

# Inspection report for Sidley Children's Centre

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<b>Local authority</b>	East Sussex
<b>Inspection number</b>	384090
<b>Inspection dates</b>	8–9 February 2012
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<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	Not previously inspected
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<b>Linked school if applicable</b>	
<b>Linked early years and childcare, if applicable</b>	Rainbow Childcare Centre EY397764

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 representatives from a range of partner agencies and the local authority, members of the local advisory group including the chairperson, and frontline staff. They observed the centre's work, looked at a range of relevant documentation, and visited a number of groups at the centre as well as some community-based groups.

## Information about the centre

Sidley Children's Centre is one of six centres in the Rother area of East Sussex. It is a phase 2 centre which was designated in October 2007. Services operate from within the centre's building, at other local community venues, and local schools. Some services are offered at other local children's centres. The centre serves an area of high deprivation with over 90% of children aged under five years living in the top third ranked areas for deprivation in the country. Around 37% of families are claiming out of work benefits. Residential areas consist of a large proportion of social housing, rented accommodation and privately-owned homes.

Registered day care is provided on site by the Rainbow Childcare Centre which provides full day care for children aged under five years. A youth centre is located next to the children's centre. Crèche facilities are commissioned through the Bexhill and Battle Under Fives Association.

The majority of families in the reach area are of White British heritage, with a small and increasing number of Eastern European families including Albanian and Polish. Children's levels of skills and understanding on entry to school are lower than those expected for their age. At the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage around 43% of children achieve at least 78 points across the Early Years Foundation Stage, with communication, language and literacy the weaker area.

The centre provides the full core offer services and works in partnership with colleagues from a number of agencies. Governance arrangements are provided by the local authority. A local advisory group oversees the work of the three Bexhill Centres. There is another local advisory group for three other centres in the area and the minutes of the two group's meetings are combined.

## 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

Sidley Children's Centre is making a good contribution overall to improving outcomes for families. Over 97% of families are registered at the centre and take up rates are excellent and improving. The centre has some outstanding features including the contribution families make to the centre, the care, guidance and support they receive and safeguarding arrangements. However, health outcomes for families are satisfactory and the centre is working hard to improve these and has identified this as a priority. For example, they are piloting the Good Start programme.

Centre staff are highly committed to improving outcomes for families in the area. Groups are well attended and families benefit from a wide range of activities and experiences. One parent echoed the views of many, 'Without the centre my daughter would not be so sociable or confident to separate. My daughter is off to the best start in life.' The centre is well respected by families who see it as an integral part of the Sidley area. It provides an inclusive environment which all parts of the community are encouraged to access. Resources available at the centre effectively promote the diversity of the local families. The centre has access to translation and interpreting services and uses them to obtain information in community languages.

Safeguarding is a high priority. A range of highly effective safeguarding policies and procedures are in place and as a result families report feeling safe at that the centre. Safer recruitment procedures for staff and centre volunteers are comprehensive and include ongoing training in safeguarding and specialist areas. Excellent

communication between agencies ensures that families identified as most in need receive a fully integrated package of support, which includes individual focused work from the family outreach service. Staff treat families with respect and see them as individuals. One parent commented, 'Staff know your story and remember your baby's name.' Families are actively encouraged to contribute to the centre's work at all levels through a range of methods.

Resources are very effectively managed. Some activities are planned on a district basis to avoid duplication. Staffing is also organised on a district basis and as a result services are targeted where there is most need. Group sessions are well attended and ongoing evaluation of services and careful planning ensure that they have a positive impact on improving outcomes.

The centre produces a comprehensive self-evaluation and priorities from this feed effectively into the centre's business plan. The centre has access to a wide range of data which is used effectively to assess and evaluate the centre's work and to target services. The centre has introduced some systems to track children through the Early Years Foundation Stage and parents' access to training and employment. There are missed opportunities to extend this work across the centre.

Staff work well as a team, and have an excellent understanding of the community and the partner agencies and services available to families. There is good access to a range of support and training which assists them in undertaking their roles effectively. The area coordinator and assistant area coordinators provide clear leadership and provide a visible management presence in the centre. Staff demonstrate high levels of commitment to improving outcomes for families and to raising their aspirations. They are supported and challenged by the local advisory group in continuing to develop services and this means that the centre has good capacity for improvement.

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

### **Recommendations for further improvement**

- Implement effective strategies to improve the health outcomes for all families in the reach area particularly:
  - improve breastfeeding rates to at least local authority averages
  - reduce obesity rates.
- Develop effective tracking systems in order to be able to evaluate the longer-term impact of services and to ensure sustained and improved outcomes in all areas.

## **How good are outcomes for families?**

<b>2</b>
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Promoting the safety of families is a high priority for the centre. Families who need additional support benefit from the work of the family outreach service and in times of crisis families gain excellent support. Outreach work is clearly focused and there is

good evidence of improved outcomes. The low re-referral rate indicates that the work brings about sustained improvements. Parents with mental health needs are well supported by sensitive staff.

Healthy lifestyles are promoted through the provision of healthy snacks and displays. The Rainbow Cookbook, devised by the nursery, contains healthy recipes for families. The on-site community café provides healthy, affordable meals. Activities, such as Kick Start, encourage families to take part in physical play and exercise. However, obesity levels in children are increasing. Breastfeeding rates are low and significantly below local authority averages. However, highly-targeted breastfeeding support for teenage parents has had a significant impact so that the majority now breastfeed. The Good Start programme, which the centre is actively involved in, will focus on improving health outcomes and will include the provision of breastfeeding peer supporters. It is too early to assess the impact of the new programme.

Families enthusiastically engage with, and enjoy, groups at the centre and in the community. Staff are good role models and educators. They involve parents in their children's play. There are excellent links between the on-site nursery and the centre, with some staff working across both provisions. Groups follow the Early Years Foundation Stage and parents are given practical advice about how to continue activities at home. Excellent links have been built with local primary schools and good work has been undertaken on supporting children's learning in identified weaker areas. Transition arrangements are very effective and children are well prepared for school. Parents have good opportunities for learning and development and benefit from courses such as first aid and courses on basic numeracy and literacy. There is a popular volunteer programme with a comprehensive induction and ongoing support package. Good links have been established with Jobcentre Plus, Learn Direct and Bexhill College so that parents can access training and support back into employment. Staff work with parents to support them in their learning and have been proactive in devising individual plans. The introduction of the employment tracker will enable the centre to be able to assess more effectively the impact of this work on supporting families' economic stability.

The centre is highly committed to involving parents in its work at all levels. Their views and ideas are sought in informal ways through the groups and through more formal routes such as the parent involvement group and the local advisory group. Parents are also actively involved in designing some services. For example, a large number have been actively involved in shaping the Good Start programme. One parent commented, 'We really feel that we are listened to and our opinions are valued.'

These are the grades for the outcomes for families

<p><b>The extent to which children, including those from target groups, are physically, mentally and emotionally healthy and families have healthy lifestyles</b></p>	<p><b>3</b></p>
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<b>The extent to which children are safe and protected, their welfare concerns are identified and appropriate steps taken to address them</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The extent to which all children and parents, including those from target groups, enjoy and achieve educationally and in their personal and social development</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>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</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>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</b>	<b>2</b>

## **How good is the provision?**

<b>2</b>
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Space at the centre is used creatively and effectively to provide a range of services matched to the needs of families. The early years teaching and support service has office space and staff from the new Good Start programme will be located in office space adjacent to the centre. Taxi bursaries are available to assist some families to access groups.

The centre has built very strong links with an extensive range of partner agencies and schools within Sidley and Rother. Information is available on a wide range of services and staff are proactive in signposting families to other services. As a result, families receive a seamless service of support.

Families receive an outstanding level of care, guidance and support. Many spoke very highly to inspectors about how the centre supported them, for example, 'It has improved my confidence, self-belief and skills.' They are encouraged to treat each other with respect. Staff see all families as individuals and are committed to supporting them in achieving the best possible outcomes.

The work of the family outreach service is highly effective. The clear focus of this work, comprehensive assessment, and effective communication and information sharing between agencies ensure that all families receive very good levels of support.

There is an ongoing process of evaluation for all services which includes analysis of data to assess attendance and to ensure that services are meeting the needs of families from target groups. The centre has correctly identified the need to ensure that services become more targeted and well placed to continue this work.

A comprehensive learning and development programme is in place. A range of structured parenting programmes are available which improve family relationships and help parents to understand their children. Parents have access to a range of courses which will support them in developing employability skills. Packages of support can be tailored to the individual needs of the parents and this is enhanced by the good links with the local college and training providers. There are some

opportunities for parents to undertake accredited courses. Courses such as English for speakers of other languages are popular and well attended. Staff have high aspirations of parents and many benefit from the volunteer scheme; some have been successful in obtaining employment at the centre.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

<b>The extent to which the range of services, activities and opportunities meet the needs of families, including those in target groups</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which the centre promotes purposeful learning, development and enjoyment for all families, including those in target groups</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The quality of care, guidance and support offered to families, including those in target groups</b>	<b>1</b>

## **How effective are the leadership and management?**

<b>2</b>
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The area coordinator and senior managers work well together and are fully committed to driving improvements and raising standards. They are assisted by a strong team who shares their passion and commitment. Line management arrangements are clear and understood. Staff receive a good package of support and training. Governance arrangements are fully embedded with clear lines of accountability. The advisory group sets challenging targets for the centre and is becoming more effective in holding it to account; however, this information is not always recorded in a clear format.

The centre provides excellent value for money and the staff and resources are effectively deployed. Space at the centre is very well utilised. The community café encourages all areas of the community to engage with the centre. Effective rental of rooms at the centre generates additional income. The crèche, commissioned by the local under fives association, supports community sustainability. Excellent monitoring systems ensure that services are well focused at those families most in need of support and intervention.

The centre provides an inclusive environment which is reflected in the displays and resources available. The achievement gap between the most disadvantaged children and the rest is beginning to close. Information and publicity are available through a translation and interpreting service, with some information readily available at the centre. Staff work effectively with a range of partners, including the Rother Race Action Forum, to promote community cohesion. The centre is proactive in analysing data about specific groups, including target groups, children with disabilities and families from the Black and minority ethnic community, to ensure that services are reaching out to all parts of the community and improving outcomes.

Safeguarding procedures are exemplary. Rigorous and robust safeguarding procedures are consistently applied across all aspects of the centre. Clear procedures

ensure that the details of families who are referred to social care but do not meet the threshold for input are passed on to the family outreach service who can offer a range of support. Many families benefit from an integrated package of support, where roles are clearly defined. The centre has been proactive in developing the Good Start programme and the family outreach service will play a key role, alongside health colleagues.

The centre evaluates the effectiveness of its groups and overall service in a wide range of ways. Service specifications are completed for all groups and these are reviewed annually. Data are also used at all levels to evaluate the centre's work. Tracking systems have recently been introduced to more effectively assess the impact of the centre's work in bringing about longer-term improvements for families. This is not yet fully embedded or extended across all areas of the centre.

Families have excellent opportunities through the parent involvement group to feed their views into the work of the centre via the local advisory group. A number of parents sit on the advisory group. Ongoing evaluations of services are also undertaken and contribute to improving services. The centre is proactive in seeking children's views. Parental involvement on the Good Start programme planning is exceptional. Their views are taken into account; their experiences of parenting and the contribution they bring are highly valued and changes have been made to the programme as a result.

These are the grades for leadership and management

<b>The extent to which governance, accountability, professional supervision and day-to-day management arrangements are clear and understood</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness of evaluation and its use in setting ambitious targets which secure improvement in outcomes</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which resources are used and managed efficiently and effectively to meet the needs of families, including those in target groups</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The extent to which equality is promoted and diversity celebrated, illegal or unlawful discrimination is tackled and the centre fulfils its statutory duties</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness of the centre's policy, procedures and work with key agencies in safeguarding children and, where applicable, vulnerable adults</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>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</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>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</b>	<b>1</b>

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## Summary for centre users

We inspected the Sidley Children's Centre on 8 and 9 February 2012. We judged the centre as good overall.

The centre provides a very welcoming environment for families, where you feel safe. Many of you told us how you enjoy attending the centre and the difference it has made to your lives. The staff team is committed to working with you and helping you to improve the outcomes for you and your families. All appropriate checks are undertaken on staff and volunteers to ensure that they are suitable to work with children. This includes ongoing training in safeguarding.

Centre staff act as good role models for you and offer practical support and guidance with a very wide range of issues. Those of you who may need additional support benefit from work provided by the family outreach service workers. They work with you on issues where you are experiencing difficulties and support you in overcoming them. Some of you benefit from attending the structured parenting programmes and told us how it improved your relationship with your children. You are able to build on this good work.

The centre provides healthy snacks for your children and there is information at the centre which offers you advice on healthy lifestyles. Some of you benefit from the healthy meals and snacks provided at the community café. Breastfeeding rates are low. The obesity level of children in the reach area is high. We have asked the centre to look at how they can improve the health outcomes of you and your families so that your children have the best start in their early years. These include how to encourage more of you to breastfeed and to reduce obesity rates in your children.

The centre has worked hard to establish itself as part of the community and we can see that they have been successful in doing this. Staff have built excellent links with a range of partner agencies and community groups and this ensures that you receive a good level of support. Links with key agencies involved with safeguarding are excellent and this ensures that you receive a raft of support. Staff contribute to community events and encourage you to become involved too. Many of you are involved in the parent involvement group and you told us that you feel that staff are truly interested in what you have to say. Some of you have been actively involved in the planning of the new Good Start programme where you have made a valuable contribution to the design of the programme.

Staff at all levels are committed to working in partnership with you to bring about improvements to your lives. They know the community well and understand the barriers that you need to overcome. They offer you exceptional levels of care, guidance and support. We heard many positive comments from you about the staff including 'workers are great' and 'staff are brilliant'. At times of crisis you feel able to approach the centre for support.

Many of you benefit from attending courses at the centre; these cover a wide range of subjects and run for different amounts of time. Courses such as cookery and first aid are popular and give you practical skills which you can build on. Some of you are now part of the volunteer programme and some of you are peer supporters to parents who breastfeed their young children. Some staff were previously parents at the centre and through volunteering and developing their skills have been successful in obtaining paid employment at the centre. The centre has devised a way of tracking the achievements of your progress through learning and into employment or further training. We have asked the centre to extend this tracking to cover all areas of the centre in order to be able to evaluate more effectively their work with you.

The centre provides your children with a range of different activities which are linked to the Early Years Foundation Stage. Groups such as Stay and Play and the music group are well attended. Children enjoy these activities and the opportunity to try new experiences and it gives you opportunities to join in with their play. You are provided with practical information about activities which you can continue at home with your children. Teenage parents are very well supported at the centre. Some services are offered at community venues and at other children's centres and for some families a taxi bursary is available.

Thank you to everybody who took the time to come and speak with us and to let us know your thoughts and views about the centre. We are very grateful to you all and we wish you and your families all the very best for the future.

The full report is available from your centre or on our website: [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk).