

Inspection report for Chichester Nursery School Children and Family Centre

Local authority	West Sussex
Inspection number	366290
Inspection dates	19–20 January 2011
Reporting inspector	Susan Mann HMI

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Centre leader	Candy Daffern
Date of previous inspection	N/A
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Linked school, if applicable	Chichester Nursery School
Linked early years and childcare, if applicable	Chichester Nursery School

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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 centre users, managers and frontline staff, partners and representatives from the local authority. They visited the on-site Chichester Nursery School. They observed the centre's work, and looked at a range of relevant documentation.

Information about the centre

Chichester Nursery School, Children and Family Centre was designated in 2005. Commissioned by the Local Authority, the school governors take responsibility for the delivery of Children's Centre services and fulfil their governance duties through a subcommittee titled the Community Alliance which is made up of parents, users and associated members of the centre. It offers all the elements of the core offer, which include integrated childcare, health services, family support and outreach, and links to Jobcentre Plus. The early years provision is provided by the maintained nursery school located on the same site, from which the centre evolved. Children enter the nursery with levels of attainment that are below national expectations.

The centre serves an area which is diverse in make-up, ranging from being identified as in the 30% most deprived in the country to more affluent areas. The centre is located on the edge of the most deprived area. In some parts of the reach area, a small minority of families are claiming out-of-work benefits. Local levels of obesity in the centre's reach area exceed the county average. The large majority of families living within the reach area are of White British ethnicity. There are a number of families from minority ethnic backgrounds, including those from any other White background, Indian, Asian, and Chinese 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 users and the wider community

2

Capacity for sustained improvement

The centre's capacity for sustained improvement, including the quality of its leadership and management

2

Main findings

The overall effectiveness of the centre is good, with many aspects that are outstanding. The manager and senior management team have an excellent view of the centre's strengths and areas for development and have high aspirations to improve services further. The centre works exceptionally well with key partners to deliver cohesive services, and this leads to a very positive impact on outcomes for users.

The centre's capacity to improve further is good. The evaluation of services is generally effective and focuses on users' needs to fill any gaps in provision and improve outcomes. Users are regularly asked their views and given frequent opportunities to offer suggestions and opinions about groups and services. However, evaluation is not wholly rigorous for all services. Managers realise that these systems can be developed further to include more use of data and evaluate services more thoroughly to have an even greater impact on improving user experiences.

The centre offers outstanding provision. Learning and development opportunities for children and adults are completely tailored to the individual's needs and are of exceptional quality. The range of services is excellent and extremely flexible to ensure all users, including those who work, have the opportunity to access groups. The provision of high quality childcare in the crèche enables many parents who would not otherwise have been able to do so to access courses and services. Staff have an excellent understanding of individual users' needs, including those who are most vulnerable. They work very closely with partners such as the Family Resource Team and Homestart to ensure services meet individual needs. Outreach is highly effective in engaging families who may be harder to engage, and the centre mini-bus is an important resource in enabling some of these families to access centre services. The guidance given to users is superb and staff work hard to give an exemplary level of individual support to those who are in need.

There is strong evidence of at least good outcomes in all areas, and some of these are outstanding. The extent to which children and adults engage in positive contribution is excellent and is a strength of the centre. Parents and children appreciate the exceptionally encouraging and enabling attitude of staff. Those adults who are less confident are empowered when they take on roles in the centre through involvement in the very effective volunteer programme. Users are extremely active in the centre governance through active participation in the centre's community partnership group, the Community Alliance, and in their focused and enthusiastic support of the centre through being part of the Friends of Chichester Nursery group.

Outcomes for how well adults and children enjoy and achieve are superb. The most recent inspection of the on-site nursery school found that children in the Early Years Foundation Stage are making excellent progress from their starting points. Outcomes for those who participate in adult education, parenting courses and development of skills are excellent. The extent to which users stay safe is also outstanding. Parents say they feel they and their children are wholly safe at the centre and they value the extremely strong level of knowledgeable and confidential support which enables them to access services they need.

Outcomes for health are good. These are promoted well by the increasingly popular health visitor drop-in. The centre's breast feeding support programme has resulted in a good improvement in the number of mothers who sustain breast feeding and it offers valued support to new mothers who wish to breast feed. Health visiting services used by the centre have recently undergone reorganisation which has left some unfilled posts and this has caused a slight slowing in the development of outcomes for health for centre users. However, partnership working is highly effective and services are on track to improve outcomes further. The centre realises the need to establish these very strong links with health services to improve outcomes further and is making very good progress in this area.

The centre employs exemplary safeguarding practice. Child protection procedures are followed rigorously to protect children's welfare. There are excellent protocols and partnership working between key agencies to share relevant information and provide a cohesive approach to interagency working. The centre actively promotes equality and diversity. Families from a wide range of cultural backgrounds value the popular 'Let's Chat' group. This group gives the opportunity for conversation for both those adults who have English as an additional language, and those who speak English fluently but wish to learn more about the different cultures within their community. The centre is successful in removing barriers to access for many, through outreach and through partnership working to facilitate families coming to the centre. The friendly and inclusive approach of the centre allows all to feel welcome and involved.

What does the centre need to do to improve further?

Recommendations for further improvement

- Develop the systems of evaluation further, to improve the monitoring and effectiveness of services and to make more accurate use of data to evaluate outcomes.
- Enhance healthy outcomes for all users by embedding established relationships and working practices with health services.

How good are outcomes for users?

2

Outcomes for children and families who use the centre are good. There is a strong emphasis placed on improving emotional health throughout the services provided and case study evidence indicates this is very successful. For example, participant evaluations of the Young Parents Programme show greatly increased levels of self assurance and general well-being, leading to better parenting and life chances. The centre is working very well with health services to reduce levels of obesity. A range of groups which promote dietary advice and physical activity and services, such as miniGIANTS, Let's Cook, and Let's Get Physical, are beginning to have a significant impact on reducing levels of obesity and improving well-being. The personal support provided by breastfeeding peer support volunteers is greatly valued by those women who have used the service and this is complemented by the Honeysuckle Cafe advice group. The breast feeding rates at six to eight weeks have shown a gradual improvement over the last three years and now exceed the county average as a result of these initiatives.

Vulnerable families are exceptionally well supported by a range of individual services, which have a very positive impact on their lives. A parent spoke of how the centre had helped. 'Until now, I felt I was screaming in a glass house with closed doors – now it feels as though someone has opened the doors and is listening.' Those who have been victims of domestic abuse make very good progress in moving forward because the centre delivers individually tailored programmes to provide practical and emotional support.

Outcomes for children supported by the Common Assessment Framework are excellent. Their lives improve because of excellent interagency working and dedicated centre staff. Children who are subject to a child protection plan have exceptional improvement in their outcomes as a result of the centre's involvement and the extremely good partnership working with the Family Resource Team Under Tens. Parents say they feel very safe at the centre and trust staff implicitly. One parent commented, 'It's a nice safe place to come and learn. You also feel safe with your children.'

Those children in the on-site nursery make excellent progress from their starting points. The centre's senior management team track children's progress very

thoroughly to show a significant narrowing of the gap between the lowest achieving 20% in the Early years Foundation Stage and others. Children in the nursery demonstrate exceptional achievement in the development of their personal, social and emotional skills and their communication development. Adult users have excellent outcomes as a result of attending groups and adult education, with a large number moving on to volunteer opportunities, further training, and employment.

The extremely positive relationships formed between staff and families nurtures adults and their children to become extremely confident and self-assured. Parents from many groups of users at the centre are actively involved in the governance of the centre through their participation in the Community Alliance.

The number of workless households in the centre’s reach area is higher than the county average. There is a great deal of case study evidence of adults accessing volunteer work and education and then moving on into employment. However, evaluation and data availability is not yet sufficiently detailed to provide clear statistics for this. Partnership working with Jobcentre Plus is very good, and there is excellent benefit guidance and support, such as the Child Disability Benefit Drop In, which results in parents successfully claiming their entitlement to facilitate a better life for themselves and their families.

These are the grades for the outcomes for users

The extent to which children, including those from vulnerable 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 users enjoy and achieve educationally and in their personal and social development	1
The extent to which children engage in positive behaviour and develop positive relationships and users contribute to decision-making and governance of the centre	1
The extent to which children are developing skills for the future and parents are developing economic stability and independence including access to training and employment.	2

How good is the provision?

1

The centre has outstanding provision. Recent structural development has increased the space available, enabling the centre to increase the number of groups and courses delivered at the centre. Senior managers effectively assess the needs of users because they have accurate knowledge of the centre’s hard-to-reach groups. Collaborative partnership working ensures that assessment is rigorous, and in some areas it is very good, such as with the Family Resource Team Under Tens, at the Laburnum Lodge site. Work with health services to assess needs of families is slightly less well embedded, although health visitor referrals and the health visitor drop-in

sessions improve outcomes for many, and these links are developing quickly and well.

The centre puts a very high priority on the provision of excellent learning and development opportunities for all users. Centre staff are well trained and extremely dedicated to their work. As a parent said of staff, 'They don't just stop at their job', and many staff frequently 'go the extra mile' to provide personal services. They encourage and empower parents to learn and enhance their personal development. User evaluations demonstrate an exceptional level of satisfaction with the provision offered. The range and appropriateness of services is outstanding because these are built around the needs of users to fulfil individual needs. For example, the Dads Aloud and Mums Aloud groups are held at the weekend so that working parents can access them, and many families receive practical help and individual support to access groups. Overall participation rates for courses are excellent and have a very high rate of sustained attendance, which demonstrates that users value the enjoyment and usefulness of these sessions. Outreach work significantly improves the outcomes of those vulnerable and hard-to-reach families. The centre makes very good use of inter-agency partnership working and local authority data to ensure that all groups in the community can be fully involved in the centre. The quality of care and support offered to children and their families is outstanding, and is particularly effective for those families most in need. Many parents say that they are 'never judged' by staff, and the help they receive is always prompt, enabling and exceptionally supportive. Centre involvement in the local community promotes its services very well, and also enables users to be involved in projects outside of the centre itself. For example, the centre is working with the local school Portfield Primary and Chichester City Council to deliver a health promotion event which helps to build links with the community. One parent said, 'Most of the people I say hello to in the street are from here (the centre).'

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The effectiveness of the assessment of the needs of children, parents and other users	2
The extent to which the centre promotes purposeful learning, development and enjoyment for all users	1
The extent to which the range of services, activities and opportunities meet the needs of users and the wider community	1
The quality of care, guidance and support offered to users within the centre and the wider community	1

How effective are the leadership and management?

2

Governance of the centre is well organised and strong. The chair of governors has a good overview of the centre's work and collaborates well with the senior management team to produce effective provision. The Community Alliance sub-group has clear vision of the strategic and day-to-day leadership of the centre. Members

provide a rigorous level of challenge to ensure management practices are fully evaluated to ensure they are in the best interests of the needs of the users and the community. The local authority delivers stringent monitoring and development support to enable improvement in a strong collaborative partnership with the centre. As a result, the centre provides good value for money.

The senior leadership team is wholly focused on attaining the best outcomes for users and inspires the staff team and users to aspire to the highest standards of achievement and success. Morale is exceptionally high within the centre staff team, and this produces an exceptionally enabling environment for all. The self-evaluation of the centre is accurate and has identified priorities for improvement. Recent structural development of the building has resulted in more accommodation becoming available for centre use. This, together with ongoing strategic planning for improvements and development of evaluation processes, is evident in outcomes which are good overall and improving. Evaluation of services is good and new systems are being introduced to make this more informative and useful. Partner agencies contribute to the overall evaluation of provision and resulting changes are made to suit user needs better.

The inclusion of all children and their families lies at the heart of the centre's vision. Strong emphasis is placed on making groups and events inclusive and available to all. For example, meetings of the Friends group are scheduled at different times of day to enable the attendance of those who are interested. In the Honeysuckle Café, those mums who bottle feed their babies are welcomed alongside those who are breast feeding. Targeted services are almost always intertwined with universal services so no one feels singled out and everyone benefits from a more typical mix of participants. Arrangements for safeguarding children's welfare are outstanding. Users frequently contribute to safety practices at the centre through the Community Alliance and the Friends group, as well as through evaluation and informal contact. Procedures for ensuring the suitability of staff are extremely thorough and all relevant child protection and safe recruitment training is up to date. Protocols and practice for making referrals and sharing information are well established and exemplary. Partnership working with a wide range of agencies is excellent. The centre takes a full and active role in developing and enhancing partnerships to ensure the best services and outcomes for families. These services are exceptionally well integrated and meet the needs of users very well.

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 extent to which ambitious targets drive improvement, provision is integrated and there are high expectations for users and the wider community	1
The extent to which resources are used and managed efficiently and effectively to meet the needs of users and the wider community	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 evaluation is used to shape and improve services and activities	2
The extent to which partnerships with other agencies ensure the integrated delivery of the range of services the centre has been commissioned to provide	1
The extent to which the centre supports and encourages the wider community 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 Chichester Children and Family centre on 19–20 January 2011. We judged the centre as good overall. We looked at Chichester Nursery School as part of the inspection of the children's centre, although we did not carry out a full inspection of the nursery on this occasion.

We would like to thank all those of you who took time to talk with us about your involvement and experiences at the centre. It was very enjoyable to meet you and it was very helpful to hear what the centre means to you and your families. You made it very clear to us that you greatly appreciate the staff and services at the centre, and many of you told us the centre has had a very positive effect on your lives. We found that the caring aspect of the centre is very strong, and all receive a very high level of support, especially those of you who are experiencing changes in your life.

Your children and family centre has many good features and quite a few that are excellent. Procedures for making sure children are safe from possible harm and

abuse are exceptionally good because the staff are very knowledgeable about the correct information and procedures to help keep children safe. Many of you told us that you and your children feel very safe at the centre and that you trust staff.

The provision available at the centre for children and adult groups is superb. The nursery and crèche provide high quality care and education for your children, and services are planned to make sure they suit your needs very well to have the most benefit. We could see how enjoyable the children and many of you find some of these sessions and how successful they are at helping you and your children to learn.

Many of you told us how much you value the wide range of useful services offered by the centre, such as the excellent outreach service, and by partners such as health and social care. The centre has very good links with these partner agencies to help provide as wide a range of services as possible.

The centre makes a good contribution to helping you and your families improve your health, and they work with the health visitors and other health professionals to do this. We have asked the centre to develop these services even more by working closely with health services and evaluating the effects of this work. The centre already asks many of you to give your views on the services you use, and they are planning to develop this to give more detailed information. We have also asked the centre management team to develop their use of data and evaluation to provide a clear view of what elements of the centre are working best, and which need more support or resources.

During the inspection, we met members of the governing body and the Community Alliance, which provide strong governance for the centre. Some parents sit on these boards and represent your views well to contribute to the leadership of the centre. Other parents are involved in the Friends group, helping to raise money to buy resources for the centre, and to build more links with the local community.

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