

Freemantle Sure Start Children's Centre

Fryatt Centre, Paynes Road, Freemantle SO15 3BY

Inspection date 2–3 July 2013

Overall effectiveness	This inspection:	Good	2
	Previous inspection:	Not previously inspected	
Access to services by young children and families		Outstanding	1
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.

- The centre knows all its children and families extremely well and a high percentage of them benefit from its services, including those most in need. This is because it uses information and data from a wide range of sources and partners very well to identify the needs of families and what support would be best to meet them.
- The centre is very successful in providing for children under three years of age, including providing sufficient places to meet the needs of two-year-olds who will be eligible for free education.
- The leadership and management and governance of the centre have been instrumental in ensuring the continuity of services and the maintenance of morale through a difficult period of rationalisation and change. The local authority set them realistic but challenging targets to improve their work still further.
- The centre has a wide range of good partnerships which provide a good variety of activities and courses for families. The services are relevant and appropriate, and users, such as teenage mothers and young dads, are encouraged to participate through effective relationships with those who work with them in their own homes. It also supports families well who need help with learning English.
- Children's safety and well-being are at the heart of the centre's work, and the centre ensures that there is equal access to all activities and that discrimination of any kind is not tolerated.

It is not outstanding because:

- Not enough mothers sustain breastfeeding after six to eight weeks, especially those from White British backgrounds.
- Not all members of the advisory board are totally sure of what their role involves, particularly in relation to challenging leaders to ensure the centre continues to develop and improve.
- The centre does not often take the opportunity to directly observe activities as part of its monitoring. This means leaders do not always see what could be improved further and feed this into the training and development programmes of staff.

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 three Additional inspectors.

The inspectors held meetings with the manager and project coordinator of the children's centre, the local authority member responsible for the children's centre, health, education and social care partners, family and community care workers, play leaders, volunteers and representatives of the advisory board.

The inspectors visited activities at the Clovelly and Orchard Lane sites which are also provided by the centre.

They observed the centre's work, and looked at a range of relevant documentation.

Inspection team

Christine Huard, Lead inspector	Additional inspector Inspector
Graham Saltmarsh, Team Inspector	Additional inspector Inspector
Claire Griffin, Team Inspector	Additional inspector Inspector

Full report

Information about the centre

Services for children and families are delivered at the Fryatt Centre but because this is a small gateway centre (70% offer), users are also signposted to services at Central and Orchard Lane. The centre is managed directly by the local authority. The day-to-day management of the centre is the responsibility of the team manager, who is also responsible for one other centres, a nursery and the city's two-year-old project, and the centre coordinator. The provision is currently in a period of transition as all the Southampton children's centres are being reorganised into clusters or groups. Freemantle Centre will become part of a group with North Shirley and Central Children's Centres. At present there is a separate advisory board for Freemantle but this will be reconfigured with new terms of reference for the cluster within the next two weeks.

Freemantle is just outside the city centre and has undergone significant change in the population in the last three years with a large increase in young families. About half the area covered by the centre falls into the bottom 30% most deprived nationally. Nevertheless data show there is a below average proportion who are workless or on benefits. The population has become more varied from being largely White British to being approximately 50% White British, 25% from other White backgrounds and 25% from minority ethnic groups. The number of families from Eastern Europe and South East Asia is rising steadily. Most children in the area start their early years provision with skills at below the levels expected for their age, particularly in communication and literacy.

What does the centre/group need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that all members of the advisory board, especially those who are new, are totally confident and sure of what their role entails, particularly in relation to challenging the centre to bring about further improvements.
- Develop monitoring strategies to feed into performance management to include more formal observations of activities in order to further raise practice to outstanding.
- Work with parents to ensure that more sustain breastfeeding after six to eight weeks, especially those from White British families.

Inspection judgements

Access to services by young children and families

Outstanding

- The wide range of partnerships with other agencies means that the centre receives excellent information about all the families in its area, enabling it to identify families most in need and define where needs are greatest.
- Support for families most in need, such as those from Eastern Europe, has been well matched to need and they have received excellent help in enabling them to build a new life in this country. A series of workshops led to users identifying their need for more specific English language lessons, which resulted in the provision of English for speakers of other languages (ESOL) sessions.
- The centre is well on target to meet its requirements for the take up of funded early education for two-year-olds. It has worked extremely effectively with the local schools and existing services such as nurseries to ensure that 900 places will be available over the next two years to meet demand. It has also worked hard with early years providers to ensure all places are of at least good quality.
- In order to raise the speaking and listening skills of young children, the centre has provided a range of activities for babies and children from nought to three years old, such as Baby Play, Tots and

Tunes, and Baby massage. Those who would benefit most have been encouraged to attend by workers such as midwives and health visitors. The activities include provision for the Every Child a Talker (ECAT) initiative. This is already proving to be effective in improving outcomes at the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage. Although the increase so far in the numbers attaining the expected levels in communication and literacy has been relatively small, from 48% to 56%, there has not yet been a group of children who have completed the whole centre programme.

- Attendance at courses and activities is carefully monitored by the staff and the centre has excellent, sympathetic follow-up procedures to find out why the attendance by a family may have become erratic or have ceased.

The quality of practice and services

Good

- Baby Play sessions give staff good opportunities to show parents how they can play and interact with their children in a number of different ways. In addition, support staff are able to give much valued one-to-one support to individual mothers who may have specific needs or concerns.
- Families speak highly about the level of support they receive. One parent who had attended the Incredible Years parenting programme told inspectors, 'The centre gave me my life back.'
- Courses for teenage mothers and young dads provide good support for young parents in a non-threatening and sympathetic atmosphere.
- The centre has rightly identified the rate of breastfeeding six weeks after birth as a key area for development. Although initial breastfeeding rates are high at about 85%, this falls off after six weeks to around 58%. The rate has improved through working with minority ethnic families to change established cultural practices. However, the flatlining at 58% remains mainly because of low take-up among the White British mothers whom the centre is specifically and appropriately targeting.
- A good range of strategies, such as home safety checks, targeted intervention from different agencies and a clear focus on the safety of the child, has had a positive impact on the safety and well-being of children.
- There are good links with partners such as Jobcentre Plus, and good support is provided for parents who are trying to find employment. The provision of ESOL classes as well as support with the writing of curriculum vitae and application forms have proved beneficial to many families seeking work.
- There is good evidence to show that families from, for example Eastern Europe, are aspirational, and that those who have attended classes have gone on to become volunteers at the centre and from there progressed to successfully obtain further work-related qualifications.
- Although attendance is monitored and followed up, the achievement data from courses are not sufficiently analysed. While individual success cases are well documented there is, as yet, no overall analysis of the participation and success of those within specific groups. There are advanced plans in place for this to occur and work is already being done to provide appropriate software to allow impact to be more easily measured across groups.
- Courses and sessions taught by centre staff are not yet monitored effectively enough. They are not routinely visited nor is their quality assessed in order to identify what improvements may need to be made.

The effectiveness of leadership, governance and management

Good

- The leadership provided by the team manager is strong and effective. There has been very good support from the project leader from a nearby centre during this period of transition and a new team manager and centre coordinator have just been appointed and are about to take up post.

- There is a wholehearted commitment and dedication from the centre staff and they display a determination to do their best for families. There are some concerns about the ability to sustain the current strong levels of service during this period of transition.
- Arrangements for governance are secure. Most members of the advisory board understand how well the centre is doing and the services provided as well as the arrangements for ensuring all staff can provide as high-quality service as possible through training and support.
- The advisory board is about to be disbanded and reconvened with new terms of reference to meet the needs of the new children's centre group. There are good links and liaison between the advisory board and day-to-day management. Effective communication and organisation mean that the centre runs smoothly.
- The advisory board is extremely supportive of the centre's activities. However, not all members seemed entirely sure of its role in monitoring the centre's activities effectively through visits, meetings and observations. Some members challenge the centre effectively on its performance and all have high expectations of the centre to meet the targets it is set.
- Support from the local authority and evaluation of services via its annual and six monthly reviews are effective and ensure the centre continues to target key areas and sustain good levels of performance.
- The good quality supervision for the staff feeds into a well-thought-out and appropriate performance management structure. However, opportunities are missed to monitor the on-site activities and courses taught by centre staff in order to improve practice still further. The links between strategic planning and service provision are effective.
- The centre is committed to promoting equality and diversity and it involves as many people as necessary in ensuring that the needs of all are met effectively, especially for families and disabled children or children who have special educational needs. It is committed to taking account of the views of all families, often through the very proactive parents' forum, and the views of the advisory board.
- Safeguarding arrangements are excellent and all essential policies and procedures are in place. Rigorous checks have been made on all adults, staff and volunteers who work at the centre and training for all staff in safeguarding and child protection is robust and up to date. Policies and protocols are all very clear and all records are kept very securely. Procedures to ensure the safety of families who use the centre, such as risk assessments, are wide-ranging and rigorous.
- The arrangements for monitoring and assessing the needs of children subject to child protection plans or the common assessment framework (CAF), looked after children and children in need are excellent. Records kept are meticulous and wide-ranging and cases are tracked assiduously. Case studies demonstrate the success of the centre in meeting and providing for the families.
- The centre has established a wide range of partnerships and services in order to ensure provision has a positive impact on the lives of the families. Resources are well managed and reflect well the determination not to duplicate and replicate services. As a result the centre works constructively with other providers to benefit the centre and its families.

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
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 details

Unique reference number	21216
Local authority	Southampton
Inspection number	421461
Managed by	The local authority

Approximate number of children under five in the reach area	1,274
Centre leader	Simon Dennison Team manager, and Jin Chahal Children's Centre Co-ordinator
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected
Telephone number	02380 238190
Email address	Simon.dennison@southampton.gov.uk

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