training at the centre and across the city. The centre is unable to effectively track families who access education and training, and this has an effect on how it is able to support families, signpost them to services and provide courses which will best support families in developing new skills. Groups such as 'Triple P' are highly successful in developing parenting skills and bringing about positive changes for families; as one parent who attended the group stated, 'It has changed my life dramatically and I cannot believe I am so happy as a parent.' Staff work skilfully with parents, empowering them to make choices and decisions.

Systems to track children are in place and show that children are making good progress. The most recent data indicate that over three quarters of children achieved 78 points at the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage. Centre groups are very well attended and adults are provided with information about how they can continue their children's learning and development at home.

Staff proactively engage parents in the work of the centre at all levels and there are very good examples of how services have been created or adapted as a result of parental feedback, for example extending the opening times of the multiple births group. The advisory group is actively involved in decisions about changes to services and parents are fully involved in this process. Parents have many opportunities to feedback both formally and informally, and staff use a range of different methods, including the centre newsletter, to feedback to parents.

Children are safe and very well protected as a result of the excellent work all staff do to make the building safe and secure, and by making parents aware of their responsibilities. Risk assessments are robust and minimise hazards. Staff model safer working practices and are highly vigilant in maintaining a safe environment for children. Effective joint working ensures that any safeguarding concerns are dealt with promptly. Universal robust assessments of every family are highly effective in identifying families who would benefit from additional support. A tiered approach to intervention, alongside individual packages of support, ensures that services are clearly focused on where they will most improve families' lives. Families improve their outcomes as a result of The Common Assessment Framework (CAF) process which is embedded at the centre, with health visitors acting as the lead professional. Families benefit from the extensive multi-agency approach which provides them with an extensive range of support. The numbers of children on child protection plans is lower than the local authority average as a result of the effective early intervention with the most vulnerable families.

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	1
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?

1

Centre staff are very good at assessing the needs of families and providing individual, tailored support that fully meets the needs of the most vulnerable families in the reach area.

The contribution of parents to leading groups at the centre is exemplary. Groups for parents of multiple births, those with children born prematurely ('early birds') and for children who have eczema are all led by parents and have evolved as a result of an identified need and parents' willingness to volunteer in running the groups.

The centre makes effective use of space and many of the groups are targeted at specific families so that the number of families can be more easily managed. Many other groups operate from Conway Court Children's Centre, which is located within easy reach for families. Staff provide a 'familiar face' as they work across both centres. All groups follow the Early Years Foundation Stage and link to the children's learning and development. Information and displays provide additional information about child development and other relevant areas.

Courses such as 'positive play' cover a different topic each week and provide parents with excellent information about their children's learning and the Early Years Foundation Stage. Adults have opportunities to attend courses and training and volunteer at the centre; some families undertake training via Honeycroft Nursery, which is located on the site of Conway Court Children's Centre, and through other city-wide organisations. Systems to share information about the courses adults have attended are not yet fully in place and this affects the centre's provision of training which builds on adults' previous training and progression routes. It also means that the centre cannot effectively track families' learning.

Every family in the reach area receives a visit when a new baby is born and when they move into the area. Families who have difficulty accessing the centre and those who are most vulnerable benefit from the excellent support provided by the outreach service. The centre is particularly good at responding to families who are in crisis and the early intervention work prevents many families from reaching crisis point.

Staff have great insight into the potential barriers and difficulties families may face. They work sensitively with families, providing personalised support enabling them to develop the well-being of their families, and building up positive and trusting relationships. Centre staff have excellent links with many partner agencies and, as a result, can support families in accessing wider services and effectively signpost them to other organisations.

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	1
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 centre is well managed. Staff supervision arrangements at all levels are robust and good-quality assurance systems are in place. Staff are empowered to make decisions, and managers provide appropriate challenges for staff and encourage them to challenge back and hold managers to account for their decisions.

Safeguarding arrangements are extremely secure. The centre's policies and procedures are clear and, alongside regular training and support, ensure that staff have the knowledge and skills to deal effectively with safeguarding issues. Highly effective partnership working between centre staff and partner agencies means that the most vulnerable families receive a service which is responsive and meets their individual needs. Checks on staff and volunteers are appropriate and ensure their suitability to work with children.

Parents are confident that their views and opinions are taken into account at the centre. There is an effective range of ways parents can feed into the work of the centre and shape services. Parental representation on the advisory group is very good, with the group being chaired by a parent. The advisory group is beginning to become more involved in the governance of the centre and holding it to account.

Space is well used at the centre and staff have worked creatively within the limited

space to provide a full range of information and displays to support families. The provision of a lift is effective in allowing children in buggies and wheelchair users to access the centre's main playroom. The centre provides an inclusive environment and is welcoming to all families. Children with disabilities are encouraged to attend groups at the centre and also signposted to a city-wide group which provides specific support for families of children with disabilities. Some male carers attend the monthly dads' group, which is run at Honeycroft Nursery. Information around the centre promotes the diversity of the community and access to translation services is readily available.

Partnership working arrangements between health and social care colleagues and the Honeycroft Nursery is particularly strong and this contributes to outcomes in these areas being outstanding. Where partnership working is not as effective, outcomes for families are not as high; the centre has identified agencies with whom it needs to build relationships and understands how improved joint working can bring about further improvements for families.

The centre's self-evaluation provides a picture of the centre and identifies priority areas which form the basis of the service improvement plan. Targets in some areas are not specific and this limits the effectiveness of the plan in driving improvement. The centre obtains data from a number of sources, although there have been some limitations on data recently. However, available data demonstrate that outcomes for families are improving as a result of the centre's services.

The centre is well used and has recently begun running sessions during the school holidays. It provides a welcoming environment and uses its resources well to ensure maximum value for money.

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	1
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	2

meet its core purpose	
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

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Summary for centre users

We inspected West Hove Children’s Centre on 21–22 November 2012. We judged the centre as good overall.

You and your families are very effectively supported as a result of the centre. Inspectors saw you at groups and could see that you and your children enjoy attending. Although space is limited, the staff use it creatively to provide your children with a wide range of groups and activities. Many of you attend groups at Conway Court Children's Centre, where there is more space for you and your children. As staff work across both centres, you are greeted by a friendly face regardless of which centre you attend. Effective use of staff and the centres mean that inspectors judged that the centre provides outstanding value for money.

You and your children feel safe because of the high profile the centre gives to safeguarding and child protection, and by the support that they give to those most vulnerable families. Very good procedures are in place to ensure the suitability of staff and volunteers.

The centre is particularly good at using your views to assess what works well and what needs to improve. This means that services are regularly adapting and evolving to meet the changing needs of families and the wider area. Some of you also contribute to shaping services through your membership of the advisory group as changes to services are discussed at this group.

Centre staff have established links with a wide range of partner agencies; some of these partnerships ensure that you are provided with an excellent range of services and support. We have recommended that the centre looks at where partnership working arrangements are not so strong so that the centre can better support you.

Groups for children at the centre follow the principles of the Early Years Foundation Stage and are supporting your children to develop new skills. Courses such as 'positive play' are very good as you are provided with information about child development and ideas to support your children's learning. Some of you have attended courses such as 'Triple P' which have given you new skills and improved

your confidence, and some of you may have accessed courses at Honeycroft Nursery. We have asked the centre to look at how to better track families' previous learning so that it can offer you focused support and provide courses which build on your previous skills.

Some of you volunteer at the centre and benefit from the induction and ongoing support provided by the centre; case studies demonstrate that volunteering is effective in improving your opportunities to access courses and obtain paid employment. Inspectors were very impressed by the parent-led groups and the commitment of those who run them.

The centre produces a range of documents which it uses to evaluate its service, including a centre self-evaluation and a service improvement plan. We have asked the centre to strengthen its evaluations and use them rigorously to set clear targets to drive improvements.

The work the centre undertakes with those families most in need of intervention and support is making a big difference to those families who receive it. Staff work closely with you, effectively support you in looking at how you can do things differently as a parent. Health outcomes are also promoted well with many of you breastfeeding your babies. Groups such as 'baby buffet' provide you with excellent information and ideas about the types of food you can give your children to eat.

We would like to thank all of you who spared the time to meet with us and share your experiences of working with the centre. We would particularly like to thank those of you who came in especially to do so. We wish you and your children all the very best for the future.

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