

Inspection report for Chaul End Children's Centre

Local authority	Luton
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Centre leader	Shagufta Anwar
Date of previous inspection	Not applicable
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Linked school if applicable	Not applicable
Linked early years and childcare, if applicable	Downside Children's Pre-School EY271008 Chaul End Children's Centre Nursery EY317340

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 an additional inspector and an early years inspector.

The inspectors held meetings with centre staff, local authority managers and staff, parents and carers, representatives from the Pre-School Learning Alliance and from the management board, health service professionals and members of partner organisations.

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

Information about the centre

Chaul End Children's Centre is situated on the edge of Challney ward in Luton and includes areas of the Dallow and Saints wards. Approximately 50% of the families that use the Children's Centre live in the Dallow ward which is one of the most deprived in Luton. The life expectancy of adults within this ward is lower than the Luton average by up to seven years. The centre covers seven super output areas of which three are in the top 30% index of multiple deprivation.

The children's centre is a phase one centre which was established in 2006 and is based within the Chaul End Community Centre. Services offered include access to health services, adult learning courses, family support and early education. The centre operates from a two storey purpose built building which also accommodates other services, such as a nursery and adult daycare services. The Pre-School Learning Alliance has a service level agreement with the local authority to deliver the children's centre strategy which includes supporting the centre. A management board acts as an advisory board to the centre.

The previous head of centre, who was also the headteacher of the local school, retired in 2011 and was replaced by a new headteacher who no longer manages the centre. An interim head of centre has been appointed until March 2012 when it will become part of a 'hub and spoke' cluster of several children's centres.

The majority of the population in the reach area are from minority ethnic families, predominantly those of Pakistani heritage. However there are small numbers of families from a variety of South Asian, African, Caribbean, Eastern European and White British backgrounds. Around 14.5% of the working age population in the reach area are workless and claiming benefits. This is lower than the Luton average of 16.1%. Approximately 7% of families in the area receive working tax credits. Deprivation figures for Challney ward show that 19% of children are living in poverty. Children enter early years education with skills, knowledge and abilities that are below those expected for their age.

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

3

Capacity for sustained improvement

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

3

Main findings

Chaul End offers a satisfactory range of services to families. It is a welcoming and inclusive centre and its work in areas like health promotion and learning for children and for adults makes a positive difference to the lives of the family. 'I was depressed before, now my life is so different' was the view of one parent who uses many services at the centre. Centre staff and their partners have a sensitive approach to the needs of families and work very effectively to promote equality and to reduce disadvantage caused by barriers such as language, culture and disability. Staff work well together and have coped well with recent changes. However, staffing resources are limited, particularly for outreach work. This limits the capacity of the centre to reach out to all parts of the wider community and engage new families.

The centre is still developing its ability to use data effectively to assess the needs of the reach area. Although it obtains attendance data and data for some activities, the centre is not yet in a position to systematically analyse and use participation data for all services or to track and systematically record support given to families.

Partners work satisfactorily with the centre to provide services. However, although

their views are represented via 'partnership cluster' meetings which are held for a group of children's centres, partners are not members of the management board which acts as an advisory board.

One of the strengths of the centre is its rigorous approach to safeguarding and to educating families about safety. For cultural reasons, there has been resistance from some families who do not want to engage with the Common Assessment Framework (CAF) process, however, staff use a range of alternative assessment methods to respond well to safeguarding issues.

The provision for children and adults to learn is also a key strength of the centre's work. Through effective partnership work with the local adult learning service, the nursery and the local pre-school, good quality learning opportunities are available for parents and children.

Although the centre is in a stage of transition and current management arrangements are temporary, leaders and managers know what needs to be done to improve services. The centre's ability to self-evaluate is satisfactory and performance management is also satisfactory. The moderation of the self-evaluation report by managers from the Pre-School Learning Alliance is effective in ensuring self-evaluation is evidence based and accurate. For this reason and because leadership and management are satisfactory, the centre's capacity for sustained improvement is satisfactory.

What does the centre need to do to improve further?

Recommendations for further improvement

The local authority should work with centre staff to:

- obtain and use data as effective tools to systematically monitor the impact of provision and measure participation rates
- extend the existing capacity for outreach work to ensure the needs of the wider community are effectively assessed and met
- implement a systematic mechanism for recording and monitoring the support given to families
- ensure partners are represented when the new advisory board is established.

How good are outcomes for families?

3

Families benefit from a wide range of health support that is offered at the centre

which includes midwives and breastfeeding clinics. Obesity rates are high in the reach area but are reducing. This is due in part to the active promotion of healthy eating at the centre. Work with dieticians has been instrumental in helping staff model good practice by providing healthy snacks for children. Oral health has previously been a problem in the community with high rates of tooth decay in children. However, data show that the centre has been successful in increasing the number of children who are now registered with dentists.

Parents feel safe at the centre and have a good understanding of what actions they can take to make their homes safer. A home safety assessor works with families to provide safety equipment. One parent said 'I like the window restrictors and did not know about them until the assessor told me'. During discussions with parents, their understanding of safeguarding was impressive. For example one parent talked enthusiastically about changes made at home after attending a safety course. The centre has good links with a local Police Community Support Officer (PCSO) who provides regular support and advice to families about local community safety issues. The work of the PCSO has been successful in changing attitudes about car safety and increasing the number of parents who now use seatbelts in cars. The centre works effectively with families who have children on child protection plans and case studies demonstrate the successful progress of families whose children have been removed from the register.

'I can name one everyday activity that can be used to help my child learn to count' was the comment from one parent. This illustrates the centre's success in helping parents and children develop good skills for the future. The centre has also made good use of projects such as the Every Child a Talker (ECAT) project and English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) courses to reduce language barriers. As a result of their improved skills, children and parents have increased levels of confidence. A significant number of parents have progressed to volunteering, further education and employment. Most parents who attend the centre are involved in some aspect of adult learning or training. Advice and guidance about immigration, benefits, education and employment are offered from a range of sources including Jobcentre Plus, the adult learning service and also from a local councillor who offers advice through a regular surgery at the centre.

Local data show that the number of children who achieve 78 points across the Early Years Foundation Stage Profile has increased by 8% between 2007 and 2010. Borough wide data show that the achievement gap is being narrowed between the children in the bottom 20% and the rest. Data from the on-site nursery and at the local primary school also show that children who attend the centre make better progress across the Early Years Foundation Stage Profile and make a better transition to nursery and school than other children. However, data and information about the progress and achievement of children who attend schools other than the one close to the centre are not used to inform a strategy to raise achievement levels for all children in the reach area. Parents make good progress in their personal development and also on adult learning courses. However, data on achievement and information about the progress of all parents are not systematically recorded and

collected.

Behaviour of children is satisfactory and so are relationships between families who use the centre and with staff. Parents are members of the centre's management board and are involved in decision making through their role on the board. Other parents are satisfactorily involved in decision making through attendance at a weekly 'coffee morning' which acts as a parents' forum.

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	3
The extent to which children are safe and protected, their welfare concerns are identified and appropriate steps taken to address them	2
The extent to which all children and parents, including those from target groups, enjoy and achieve educationally and in their personal and social development	3
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	3
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?

3

Assessment of community and families' needs is satisfactory. Outreach work is satisfactory and has led to increased engagement of families from the wider community. Centre staff and their partners are well informed about the local issues that affect the community and provision is responsive to community and individual family needs. However, data are not used systematically to assess needs, particularly those of the wider community. Some data are available but a systematic approach to their use and analysis, particularly to demonstrate impact is still developing. Centre staff are, however, clear about the key target groups for their work such as minority ethnic groups and within those groups, those who have low levels of English language skills. They are also developing work with other target groups such as fathers and families who are vulnerable because they are victims of domestic violence or experience social isolation.

Provision to help children and adults learn and to develop parenting, communication and language skills is good. 'Sometimes I became aggressive and shouted at the children but now I can control myself and give them attention' was the comment of one parent who attended a parenting course. The centre recognises well the cultural and language barriers faced by many families. It has planned provision that is purposeful and helps to reduce these barriers. There is a good range of adult

learning courses on offer to parents which is relevant to their needs. Other activities, such as trips to the seaside and to museums, offer enrichment opportunities for families and enable them to have experiences that they have not had before because of financial constraints or because of lack of knowledge about these opportunities.

The support offered to families is satisfactory and as a result, all outcomes for users are at least satisfactory. Families receive appropriate support when it is most needed. Case study evidence and testimonies from families demonstrate that during times of crises, they receive the right level of intervention and support from centre staff and its partners. Guidance and information are also satisfactory. However, there is no systematic recording of the support given to families and no monitoring of the impact of that support.

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	3
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	3

How effective are the leadership and management?

3

Staff and partners have a clear understanding of their roles and responsibilities. The links between the local authority, the Pre-school Learning Alliance and the centre are satisfactory. The management board satisfactorily fulfils its role to support and challenge the centre. Although there is currently no partner representation on the board, plans are in place for partners to be represented on the advisory boards that will be formed after the re-structuring of children's centre services in Luton after March 2012.

Performance management is satisfactory and a system of regular reporting and meetings are used to monitor performance. Evaluations are used satisfactorily to collect feedback from parents about courses and activities. The self-evaluation process is appropriate and leaders and managers have a sufficiently accurate understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the centre. Although measurable targets are not set, priorities are identified in the centre's development plan and in the annual conversation report.

The staff team is small but effective. Staff skills and experience are well deployed and resources, including accommodation, are used appropriately. Managers also use project funding to enhance the available resources and for example have worked jointly with partners to organise community events. Outcomes are mostly satisfactory and some are good, therefore the value for money offered by the centre is

satisfactory. The centre works productively with partners such as those from the local authority, the health services and the local primary school. Parents are valued as partners and user engagement is satisfactory. Suggestions from parents to improve services are welcomed by staff. Outreach work has led to an increase in registrations but there is limited capacity for outreach work.

Centre staff are very committed to improving the life chances of families who are at risk of disadvantage. The gap is narrowing between those who have been previously excluded from accessing services at the centre and in the wider community because of language and cultural barriers. Inclusion for all families is strongly promoted. The needs of families who have children with additional needs or disabilities are well met through the centre's work with an area inclusion co-ordinator and also through an 'opportunity group' that has been set up for these families.

The centre's arrangements for safeguarding are thorough and practice is regularly monitored. Multi-agency work and safeguarding of families affected by domestic violence are good. An audit of safeguarding practice and a separate welfare audit ensures areas for improvement are identified. Recruitment checks including Criminal Records Bureau checks and also records of checks of staff from partner agencies are rigorously carried out. Staff are suitably trained in safeguarding at levels appropriate to their roles. They have a good understanding of safeguarding procedures and effective systems are in place to ensure early intervention and detailed recording of safeguarding concerns.

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	3
The effectiveness of evaluation and its use in setting ambitious targets which secure improvement in outcomes	3
The extent to which resources are used and managed efficiently and effectively to meet the needs of families, including those in target groups	3
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	2
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	3
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	3

Any other information used to inform the judgements made during this inspection

None

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Summary for centre users

We inspected the Chaul End Children's Centre on 12–13 January 2012. We judged the centre as satisfactory overall.

Many thanks to all of you who took the time to speak to us during the inspection. We really appreciate your contribution to the process. Like you we found the centre to be a very welcoming place for families from different backgrounds. Staff work hard to make sure all families have an equal chance of success and have equal access to services offered by the centre and this is something that really impressed us.

From talking to you, we know how much you and your children enjoy attending activities at the centre. We also know from what you told us and from evidence that we looked at, that many of you have particularly benefited from attending ESOL and 'Improve your English' courses. The opportunities the centre offers both parents and children to learn and gain skills are a real strength. We'd like the centre to build on this and try and encourage more families from the community to use the centre.

Some of you have gained qualifications and also progressed to volunteering, to further education or have found jobs. We think that the many opportunities you and your children have to learn and develop skills that will help you for the future and help you find employment is something else that the centre does really well.

One of the other things that impressed us was your understanding about how you can keep your families safe. Some of you gave us some very good examples of what you do differently at home as a result of what you have learnt. We believe that the centre is very committed to keeping families safe and this is another of its strengths.

To make the centre become even more successful, we have asked the local authority to work with staff to get more statistics about the community and about the people who use the centre. We'd also like staff to do more to monitor the impact of their work. We know that some of you are already involved in the management board but we'd also like to see more involvement from partners on the board, so we've asked the centre to make sure that partners will be members of the new advisory board when it is set up.

Once again, many thanks for taking the time to talk to us during the inspection and we wish you all the best for the future.

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