

Inspection report for Moorside Children's Centre

Local authority	Durham
Inspection number	383464
Inspection dates	17–18 January 2012
Reporting inspector	Jayne Utting HMI

Centre leader	Allison Underwood
Date of previous inspection	Not applicable
Centre address	Moorside Children's Centre Chester Road Moorside Consett DH8 8EQ
Telephone number	01207 590930
Fax number	01207 589504
Email address	allison.underwood@durham.gov.uk

Linked school if applicable	114050 Moorside Primary School
Linked early years and childcare, if applicable	EY356648 New Beginnings

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.

Report Published: February 2012

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
www.ofsted.gov.uk



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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.

An inspection of the co-located primary school was carried out at the same time as the inspection of the centre under Section 5 of the Education Act 2005. The report of this inspection is available on our website www.ofsted.gov.uk

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and one early years inspector.

The inspectors visited a range of provision across the centre. They also held meetings with senior managers from the centre, parents, members of the advisory board and a number of partners including Early Years Foundation Stage and childcare partners, health, education and children's social care professionals and representatives from Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB), the local area action partnership and Jobcentre Plus. They observed the centre's work and looked at a range of relevant documentation.

Information about the centre

Moorside Children's Centre is a Phase Two centre and is located next to Moorside Primary School. Moorside is a village on the outskirts of Consett, a former steel manufacturing town, which suffered major unemployment in the 1970s and 1980s. The reach population of the centre includes 1135 children aged from birth to four years, with 485 of these children living in some of the top 30% of most deprived wards in the country. Recent figures show that just over 35% of households are lone parents with dependent children. Estimated weekly income is significantly lower than the Durham average. The percentage of children under four years living in households dependent on workless benefits is 18.5%, with 80% of children living in households dependent on benefits of some kind. The large majority of local families are of White British heritage with an increasing proportion of families from the Polish community. The proportion of children attending schools in the area that are known to be eligible for free school meals is above the national average. Most children enter childcare and early education with a much narrower range of experiences and skills than

that expected for their age. The proportion of children who are disabled and those with special educational needs, including those with a statement of special educational needs, is above average.

The local authority has recently undergone a significant restructure and Moorside Children's Centre now sits within the new One Point service. This service delivers support, advice and a range of activities for families and their children aged from birth to 19 years. Moorside Children's Centre is managed by a hub manager based in Consett and a senior lead practitioner who is based at the centre. This cluster also encompasses Leadgate Children's Centre and Benfieldside Children's Centre. The centre hosts a privately run, full-time childcare provision for children from birth to school age as well as a crèche. An advisory board was established in 2010.

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

'I have come such a long way with the support of the centre and I feel I now have a good future ahead for both me and my children', is how one parent described her experience of Moorside Children's Centre. This well-established centre provides satisfactory and improving support to children and families. The impact of actions to ensure the safety and well-being of children and their families is a strength as is the development of services to meet the specific needs of some target families within the reach area. The centre rightly gives a high priority to all aspects of safeguarding, safer recruitment and child protection. As a result, this area of the children's centre work is of good quality and fully meets statutory requirements. The combined actions taken to improve outcomes for the growing Polish community are noteworthy. Through the development of a 'drop-in' session and a baby clinic with a translator, the centre has successfully engaged the majority of families from this community with its services, many of whom now attend universal activities. However, the centre is aware that more needs to be done to increase the participation of other target groups within the reach area, including lone parents and those from workless households.

There is evidence of effective partnership working with some agencies to support children and families referred to the centre who are experiencing change, challenge or difficulties in

their lives. This joint working is helping to reduce the number of children placed on the Child Protection Register and is ensuring that vulnerable families access multi-agency support. However, the use of the Common Assessment Framework by partners is not yet consistent, with the result that provision is not always sufficiently personalised. Partnerships such as those with Jobcentre Plus and CAB have made an identifiable contribution to outcomes for some families. However, the centre recognises that other partnerships such as those with learning and skills providers are less well-developed. This has an impact on the provision of learning and development opportunities and the centre's ability to evidence the numbers of local parents who have taken up opportunities to gain the skills, confidence and qualifications that will enable them to improve their economic stability.

While provision in the centre is satisfactory overall, the quality of activities delivered by the centre is good. A visit to 'Wriggle and Giggle' and 'Messy Play' provided compelling evidence of young children and their parents bonding well, and children developing their play and communication skills as they explore and play with the different activities available. Mums were clearly delighted to observe their children having fun and talked about how they enjoyed these opportunities to meet other parents. The staff team, which includes family support workers, is clearly focused on increasing the number of families who access the centre. However, leaders are aware that more needs to be done to make sure more families from the wider community access all the services available through the centre. They are also aware that while they offer parents regular opportunities to evaluate their experiences in group activities, and sometimes make changes as a result, there is less scope for them to contribute meaningfully to the governance of the centre.

The newly established senior management team is resolute in its determination to improve the impact of the centre's work across the wider community. Managers are aware that more needs to be done to ensure that all needs are met and recognise that the centre's promotion of equality and diversity is currently only satisfactory. Extending and improving services to reach the most vulnerable groups in the locality are clearly at the centre of the team's vision for the future and they are developing robust plans to address this.

Through consultation, feedback from parents, evaluation of individual activities and case studies, the leadership team has a clear view of the centre's strengths and areas of improvement. It is aware that monitoring and evaluation strategies and the use of data to set challenging targets for improvement are not robust enough and is taking action to address this. An advisory board is in place and members are fully supportive of the work of the centre. However, their ability to evaluate comprehensively the impact of the centre's work has been limited because the centre has not used the data and management information available to best effect in order to clearly evaluate the impact of its work against key priorities and targets. Given the outcomes and current range of provision, the centre offers satisfactory value for money and has satisfactory capacity for sustained improvement.

What does the centre need to do to improve further?

- Develop the use of management information and self-evaluation in order to:
 - set challenging targets to engage the wider community, particularly those in identified target groups
 - enhance the delivery of targeted services to improve outcomes especially in relation to increasing breastfeeding rates.
- Ensure parents are empowered to contribute meaningfully to the governance of the centre and to determining and shaping services.
- Support families to improve their economic stability and independence through participation in training and/or adult learning opportunities that meet their needs and interests.
- Further develop the consistent implementation of the Common Assessment Framework (CAF) to ensure that assessment is rigorous and well informed, enabling the provision of effective personalised support to develop well-being across all outcome areas.

How good are outcomes for families?

3

The centre has developed a range of services aimed at promoting local family's understanding of how to adopt healthy lifestyles. Evaluations by parents who attended the 'Tasty Treats' weaning sessions reported how these have given them a better understanding of how to ensure their babies have a balanced, healthy diet. One parent wrote that she was now much more aware of the salt and sugar content of baby food, while another remarked how much easier and cheaper making her own baby food was. These services and the effective partnership with local 'Health Trainers' have ensured that families are developing an adequate understanding of how to keep themselves healthy. Obesity rates in the reach area among children in the Reception Year remain below the Durham average; although the centre is aware that work needs to be done in relation to supporting underweight children and families alongside ongoing strategies to tackle obesity. While clear pathways for support have been identified, breastfeeding rates remain low in the area with 11% of mums continuing to breastfeed their babies beyond six to eight weeks. However, this figure has doubled over the past year, which is testament to the ongoing commitment of health professionals, breastfeeding peer support and family support workers.

Children and families are well safeguarded in the centre. Security within the building is good and this is underpinned by effective risk assessments. Centre staff use home visits to offer practical advice about potential dangers in the home and inform parents of how to minimise these. In addition, good use is made of centre activities such as 'Come and Play' groups to reinforce a range of safety messages. The centre works effectively with social care professionals to ensure that children subject to a child protection plan or the CAF processes are well supported. Some parents access paediatric first aid courses through the centre and

those attending the 'Early Days' programme receive important messages about how to ensure children are kept safe in the home. One parent who attended the freedom programme stated, 'I am now more aware of what to look out for in a relationship and feel more able to keep myself and my children safe.'

Parents and children clearly enjoy the activities offered by the centre. The proportion of children achieving at expected levels at the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage has improved steadily over the past two years and is now 43.05%. This is below the Durham average of 53.5%. The centre's qualified teacher is beginning to work with family support workers to develop the consistent use of planning, observation and assessment across all the centre's activities so that they are better able to track children's progress during their time at the children's centre. Case studies and discussions with parents demonstrate the positive impact that parenting skills courses such as 'Family Nurturing' are having on their own and their children's development and personal well-being. One mum explained how she was now able to enjoy being a mum and for the first time looked forward to her children coming home from school.

Some parents commented on how their confidence has improved as a result of their participation in the activities offered by the centre. Parents told us that they particularly welcome opportunities provided through group sessions to share concerns and tips about dealing with issues such as feeding or sleep patterns. Most parents feel that they have a voice within the centre through opportunities to evaluate activities. However, opportunities for parents to engage meaningfully in the governance of the centre and to participate in key decision making are limited.

The centre can demonstrate some success in relation to supporting parents to improve their economic well-being. The work of the Jobcentre Plus and CAB advisors is particularly effective, and has successfully supported a small number of parents back into employment and training. While partnerships with local learning and skills providers are established, these are less well-developed and as a result the centre can evidence only a satisfactory range of adult learning classes with an adequate 'take-up' rate.

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	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.	3
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How good is the provision?

3

While the provision received by children and parents who attend the centre is of good quality and contributing to improved outcomes, a significant minority, including some of the centre's target families, are not yet accessing this provision.

Assessment of individual cases is secure with families referred to the centre receiving timely, good quality, multi-agency support as necessary. The children's centre's role in establishing effective exit strategies is improving and ensuring that an increasing number of parents are able to build their confidence and parenting skills. This is supporting them to independence at a pace that is appropriate to them. However, the use of assessment to ensure activities are appropriate to the needs of the whole community, particularly those currently not accessing services, is less well-developed as is the consistent use of the CAF. On occasion this impacts on the centre's ability to provide individualised packages of support to families and individuals. Managers are aware of this and are taking action to increase the use of the CAF to better meet the needs of the wider community.

Activities delivered through the centre are beginning to engage some families and those that attend comment on the real difference the centre has made to their confidence. While personal development and achievements are noted and celebrated, the individualisation of support to promote achievement is less well developed for both adults and children. Parents are encouraged to participate in the county's 'School Start' programme, which offers parents and children the opportunity to visit their child's primary school prior to them attending. Overwhelmingly, parents noted that their children were now looking forward to beginning school and welcomed the opportunity to meet teachers and classmates so that there would be familiar faces on their first day.

The centre provides a wide range of good quality information booklets and leaflets for families to access. In addition, family support workers have attended training on a wide range of topics including breastfeeding, smoking cessation, safeguarding, domestic violence and parenting skills. As a result, they demonstrate a wide breadth of knowledge and are able to advise and signpost parents effectively. The well-established links with 'Heath Trainers', Jobcentre plus and CAB also ensure that families have access to more specialised support within the centre.

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	3

The quality of care, guidance and support offered to families, including those in target groups.	3
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How effective are the leadership and management? **3**

The local authority has recently implemented a significant restructure across all of its children’s centre provision. As a result, the new senior leadership team, advisory board and key partners have a clear, renewed focus on improvement. All staff are supported through regular supervision and the implementation of personal development plans which ensure a coordinated approach to training and continuous professional development. Work is underway to ensure that all staff fully understand their role in relation to affecting future planning to improve outcomes for families in the locality, with robust performance management procedures being introduced to support this. All staff have an in-depth knowledge of policies and procedures in relation to safeguarding children and are confident to follow these as required. Effective financial management systems are in place to monitor day-to-day expenditure; delegation of responsibility for resources is at an appropriate level. Outreach to target groups in the locality is developing and having an improved impact. This combined with an adequate take-up of services by local families ensures satisfactory value for money.

Evaluation and monitoring to date have not been consistently rigorous to ensure that sufficiently challenging targets are set; particularly in relation to the development of targeted services to improve key outcomes such as breastfeeding rates and improved economic stability and independence across all target groups. The centre’s management team has made a clear commitment to developing more effective systems for monitoring and evaluation. A new delivery plan is being developed. It is based on a sound analysis of need and reflects an accurate understanding of the centre’s strengths and areas for development; such as improving the engagement of the reach community with a specific focus on key target groups.

The centre promotes the inclusion of all children and their families across the locality. It has effective systems in place to evaluate the engagement of specific target groups of families. As a result, it can demonstrate some clear improvement in the uptake of services where actions have been targeted to promote this, for example in relation to Polish families and children with disabilities. The centre recognises that there is scope to develop the use of this management information further in order to set more challenging targets that secure the improved engagement of more families from the wider community.

Partnerships are developing because of the strong commitment of the centre’s new management team to harness the energies of local partners. The centre recognises that some partnerships need to be developed further in order to enhance opportunities for families and secure good outcomes across the reach area. While parents’ views are used to inform some developments in the centre, there is further action needed to increase their involvement in shaping and developing future services, including through meaningful participation on the advisory board.

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 secures 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	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

Moorside Children's Centre hosts a full-time childcare provision (New Beginnings) for children aged from birth to school age. Six local primary schools, Castleside, The Grove, Moorside, Consett Infants, St Pius X Roman Catholic Voluntary Aided (RCVA) and St Patricks RCVA with Early Years Foundation Stage provision for children over three years are also part of the centre's remit. Information from their most recent Ofsted inspections has been taken into account when writing about early years provision and outcomes for children in this report.

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Summary for centre users

We inspected Moorside Children's Centre on 17 and 18 January 2012. We visited a number of activities, looked at the centre's plans and documents and had discussions with some of you and centre staff. Following this work, we have judged that the centre provides

satisfactory and improving support to you and your families. Some of the good things that the centre is doing include the support provided to ensure the safety of you and your children. Activities and actions taken to promote healthy lifestyles are also effective as is the support offered to families with children with special educational needs and/or disabilities.

We found that the centre works well with other services such as health and social workers. This ensures that those families who are experiencing challenge in their lives are well supported. You also told us that you valued the support of the family support workers and appreciated having the opportunity to go with someone on your first visit to a group or activity. The centre offers a number of activities to help people in your community lead healthier lifestyles and some of you have appreciated the support of the Health Trainers and have participated in the weaning groups. However, there are still too few mums choosing to breastfeed their babies. We know family support workers and health professionals are committed to passing on information about the benefits of breastfeeding your baby. Some of you have found the sessions for pregnant and new mums helpful and have encouraged you to continue breastfeeding and you value the work of the peer support workers.

Most importantly, you tell us that you 'feel safe at the centre,' and can 'trust the staff'. You particularly appreciate home visits and the opportunity to attend groups and activities which have helped you to build confidence and make new friends. We found that the centre is effective in helping people in their lives when they most need it. Once families are known to the centre we found that different people and organisations worked well together to provide support. However, while many in your community have registered with the centre, a significant number of people do not currently participate in the good quality activities offered. We have asked the staff at the children's centre to continue developing ways to encourage more families to use the groups and activities they provide so that more can benefit if they wish from the support available. While some of you have undertaken courses, the take-up rates for training and adult education programmes are only satisfactory. The centre is looking to work more closely with local training and skills providers to make sure more of you can access these opportunities. We hope you will find this interesting and choose to take part.

The centre has recently undergone lots of changes particularly in relation to the way it is managed. Managers, together with staff are determined to improve provision ensuring it meets your needs more effectively. As a result, the ability of the centre's management team to understand how well the centre is doing in improving the lives of you and your family is improving. This is because the centre is in the process of developing effective systems to monitor and evaluate its impact. We know the centre is good at asking you to tell them how you have found all the activities and services which you attend through questionnaires and evaluations. The centre continues to look at ways in which it can increase the involvement and influence you, as parents, in its work, particularly in relation to your ability to participate in the work of the advisory board. We hope that this is something in which you might be interested in becoming involved.

Thank you to everyone who took the time to come and speak to us. We are very grateful and we wish you every success for the future.

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