

Inspection report for Coalville Sure Start Children's Centre

Local authority	Leicestershire
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Date of previous inspection	Not applicable
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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 the children's centre coordinator and centre staff, the local partnership coordinator, health professionals and partners who provide services and parents. Inspectors observed the centre's work, and looked at a range of relevant documentation.

Information about the centre

Coalville Sure Start Children's Centre works within a cluster of seven other centres in the North West Leicestershire locality. A children's centre coordinator is responsible for the management of the eight centres. A Locality Partnership Coordinator provides the strategic oversight to the locality. The body responsible for locality governance is the Locality Partnership Group. The locality provides programmes and activities in response to the identified need through the commissioning of services.

Coalville Sure Start Children's Centre is a phase two centre that started its delivery of services in October 2008. The small purpose-built centre has a large family room and two smaller rooms but no onsite childcare facilities. The centre is open five days a week for 48 weeks of the year. It is within easy walking distance for most of its reach families and has good public transport links. The centre covers the wards of Barden, Snibston and Coalville and has 1003 children under the age of 5 in its reach area. Some 3.5% of the population is classed as the most deprived nationally in an overall relatively affluent district. Unemployment in the county is above the national average as are the numbers of young people who are not in education, employment or training. Children's skills, knowledge and abilities on entry to the Early Years Foundation Stage are below those expected for their age. The conception rate among teenagers is high. The families who live around the centre are mainly of White British origin with 2.4% from minority ethnic backgrounds.

Since April 2011, the centre has begun to focus its services to the targeted groups. Since then 810 families from the North West Leicestershire locality have used the children's centre services. Since families travel to various centres to join in the group activities, the centre is unable to identify the families from its reach area or which other centres these families also attend. The service is in a period of transition and is currently undergoing changes alongside many services in the locality.

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

Coalville Sure Start Children's Centre provides a satisfactory level of early childhood services to parents, prospective parents and young children in the reach area and the neighbouring areas. Well qualified, experienced and highly professional workers from various agencies work well together to maximise the benefit of these services to the target groups and improve the well-being of young children. Due to careful scrutiny in the selection of the service providers and stronger focus on the quality of support, workshops sessions and outcomes, the quality of the provision as well as outcomes have improved. The outcomes for users in 'being healthy' and 'economic independence and skills for the future' are good. Due to a relatively short timescale, the full impact of the improvements has not yet translated into good outcomes across all aspects.

Partnerships are working well to the benefit of the users. The locality partnership has established strong links with the local health authority. Local families receive high quality support for breastfeeding, weaning and the development check for children at age two. These programmes ensure that the newborn babies have a healthy start in life. Parents develop confidence and many overcome social isolation. A good number of parents have joined further learning, started doing voluntary work or have secured employment. Help and advice on education, financial and relationship matters is highly effective.

Parents and their children feel safe in the centre. Parents also develop greater understanding of domestic violence, sexual abuse and neglect. The facilities and learning resources including toys in the centre and within the partners' premises are

good. Staff provide a wide range of useful, fun activities that develop children's communication, language and literacy skills to a satisfactory level. Some parents reinforce these skills and start reading to their children. Positive behaviour learnt at the centre lays a solid foundation for good behaviour in Reception Year. Staff provide good care, guidance and support on a range of matters; helping families to deal with many complex issues successfully.

Day-to-day management of the centre is good. Staff understand their roles well. Team working is good. The arrangements for promotion of equality and diversity as well as safeguarding are satisfactory. The users feel welcome and respected. Through its strong work with the partners, the centre provides satisfactory value for money as it is making effective contribution to alleviate poverty and empower its current users to re-engage fully into society.

The locality has established very useful data sharing arrangements with various agencies. It has improved the collection of data at locality and the reach level, but it does not use available data to promote its services to all parents of children including targeted groups. The centre is unable to produce accurate data at the reach level. Managers have not set any targets either to increase the take up of the centre's services or to improve the outcomes for users from its reach area.

Users make positive suggestions to evaluate the directly run and commissioned programmes. This has led to improvements to the quality of the programmes. Partner agencies, such as the adult learning service and the health authority, conduct a thorough evaluation of the projects and programmes. They are well aware of the impact of their services on the users. However, the centre does not play an active role in the ownership and joint evaluation of the programmes.

The centre has revised the arrangements to improve the effectiveness of its recently reformed advisory board. Parents are not represented on the board and are not sufficiently engaged in contributing to the running of the centre or the advisory board.

The recently appointed locality partnership coordinator has made substantial changes to improve the programmes by winning the trust and respect of the partners. The commissioning process is open and transparent. The managers have positively supported a few local voluntary sector and public sector organisations to develop specific and additional programmes to maximise the benefits to the local community.

The centre's self-evaluation report uses broad ranging evidence based on the locality with some specific details about Coalville Sure Start Children's Centre. Although the report graded its overall provision accurately, it failed to identify the key weaknesses identified by the inspectors. The development plan is not sufficiently specific to the centre and lacks appropriate targets.

What does the centre need to do to improve further?

Recommendations for further improvement

- Enable the children's centre to engage with more parents from the reach area by:
 - simplifying the collection of accurate data based on individual families
 - setting specific and measurable targets to increase the reach levels
 - monitoring and managing the performance of the centre against each of its outcomes for the target groups.

- Make a concerted effort to improve the engagement of parents in the running of the centre and the advisory board.

- Increase the extent to which evaluation (including feedback from parents and commissioned services) informs the development of the centre programme and contributes to ensuring improved outcomes for children and families. These include:
 - setting more precise targets and objectives for and with all service providers
 - taking greater ownership of the evaluation provided by all partners and team members
 - establishing a more consistent approach to evaluation and designing the service accordingly.

How good are outcomes for families?

3

Health outcomes for children and their families are good overall. A good number of pregnant teenagers and parents-to-be attend the antenatal clinic in the afternoons. As a result, more children have normal weight at birth. Parents develop deeper knowledge about healthy eating and healthy ways of cooking by gaining expert knowledge from the dietician sessions. The centre is effective at identifying and supporting vulnerable groups, such as drug users and those experiencing domestic abuse. Many mothers experiencing depression overcome social isolation, gain confidence, and improve their self-esteem. They make new friends and develop strong networks of support. Mothers appreciate the benefits of breastfeeding and nurse their babies for the first crucial weeks to strengthen their babies' immune systems. However, the centre has not been effective at reducing the smoking levels among parents. Additionally, the uptake of exercise and physical activities is poor and relatively more children in the area are still overweight and obese in Reception Year.

Parents and children display adequate awareness of risks and safety precautions. Staff are proficient in the use of Common Assessment Framework and work very well with other agencies to protect children from emotional, sexual and physical harm as well as neglect. In one case, staff provided extensive and successful support to parents with learning disabilities and/or difficulties, to enable them to look after their children.

Users enjoy learning, developing knowledge and acquiring skills. Children develop an

appropriate level of social skills and display good behaviour in groups. Family learning courses help parents to learn the skills of reading to their children. However, the centre has not been able to narrow the attainment gap between the lowest 20% and the national average. Children's scores for the Early Years Foundation Stage Profile, although improving, are still below average as are their communication, language and literacy skills. The centre has also not been able to increase the participation levels of dads in various activities.

The timely help from the Citizens Advice Bureau has helped families to budget more effectively. Some families have been able to claim their full benefit entitlement. Further education, including computer classes, combined with extensive guidance on making job applications has made a substantial contribution to improving the parents' economic stability and independence. However, the centre has not established firm links with the Jobcentre Plus and does not actively promote its services.

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	2
The extent to which children are safe and protected, their welfare concerns are identified and appropriate steps taken to address them	3
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?

2

Since April 2011, the centre has made significant improvements to the quality of its provision and to all outcomes, by taking a highly diligent approach to needs assessment and establishing the appropriate provision. Previously, the centre did not focus on the quality of its provision or users' outcomes. Through a commissioning approach, managers are contracting with the expert organisations, including some from the voluntary sector who have detailed knowledge and sound experience of working with the target groups. Parents and children enjoy learning in a safe learning environment. The outreach work is effective. The outreach workers meet regularly to share good practice.

The 'Living without abuse' project team raises awareness about abuse and provides high intensity support to families. Home Start services provide valuable support to

mothers recovering from postnatal depression.

The centre provides and promotes a broad range of purposeful learning, development and enjoyment for the parents and children from several centres. Staff plan their sessions and workshops well with a logical and clear learning focus. 'Learning through Play' sessions encourage children to develop their language and parents become more aware of the value of play and the associated learning. Children love making models with play dough and recycled materials, as well as 'bug hunts'. First aid courses, sleeping, weaning and behaviour management are some of the other examples of purposeful learning that add to the enjoyment of individuals and groups. The toy library is, in the words of one parent, 'one of the very best services the council offers.'

Support from the health visiting service and information, advice and guidance from the Learning in the Children's Centre worker are excellent. The quality of care, guidance and support to families are very effective. Staff are kind, caring and compassionate. They are extremely knowledgeable about the services in the locality and refer families promptly when they cannot provide the required help and support themselves.

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	2
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	2

How effective are the leadership and management?

3

The governance and accountability arrangements are effective and are clearly understood by the district council, the county council, the children's trust board and the public service board, Leicestershire Together. The accountable body has good representation from a wide range of managers from the voluntary and the statutory sector. Staff understand fully the clear arrangements for governance and management.

The commissioning group selects partners after careful scrutiny. The service level agreements focus strongly on outcomes and the quality of workshops and sessions. Monitoring arrangements are robust. Since April 2011, managers have improved the outcomes for health and economic independence as well as the quality of provision. The relationships with the partners are stronger because of the focussed monthly meetings. Family outreach workers improve their skills and knowledge through good professional support, guidance and staff development. Regular team meetings encourage sharing of good practice and monthly supervision is effective. However,

staff are not set any specific targets for increased engagement of users and improvement of outcomes.

The centre promotes equality and diversity to its users appropriately through its services. The centre is accessible for wheelchair users. Staff have good awareness of equality and diversity issues. They provide valuable support, including crèche and transport facilities, to enable users to take part in activities. The culture, ethos and practice of the centre promote respect and inclusion. However, the number of users from minority ethnic groups remains low and the centre does not fully promote cultural diversity sufficiently well.

Managers conduct rigorous Criminal Records Bureau checks on staff, volunteers and other staff delivering services from the centre. Staff are appropriately trained and are aware of how to recognise abuse and of the reporting procedures. Risk assessments of the various activities are robust.

The centre engages satisfactorily with families in the reach area through its partners. Staff respond promptly to the users' views by changing the programme times and the activities and keep them informed about the actions taken. In addition, managers have successfully involved some parents to develop the provision and evaluate the bids from the voluntary and public sector by providing strong support and guidance. Parent satisfaction levels are high.

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	3
The effectiveness of the centre's policy, procedures and work with key agencies in safeguarding children and, where applicable, vulnerable adults	3
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	2
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

Ofsted inspected the centre concurrently with the reinspection of Measham children's centre. Inspectors shared the evidence of some of the common aspects of leadership and management and the delivery of joint provision.

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Summary for centre users

We inspected the Coalville Sure Start Children's Centre on 18–19 January 2012. We judged the centre as satisfactory overall.

Thank you for taking the time to talk to us and offer your opinions of the centre. Many people enjoy coming to the centre to seek high quality help, support and guidance. Some of you have explained how the centre has made a significant difference to your lives and has enabled you to tackle various problems confidently. One parent attributed her confidence and success to the help she received from the centre. Another parent felt that the centre had given her 'a ray of light.'

We agree with you that the central location of the centre is very helpful in accessing a range of children's services. You have told us how the centre has helped you greatly to develop your parenting and child rearing skills. You have benefited significantly from the services of the Citizens Advice Bureau to deal with financial, employment and relationship matters. You have told us that you feel very secure and welcome in the centre and we agree with you.

The centre staff organise a broad range of enjoyable activities for you and your children. Families learn the value of play to the children and participate in activities well. Parents receive helpful advice, guidance and support from the staff and from each other by sharing experiences. Children's behaviour is good and they are prepared well for the school. The centre is providing you with good quality help and support for health issues and improving your child's learning. You have benefited from useful workshops on topics such as 'Mums in Mind', 'Learning through Play' and support from the dietician to improve your knowledge of healthy cooking and eating. You value the childcare and transport support that enables you to learn while your children are well looked after. Although the centre is welcoming, not many dads are taking part in the activities.

The centre staff are highly knowledgeable and very professional. They work very hard to provide services for you. They evaluate their work with you thoroughly. They have made many changes to the activities and services at your request. Although staff ask for your views on the sessions and workshops and how they have

benefitted you, the centre has not done enough to involve you at advisory board level. To improve their services further, we have asked the centre to collect useful data to set targets to increase the numbers of families using the centre and to improve the outcomes reached by everyone who uses it. We have also recommended that the centre take greater ownership of the services by evaluating the programmes jointly with the partners. Finally, we have asked the centre to involve you more effectively in the running of the centre.

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