

Inspection report for Pleasley Hill Children's Centre

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Linked school if applicable	N/A
Linked early years and childcare, if applicable	N/A

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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 one early years inspector.

The inspectors held meetings with the programme manager, members of the advisory board, representatives of the local authority, representatives of the charity commissioned to manage the centre, and community organisations and other professionals working in partnership with the centre. They also talked formally and informally to parents, carers and users of the centre. They observed the centre's work, within the centre and at other sites, and looked at a range of relevant documentation.

Information about the centre

Pleasley Hill Children's Centre, is on the outskirts of Mansfield and is situated behind Farmilo Primary School, in a purpose-built building overlooking farm fields. This phase one centre, which was previously a Sure Start local programme, was designated in 2006. The centre meets its core purpose and operates activities on a number of satellite sites, including Farmilo Primary School, Crescent Primary School and Intake Primary School. The centre's designated day care provider is Cherubs Children's Centre.

Most families living locally are of White British origin. A significant number of properties in the Pleasley Hill area are in the process of being re-developed. As a result of this, a number of families have been re-housed to other local areas or are in the process of waiting to be re-housed. The levels of deprivation and unemployment in the local area are higher than average. A large number of families in the community have experienced domestic violence. Children enter school with levels of skills and knowledge which vary considerably between local schools but are generally at or below those typical for their age.

The national charity, 'Family Action,' is commissioned to manage the centre by the local authority.

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

Pleasley Hill Children's Centre provides good support for children and families and the range of services offered by the centre are highly valued by users. One parent told inspectors: 'I really didn't know which way to turn when the centre first started to help me. Thanks to their help in so many different ways, my children are happy and I can now see the light at the end of the tunnel. I honestly don't know what I would have done without them.' Other parents and carers made similar comments.

The safety and well-being of children and families is at the heart of everything the centre does. As a result, all parents and carers spoken to during the inspection said that they felt very safe when taking part in activities. Children behaved safely and considerately during all activities observed by inspectors. Discussions with parents and carers confirmed that their very safe conduct was typical of that normally seen during the centre's activities. The centre's safeguarding procedures and documentation are exceptionally well organised and thorough. All staff know and understand the centre's safeguarding procedures very well. Work with other agencies and partners, including health visitors, social care and the midwifery team, is underpinned by excellent communication systems, meaning that potential threats to the safety of centre users are screened well and identified at an early stage. Case studies and discussions with service users indicate that those who are identified as most in need of intervention and support, including children subject to child protection plans, are supported very effectively in order to help keep them safe.

The quality of care, guidance and support provided by the centre is outstanding. A number of parents and carers, most from target groups, told inspectors how 'nothing ever seems to be too much trouble' for staff and, as a result, they feel exceptionally well supported. A particularly strong feature of this centre is the 'Perinatal Support Project,' which provides targeted multi-agency care and support for mothers-to-be and new mothers suffering from distress. Twenty-six mothers, many of whom are in

target groups, have received support as part of this project in the last 12 months and there is strong evidence that their health and well-being has improved significantly as a result. The take-up and completion rate for the centre's parenting programme is high, and includes good take-up from those in target groups. Discussions with parents and carers identify a significant increase in confidence in their parenting skills, following completion of the programme. One parent said: 'I used to have to shout all of the time and the house was not a happy place. Now I am more positive and I can control my children well for most of the time, without losing the plot.' Comprehensive speech and language development programmes also make a strong contribution to improved outcomes for children starting at school.

Leaders monitor the centre's work carefully and are increasingly proactive in ensuring that the centre has reliable data to help them measure effectively the impact of its work and accurately inform its priorities. Action plans are very detailed and identify appropriate priorities. However, the estimated costs of planned actions are not always clearly presented, meaning that stakeholders are unable to evaluate whether planned activities would represent good value for money. Families are consulted about the work of the centre and are given some opportunities to shape the centre's services. However, parents and carers, including those from target groups, are not well represented on the centre's advisory board. This means that they do not contribute to shaping services and activities as well as they could.

Good provision and outcomes, coupled with effective self-evaluation and development planning demonstrates the centre's good capacity for sustained improvement.

Equality and diversity are celebrated well and the centre offers a welcoming environment for all users. Posters promote greetings in different languages and pictures which are representative of different cultures are displayed around the centre. However, the centre is situated in an area with a low level of cultural diversity. This means that service users are not able to gain frequent first-hand experience of different cultures in order to further improve their understanding of a culturally diverse society.

What does the centre need to do to improve further?

Recommendations for further improvement

- Improve outcomes by engaging more parents and carers in shaping the centre's provision, through ensuring their greater representation on the advisory board and parents' forum group, especially those from target groups.
- Improve the ability of stakeholders to judge whether the best value for money is being secured by the centre, by ensuring that the planned costs of projects and activities can be easily evaluated against the intended impact upon improved outcomes.
- Improve the extent to which diversity is celebrated and understood in the local area by forming links with a children's centre in an area with a much greater level of cultural diversity.

How good are outcomes for families?

2

Outcomes for families accessing the centre's services are good. The centre makes a good contribution to promoting the physical, mental and emotional health of users and their families. The proportion of obese children starting local schools in the Early Years Foundation Stage has fallen consistently over recent years and is now below the latest indicative national level. During the inspection, a number of families, many from target groups, attended a 'family fitness' session at a local primary school. The sessions are well-established and families were observed enjoying the exercises. The centre has ensured that a 'stay healthy' activity has been a consistent feature on the weekly programme during recent years and sessions have been well attended by families. A number of parents and carers told inspectors how staff support them in learning to cook and eat more healthily. The emotional health of parents and carers is also well supported by the centre. A counselling service works in partnership with the centre and is well established. The service has supported parents and carers in dealing with a broad range of issues, including depression, anxiety, and drug and alcohol abuse. Numerous case studies highlight the positive impact this work has made upon families. Despite the many positive local health outcomes supported by the centre, breastfeeding rates at six to eight weeks are well below the latest national figures. The centre has recognised this and is working with partners to encourage young mothers in particular to maintain breastfeeding for longer following the birth of their child.

The centre makes an outstanding contribution to the safety of children and their families in the local area. As a result, local figures indicate a sharp drop in the number of referrals made to social care during the last twelve months. There has also been a noticeable fall in the number of police call-outs to incidents of domestic violence and a drop in the number of emergency hospital admissions for children. Staff know and understand the local area very well and use this knowledge to help identify and protect those most in need of support. Families whose circumstances may make them more vulnerable are assessed very carefully through a single assessment framework. Due to these factors and through effective communication and partnership working, there is significant and sustained evidence of improved outcomes for most children on child protection plans and also for those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities.

Children in the centre's reach area are well prepared for the transition to school. Over time, good progress has been made in narrowing the achievement gap for the lowest achieving 20%. The latest figures indicate that the communication, language and literacy skills of children in the centre's reach area are improving rapidly. These improvements are supported well through the centre's links with the speech and language therapy team, who are based in the centre. Effective programmes are used well to support children. They include 'Home Talk' which delivers home-based support for children identified at their 'two year check' as having speech and language skills that are below the expected levels, and 'Toddler Talk,' which supports children's readiness for school and nursery. Transition groups, supported by centre staff, enable children to attend weekly sessions in their new school setting

during the term before they are due to start school. These sessions prepare children well for starting school and are highly valued by school staff and parents and carers. Children were observed enjoying these sessions during the inspection. Children were also observed in the centre's designated day-care setting enjoying activities and making good progress, in a calm, safe and stimulating environment.

Adults are well supported in making achievements, particularly through a broad range of volunteering roles and opportunities. A number of parents and carers have moved on to access further training and achieve higher level qualifications, following their work on the centre's volunteer programme. Almost half of registered centre users are engaging in some form of adult training, development or volunteering projects. However, the centre acknowledges that there is a lack of access to an increased range of accredited courses for parents and carers.

Children and adults using the centre demonstrate good, positive relationships with each other. One parent told the inspectors, 'The staff never look down on anybody, and everyone, whoever they are and wherever they have come from, is made to feel welcome.' Parents and carers have helped to shape some activities and events at the centre, including a recent trip to a children's theme park. Some parents and carers, including some from target groups, attend the centre's parents' forum. However, their representation on the centre's advisory board is very limited, meaning that they miss out on opportunities to influence the strategic direction of the centre and also to work at a strategic level with the centre's partners.

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	1
The extent to which all children and parents, including those from target groups, enjoy and achieve educationally and in their personal and social development	2
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

The centre's most recent 'user audit' indicates that the very large majority of parents and carers are very satisfied with the services offered. All parents and carers spoken to by inspectors during the inspection said that the centre fully meets their needs and expressed a high level of enjoyment in their activities. The centre provides a

broad and varied programme of well-attended activities. 'Stay and Play' sessions are particularly popular. The centre is spacious and both indoor and outdoor areas are stimulating and well resourced.

The centre's outstanding care, support and guidance provided for children and adults have a positive benefit on their well-being. One parent said: 'I used to be shy and never really had the confidence to go out of the house to talk to people. Since I have been coming here, I have got to know people and I can feel my confidence growing more each week.' Case studies indicate that outstanding care, guidance and support has improved outcomes for those in most target groups. During some activities, the centre runs well-organised crèche facilities. This feature is appreciated by parents and carers and enables them to take part in training or activities they would otherwise be unable to access.

For those families who face challenging circumstances, the centre uses the Common Assessment Framework (CAF) very effectively to sensitively, but accurately assess their needs. This approach facilitates good information-sharing and ensures continuity of approach across all partner agencies. The dedicated and well-qualified staff team very creatively adapt outreach services to meet individual family's needs. This means that many move rapidly from individual support in the home to accessing services delivered from the centre. They identify that other families may have similar problems and provide peer support for each other. As one parent said, 'We learn from each other and I feel good when I can use what I know to help others to get better.' A respite crèche is provided by the centre for families facing particularly challenging circumstances.

Case studies and discussions with parents and carers show that the centre has been successful in raising aspirations. One parent explained that he was thinking about how he could move back into work, when previously all he had been able to think about was coping with everyday life. The centre succeeds in building the esteem of service users, particularly through the use of certificates and photographs. Parents and carers, many of whom are from target groups, appear proudly on a photograph following their successful completion of a parenting course. Parents and carers feel particularly well supported by family support workers.

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	1

How effective are the leadership and management?

2

Leaders and managers at all levels have high expectations and are enthusiastic and passionate about their work. They communicate these very effectively to staff, partner agencies and users. This results in a shared common sense of purpose to improving outcomes for children and families, through a well-integrated service. Leadership roles are clearly defined and staff are given frequent opportunities to develop leadership skills. This is best demonstrated through the centre's 'guardianship programme,' in which staff are given responsibility to oversee priorities in the centre's development plan.

Senior managers of the commissioned charity responsible for managing the centre, provide good strategic direction for the centre and appropriate levels of challenge and support to the programme manager. The local authority also support accountability mechanisms well, particularly through their 'annual conversations,' with the centre. The centre successfully engages with all schools in the reach area, and school leaders have influenced the organisation of a number of activities to support children's improved transition to school. These good relationships help to provide the centre with a strong understanding of the reach area and its users, and this underpins its accurate self-evaluation and effective development planning.

The programme manager's deployment of her staff team, management of resources and good relationships with stakeholders, ensures families' needs are well met and outcomes for children and adults are good. This demonstrates that the centre provides good value for money. The centre seeks the views of parents and carers regularly but very few parents and carers are represented on the advisory board.

The centre effectively celebrates diversity in the local area and values children and their families equally. Centre users, including those with additional learning needs and those with disabilities, say they are happy to use the centre because they are treated with respect, their needs are met, and they not made to feel that they stand out or are different from others. Good professional relationships with external agencies, ensure that expertise is readily available for families who require help and support. The centre works well with the designated day-care setting and with childminders to ensure parents can access quality childcare best suited to theirs and their children's needs.

Safeguarding is outstanding because it is given paramount importance. The programme manager has a very strong understanding of safeguarding procedures and this has filtered through to influence the improved practice of all members of staff. Thorough checks are made to ensure that staff are suitable to work with children and all necessary Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) checks are carried out and updated regularly. Checks are also made to ensure agencies delivering services on behalf of the centre have equally rigorous safeguarding procedures in place. All centre staff and those in partner agencies are extremely vigilant about children's safety and have regularly accessed safeguarding, child protection and other training, as appropriate to their role, to aid identification of families' complex needs and help keep children safe.

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	2
The effectiveness of evaluation and its use in setting ambitious targets which secure improvement in outcomes	2
The extent to which resources are used and managed efficiently and effectively to meet the needs of families, including those in target groups	2
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	1
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

Information from the inspection of the centre's designated day-care provision, Cherubs Children's Centre, which was inspected in March 2011, was used to inform judgements. The Ofsted reports on local schools were scrutinized to provide contextual information.

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Summary for centre users

We inspected the Pleasley Hill Children's Centre on 19–20 January 2012. We judged the centre as good overall.

We found that the centre staff work hard to plan a good range of activities that meet your needs well. Different groups including young parents, and disabled children, or children with disabled parents all benefit well from the centre's work. It was good to see you enjoying activities during the inspection, including 'family fitness' and 'baby

massage.' Your high level of satisfaction with the centre's services has been helped by the staff, who have successfully created an atmosphere where nobody feels judged and everyone is respected as an individual, whatever their circumstances. You live in an area with quite a low level of cultural diversity. We have asked the centre to try to make links with another centre in a more culturally diverse area, so that staff and other centre users can improve their knowledge and understanding of the wealth of different cultures in our society.

The centre is very good at helping families to keep safe. Everybody we spoke to said that they feel safe, and many of you explained to us how the centre has supported you in improving ways to make your children very safe. The centre has all the appropriate health and safety checks in place. Staff work very effectively with their partners in health and social care. They assess well with you what will make the most difference to help you cope if things get difficult. The perinatal project has been particularly successful in supporting new mothers and mothers to be in your local area in improving their health and well-being.

The quality of care, guidance and support the centre provide for you is very high, particularly when you face very challenging circumstances. You told us that nothing is ever too much trouble for the staff. You particularly appreciate the work of the family support workers and we agreed that their work is a strength of the centre. You strongly value the 'Stay and Play' sessions provided by the centre and appreciate the crèche facilities, which enable you to take part in activities. The designated day-care setting provides high-quality provision for children, in a safe and caring environment.

The hard work of the centre is contributing to some good outcomes in your local area, and some improvements. Children's obesity levels are falling when they begin at school, the numbers of referrals made to social care are falling and there have been fewer reported cases of domestic violence in your area. The number of emergency hospital admissions for children has also fallen. However, the centre are aware that breastfeeding rates at six to eight weeks following the birth of a baby are low when compared with other areas.

Children are developing their basic skills well and this means that they are now more ready to start school. In all the sessions we visited, children were well behaved and were learning how to become independent learners. Headteachers and other leaders and managers in local schools appreciate the work of the centre, and can see the difference it is making. The gap between the lowest achieving 20% of children and other children in the Early Years Foundation Stage is closing. Children's communication, language and literacy skills are improving and the 'Home talk' and 'Toddler Talk' programmes, in particular, are making a strong contribution to these improvements. Parents and carers also achieve well. Some of you told us how the centre's volunteering opportunities have helped you to gain new skills. Parenting courses and basic literacy and numeracy courses have also been well attended. Many of you told us how the parenting sessions had helped you to improve your children's behaviour, which you said helped you to feel more confident.

The centre is well-managed. The programme manager is knowledgeable and enthusiastic and this enthusiasm is shared by all members of staff and partners working with the centre. Although you are able to share your ideas with the centre about how to make improvements, very few parents and carers contribute to the centre's advisory board, or understand what it is. We have asked the centre to address this. We have also asked the centre to make the costings of activities more accessible to the advisory board and other stakeholders, so that value for money can be judged in a more informed way.

Thank you very much for your welcome. We thoroughly enjoyed talking to you and hearing your views. We wish you every success in the future.

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