

Inspection report for Sherwood West Children's Centre

Local authority	Nottinghamshire
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Date of previous inspection	Not applicable
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Linked school if applicable	Lake View Primary School
Linked early years and childcare, if applicable	Longdale Nursery School and Children's Centre URN 509252

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.

Inspectors observed the centre's work and held meetings with parents, volunteers, partner agencies and key professional staff. They also looked at a range of relevant documentation, including evaluations, key policies and safeguarding procedures.

Information about the centre

Sherwood West Children's Centre is situated in the village of Rainworth, Nottinghamshire on the site of Lake View Primary School. Its reach area covers two distinct villages, within a former coalfield area. The centre opened in 2008 as a phase two Sure Start centre. A satellite base is located in Blidworth on Blidworth Oaks Primary School site. A team of locally employed staff and district lead workers provide services with partner agencies to support families and young children in the area, including health services, social care, advice and guidance, childminder networks, family support and outreach. The centre's designated childcare provider is Longdale Nursery and Children's Centre which was inspected separately in 2010. The report for this inspection can be found on www.ofsted.gov.uk.

The centre serves a mixed socio-economic area with pockets of high levels of deprivation in Blidworth and Rainworth, and a more recent addition to the reach area Ravenshead, which is generally more affluent. Most families living in the area are of White British heritage, although the centre engages with some families from different heritage backgrounds. Salary levels are below average, and there is much unskilled and low-waged employment. Almost a quarter of children within the reach area live in workless households. When children start school, their skills, knowledge and abilities are generally below those expected for their age.

The centre is run directly by Nottinghamshire local authority. The centre coordinator has been in post since April 2011. A local advisory group represents the views of

service partners and providers and there is a well-established parent and volunteer forum.

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

Sherwood West Children's Centre provides good support for children and families. It is well established and is regarded locally as an important hub of community life. Parents were unreserved in their enthusiasm about the value they place on the activities offered and about the quality of the staff and their commitment to 'go the extra mile', particularly when circumstances have made families more vulnerable.

Effective team working is enhanced by very strong collaboration with partner agencies and the local schools. Together they share a detailed knowledge of the reach area and its families. Excellent information sharing and joint working arrangements make sure that families in times of crisis receive prompt, tailored and effective support. Feedback from families and the comprehensive recording systems show that support received is good and highly valued. 'I don't know what would have happened without this help,' and 'It has been my lifeline,' were comments made regarding the interventions.

The centre is warm, safe and inviting. A lot of attention has gone into making the buildings bright and stimulating. Parents and children are encouraged to observe the good safety procedures and understand that these are there to protect them and keep them safe. Displays are used creatively to share information, promote activities and re-enforce the centre's strong, inclusive ethos. Diversity is celebrated exceptionally well, and the staff skilfully plan activities to raise the awareness of children and parents to different cultures and lifestyles.

Children make good progress in their personal and social development and in communication skills. They are encouraged to develop amicable relationships with adults and other children, as they learn to join in, behave and play happily. Healthy lifestyles are promoted very well throughout the centre, and good attention is given to physical well-being and healthy lifestyles. Strategies to improve children's

educational achievement are constantly monitored and reviewed. However, the centre does not systematically record or share the data it collects about the good progress children are making prior to their arrival at nursery so is not taking full credit for this work.

Outcomes for parents are good, sometimes outstanding. The centre provides a wide range of innovative ways to develop awareness and understanding of health issues which ensure outstanding outcomes for children and families. Many parents are fully engaged in the activities and make excellent contributions to how the centre develops and improves its activities and services. There are many examples showing how individuals have increased in self-confidence and skills as a result of taking part in courses offered. However, the centre does not record all learning outcomes achieved so its self-evaluation does not accurately reflect how well it is doing in this area. Too few fathers are involved in the centre's activities and, although some are registered as volunteers, their participation rate is low.

Leadership and management are good overall with some aspects that are outstanding. The centre is supported well by the local authority which provides good management information and discusses performance against local and county priorities regularly. Children's centres are currently under review across the county, which has led to some uncertainty about the future, but discussions held with senior officers are positive and work has not been overtly disrupted. The local advisory group holds the centre to account effectively. Partner agencies strive with staff to ensure families in need receive seamless services. The consistently good or better quality of work, the motivation of the coordinator and her team to continue to improve, and the highly effective collaboration with key partner agencies demonstrate good capacity for sustained improvement.

What does the centre need to do to improve further?

Recommendations for further improvement

- With support from the local authority, strengthen leadership and management by improving the collation and dissemination of data, paying particular attention to:
 - data regarding children's progress across all activities in the Early Years Foundation Stage
 - the recording of outcomes for adults engaged in further learning courses.
- Strengthen the centre's provision by increasing the involvement of fathers in the centre's work and activities.

How good are outcomes for families?

2

Safeguarding children and families from harm is a key priority for the centre, and families using the centre feel safe. Health and safety procedures are implemented well. Parents are regularly involved in undertaking risk assessments of the activities,

and targeted safety awareness work is covered on home visits. Partner agencies were complimentary about the positive impact the centre's early intervention work is having on improving outcomes for those children and their families who are involved in Common Assessment Framework processes or who are on the child protection register.

Staff, parents and children develop positive relationships and show mutual respect for each other. Children and parents are actively encouraged to contribute to decision making, and excellent practice shows how they routinely help with planning and evaluating the activities. Some parents, mostly mothers, work alongside staff as volunteers, and a number are well-established and highly effective members of the local advisory group.

Many parents are learning how to extend their own children's learning through the range of play and activity sessions, such as 'Messy Play', 'Jelly Babies' and the 'Ladybird' toddler group. Singing and talking activities focus well on developing children's speech and language skills. Learning journeys help parents understand how well their children are doing. Children make good progress and schools report that they arrive at nursery ready to learn and settle quickly. However, teachers are not capturing well the progress children are making so that they can pass this on systematically to the school. Parents are routinely encouraged to raise their aspirations and take part in a variety of adult learning and training opportunities. Individual 'parent passport' coaching helps them set achievable goals to improve their life chances. The centre struggles, however, to record the many accredited learning outcomes achieved.

An excellent range of health services is delivered through the two centres and these are well used by the majority of targeted groups. All new births are registered and attendance at baby clinics and ante- and post-natal classes is good. Breastfeeding rates have improved as a result of the highly successful breastfeeding peer mentoring support group, and two mentors have recently made a promotional DVD about breastfeeding with the local hospital. Healthy lifestyles and physical activity are very widely promoted through activities such as 'Busy Feet', healthy eating projects and swimming lessons. As a result, the obesity levels of six-year-olds are lower than both the national and county averages. Emotional well-being is supported very effectively. Targeted work helps parents to develop coping strategies at difficult times, particularly with regard to managing behaviour. One parent explained how she had worked with the centre to find ways of diffusing her children's disruptive behaviour and could now take good control of situations calmly and successfully.

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	1
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	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	1
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 large majority of targeted families in the reach area are registered with the centre and access services regularly. They receive good outreach provision, and partner agencies work well together with the staff to develop seamless packages of care and support. The centre is a lead agency in implementing Common Assessment Framework processes; needs are carefully assessed and action is taken promptly; referrals on to other services are made appropriately. Families subject to these processes are fully engaged in action planning and reviewing progress.

An effective signposting system for additional services families may need is in place, and they are able to contact benefit and housing agencies from the centre. Jobcentre Plus provides regular newsletters about local job opportunities, and a Connexions personal adviser provides weekly support at the centre for younger parents. As a result of targeted intervention, families also become more active in the universal activities delivered by the centre and in wider learning opportunities. The 'Moving On' group held in the local library was established to help those families wanting to improve their learning and employability skills and good success rates have been recorded.

The centre's programme reflects a good range of activities which are planned in accordance with the Early Years Foundation Stage framework. Activities are well attended, stimulating and enjoyable. 'Stay and Play' sessions and toddler groups are organised and managed well with clear learning goals and targets. Transition arrangements between early years provision and nursery education are well established and ensure children are prepared and happy to move on. All achievements by children and adults completing courses are regularly celebrated through displays, award ceremonies, the annual 'timeline' and in the successful newsletter, 'The Voice'.

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?

2

Leadership and management are good. Managers supervise the staff well and lines of accountability are clear. Staff work well together, are highly committed and work diligently to ensure services are of good quality. Through purposeful reflection and regular involvement in the self-evaluation processes, performance is well monitored and reviewed. Data collection systems, however, do not help staff to capture systematically some of the good outcomes it achieves. Children and families regularly contribute their views and the active parents' forum ensures these are acted upon. The local advisory group representing all agencies and parents is well established. Chaired by a parent representative, members report that challenging discussions about performance ensure services continue to meet needs, are of good quality and are sustainable.

The centre targets its resources effectively. Outstanding partnership arrangements ensure that finite resources are targeted very effectively and that services are not duplicated. Commitment by key partners to the centre's work is high and they work diligently with the staff team to strive for better services. There is a strong ethos of 'growing their own' within the centre and some parents have become staff members. A large group of trained parent volunteers regularly support its work. The centre is well used throughout the week, and evening sessions enable families to use services they would otherwise struggle to attend. Sustainability issues are well integrated in the centre's work. It provides good value for money.

Equality and diversity themes are extremely well embedded throughout the centre's work. Excellent attention has been given to make sure the centre is fully accessible and welcoming to all people, regardless of their background or beliefs. Displays and equipment fully reflect the diverse needs and values represented. Staff are well qualified and have relevant training to make sure they develop the right skills to support families effectively. The centre has engaged well with the most vulnerable groups in its reach area, particularly lone parents, those from different heritage backgrounds or new to parenting. All children who are registered as disabled are accessing appropriate services in the area. The centre acknowledges that fewer fathers take part in activities than they would like.

All staff, partners and families have a good understanding of safeguarding, and the centre reflects a broad appreciation of safeguarding issues, such as domestic

violence, affecting families. Good attention is paid to making sure everyone understands child protection procedures. Safer recruitment procedures are implemented well and Criminal Record Bureau checks are undertaken for those employed by and working with the centre to enable the centre to assess an individual's suitability to work with children and vulnerable adults. Safeguarding training relevant to roles undertaken by all adults is regularly updated. Lone working arrangements are closely monitored and adhered to. Fire safety checks are conducted routinely and risk assessments are completed for all activities and visits.

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	1
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	1
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	2

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

Ofsted reports relating to other settings and schools in the reach area were scrutinised to provide additional contextual information.

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Summary for centre users

We inspected the Sherwood West Children's Centre on 22–23 February 2012. We judged the centre as good overall.

Thank you to those of you who contributed to the inspection. We enjoyed our time looking at the work of the centre and talking to staff and other professionals who work with you. Staff work very well together with a wide range of other agencies to make sure they know about those of you who might need support or are experiencing difficulties. The joint working arrangements with a wide range of different services are outstanding. They act quickly and effectively to get the right help to you at the right time. You told us how you have grown in confidence and have improved your skills as parents and as new learners. The centre works hard to bring services together and provide information and advice about health, education, welfare, jobs and money. If it cannot provide services at the centre, then staff will show you where you can go to get good advice and support.

Those of you who have received individual support in your homes said how much workers have helped you find your own solutions to problems, given you self-confidence and improved your lives. Courses and activities such as 'Busy Feet', 'Jelly Babies' and 'Incredible Years' have helped you learn new parenting skills, to understand how children learn through play and how to manage their behaviour more effectively. You told us that the centre is very good at encouraging you and your children to be healthy and the services and activities it provides are outstanding. A lot of time is given to healthy activities, such as buggy walks and 'Busy Feet' sessions, and healthy eating is a top priority. You said you feel very safe in the centre and that you appreciate the help staff give you to stay safe in the community and at home.

A lot of attention is given to helping to improve your children's speech and language. This is giving them a good start when they move on to nursery. They make good progress while at the centre, which staff record for you in lovely 'learning journey' books. Unfortunately, nursery provision and the local schools are not always told clearly about the progress your children have made, so we have asked staff to get better at making sure this is recorded systematically and shared when they move on.

While being involved with the centre, you told us that you have always been encouraged to share your views openly about the services and programmes it provides. The way the centre supports you to be fully involved in all aspects of its work is outstanding. You know about how decisions are made through the local advisory group, which a number of you attend, and it was good to see that many of you are involved in the parents' forum and have become volunteers, undertaking good training that you enjoy. One or two fathers are involved in volunteering, but few come and join in the activities. We think the centre should do more to get them involved regularly.

You have made many new friends and a large number of you have gone on to do interesting activity classes, such as cake icing and crafts, as well as further education courses in English and mathematics to improve your skills and job prospects. Everyone gets on very well together and show mutual respect. The centre is outstanding at valuing people's backgrounds and celebrating differences. Some of you have recently become breastfeeding peer mentors, an initiative which is starting to improve breastfeeding rates, and have also helped in making a breastfeeding promotional video with the local hospital. Parent passports are helping some of you to set challenging but achievable personal goals to improve your lives. We discovered that many of you have received certificates for the learning you have achieved but the centre could not tell us this readily so we have asked them to improve how they collect and record this information.

The centre is led and managed well. Everyone involved is committed to its success in improving the lives of families living in the community. We think the centre gives good value for money and is well placed to become even better. We wish the centre and you every success for the future.

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