

Inspection report for Dallow Children's Centre

Local authority	Luton
Inspection number	383423
Inspection dates	28–29 February 2012
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Centre leader	Rukhsana Ali
Date of previous inspection	Not applicable
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Linked school if applicable	Dallow Primary School
Linked early years and childcare, if applicable	Dallow Community Nursery URN 155769

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.

An inspection of the co-located/partner 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.

An inspection of the registered early years/childcare provision was carried out in 2008 under section 49 of the Childcare Act 2006. The report of this inspection is available on our website: www.ofsted.gov.uk.

This inspection was carried out by an additional inspector and an early years inspector.

The inspectors held meetings with: the manager of the centre; family support workers; governors; members of the parents' forum; representatives from the local authority; health professionals; and other partner organisations and educational bodies who provide services for the centre's families.

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

Information about the centre

This is a phase one children's centre which delivers the full core offer 50 weeks of the year. It is open from 8.00am until 4.45pm Monday to Thursday and 8.00am until 4.00pm on Fridays. The local authority has delegated responsibility for the day-to-day running of the centre to the governing body of Dallow Primary School with which the centre shares a site. The centre has a partnership management group and a parents' forum which meet on a regular basis. Family support, early years' services are most other services are delivered at the centre.

Data indicate that the reach area includes families which are in the bottom 30% in England with regard to levels of deprivation. A significant number of families are in the bottom 10%. Most families in the reach area are of Asian origin, but there are growing numbers of families with Eastern European backgrounds. The proportion of

families in the area with adults or children with disabilities is very high, at around a quarter. Children's skills, knowledge and abilities on entry to early years' provision are below those expected for their age. The proportion of families where no one is in work is higher than the national figure at around a third. The centre manager was not able to provide exact information as to all of the children in the reach area are identified as being at risk or subject to a child protection plan. However, two are known to the centre. The numbers of teenage pregnancies and the proportion of teenage parents not in employment, education or training in the reach area are also unknown to the centre. In 2011 the centre won an award from Luton health services for 'Healthy under fives'.

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

This is a satisfactory centre and outcomes for the children and families in the reach area are satisfactory. The centre provides a warm welcome to those who visit. The bright and welcoming accommodation includes many informative displays. Staff are readily to hand to provide information and support for those who ask for it. Parents and carers who use the centre are enthusiastic about the benefits they gain from attending. They made comments such as, 'They made life easier for me, made me more confident' and, 'This is my second home.' Parents who attend courses and members of the parents' forum are encouraged to say what courses they would be interested in and what trips and outings they would enjoy, knowing that their wishes will be taken into consideration by centre managers.

Governors and members of the management committee are supportive of the centre. They rely largely for their monitoring on reports from the centre manager. While these provide a satisfactory overview, some lack sharpness and enough detail to allow decisions and plans to be made that will improve the quality and scope of services further. Development plans do not always outline precisely all that the centre is working to improve. They lack specific and measurable targets and timescales. The links between the parents' forum, the management committee and the governing body are not consistently fully understood by all concerned. However, services provided can be linked back to planning so that outcomes are satisfactory

overall and the capacity of the centre to improve is satisfactory. The centre provides satisfactory value for money.

Leaders and managers have a broad understanding of the make up of the reach area and keep records of those who have registered with either the centre or the partner nursery. However, they do not have an accurate and detailed knowledge of the exact numbers from different vulnerable and target groups who live in the area. This prevents them from providing services tailored precisely to the exact needs of these groups. For example, there is relatively little planned specifically for the high numbers of disabled parents or children in the reach area, or for families where no-one is in work. However, work done to include families from minority ethnic backgrounds is one of the centre's successes and there is a developing and enthusiastic fathers' group.

Centre staff monitor the impact of the services they provide to parents, carers and children who attend, on an individual basis. The systems to monitor the progress made by children who attend are good. However, the information of the effect of services on adults and families is not collated sufficiently by centre leaders to allow for swift evaluation of how well the centre's work has improved outcomes for target groups. Partner agencies often give information of outcomes of their interventions for the whole Luton area, instead of the area that the centre works in. As a result, the centre leaders can make only very general evaluations of the value for money of these services. The equality of opportunity provided by the centre is satisfactory.

The centre maintains a suitably strong emphasis on keeping families safe. Staff are well trained and alert. There are satisfactory systems for safety, safeguarding and child protection. The centre is highly responsive in times of crisis and the care guidance and support it offers to families who ask for it has a positive impact on their lives.

What does the centre need to do to improve further?

Recommendations for further improvement

- Collate information from all sources to build an accurate picture of the reach area, with particular regard to target and other vulnerable groups, especially vulnerable children and their needs.
- Develop strategic planning for improvement with measurable and challenging targets to involve more families from vulnerable and target groups in the centre's work.
- Work closely with all partner agencies to monitor the impact of services, particularly with regard to improving prospects for the most vulnerable families.

How good are outcomes for families?

3

Those who attend sessions regularly at the centre are enthusiastic about it. They make comments such as: 'They gave me new life' and, of the Friday breakfast club, 'It is nice to sit here like a family and share problems.' Those who attend activities

are routinely asked for their opinion of how useful these have been. In addition, there are opportunities for parents and carers to make a positive contribution to planning of services through regular opportunity to tell members of the parents' forum what they would like.

Health outcomes for children and families that the centre serves are satisfactory. The centre leaders do not receive information from partner agencies of the success of mothers in the reach area in continuing breastfeeding or of parents who attend sessions to stop smoking. The proportion of children who are judged as obese in the area in the reception year has declined, but is double the national average. A number of sessions to help parents develop their knowledge of healthy eating have had to be cancelled as parents did not turn up. However, the centre has persisted and a course is being run currently. Sessions such as stay and play promote healthy lifestyles appropriately through activities such as playing in the outdoor area and healthy snacks. Two enthusiastic swimming groups are run, one for fathers and another for mothers. Children enjoy coming to the activities and their behaviour is good.

The safety and well-being of children is important to the centre and care is taken to ensure staff are fully trained in safeguarding and child protection issues. Policies meet all requirements and are up-to-date. The extent to which children and families are kept safe is satisfactory. Help has been given to a number of families to improve the safety of their homes. Those who use the centre feel safe and understand safe practice. However, the centre currently has limited information on the numbers of children in the surrounding areas with a child protection plan or how many may have been involved in the Common Assessment Framework process. It works with those it does know, in partnership with the Nursery School. It does not have precise information of families where there are disabled children or parents in the reach area, although this is known to be a very large group.

Enjoyment and achievement is satisfactory. A course was run for parents and carers on understanding the sounds letters make and their written form, as part of family learning, which had a positive impact on those who attended. The centre teacher ensures that there is systematic measurement of progress made by children who attend the centre. Children in the adjoining nursery make excellent progress. There has been an improvement in the proportion of children reaching national expectations at the end of Reception Year and the gap between the lowest attaining children and the rest is narrowing.

Support for adults who wish to extend and further develop their skills and gain qualifications is satisfactory and mainly undertaken by partner agencies. However, the centre does run some accredited courses, such as first aid. None of the academic courses run by partner agencies, such as literacy, are currently accredited, to the centre's knowledge. No courses specifically to develop numeracy are currently running. Information given to the centre leaders on the progress made by parents and carers in developing skills and qualifications is limited and sometimes contradictory. It is difficult for the centre leaders to assess how many people have been involved in total as bare figures of each course are given and parents often

attend more than one course. Some of these directions to other services have had positive outcomes and the centre hears back from a small number of users with whom they have continuing links. However, on some other occasions, the centre has very general feedback, based on figures for the whole town and the precise outcomes of advice and support are difficult to assess.

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

How good is the provision?

3

Leaders have a broad, overall picture of the needs of families in the area. The centre gets appropriate information from the local authority and health services, which is helpful in assessing what needs to be provided. However, some of the data is general, giving information for the whole Luton area, rather than specific to the centre reach area. Centre leaders have an adequate understanding of the needs of the families who live in the area and can demonstrate some improvement in outcomes. However, because they do not have an incisive overview of data, it is not possible for the leaders to plan any better than satisfactorily for the needs of parents and carers and the wider community.

The extent to which the centre enables individual users to progress to further employment, education or training is developing satisfactorily. The quality and range of services offered, including outreach, are adequate and meet the needs of most of the targeted vulnerable groups. Support for families from minority ethnic backgrounds and for fathers is developing well and is beneficial for those involved. However, some groups, such as families with disabled children or parents and families where no-one is in employment, education or training, are not yet supported as effectively.

The centre promotes purposeful learning for the children who attend. Staff plan sessions, such as stay and play, according to the needs of those children who come and they support these children's learning well. As a result, children are involved,

happy and engaged during sessions at the centre. Outreach services meet the needs of the wider community satisfactorily. The quality of advice about universal preventative treatment is appropriate. Two of the centre staff are now fully trained in the use of the Common Assessment Framework.

The centre has little detailed information to measure the impact of sessions it has facilitated for users, for example, on accessing support and benefits or seeking work. Too little emphasis is made of the evaluation of the information it does have, particularly with regard to target families. Families known to the centre who have experienced crisis, are wholehearted in their praise for the support they received at these times. For them, the care, guidance and support from the centre staff have made and in some cases, continue to make, a real difference to their lives.

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

How effective are the leadership and management?

3

The leadership and management of the centre are satisfactory. There are satisfactory links with other agencies, such as Jobcentre services, health services and Luton community and family education services. Staff training is appropriately targeted towards developing staff skills and services further. Governance is satisfactory. Governors, members of the management committee and of the parents' forum have a satisfactory understanding of their roles and responsibilities, but these are not consistently understood by all. Adequate numbers of parents and carers are involved in the governance of the centre. Planning for improvement is satisfactory, but lacks clear and measurable targets. In addition, criteria to measure the effectiveness of plans for improvement are not always precise enough, made fully explicit to all stakeholders or easily evaluated.

Centre leaders acknowledge that not enough is yet done to evaluate the impact of the centre's work on target groups and to use data to plan to meet the needs of all groups in the area. While the centre caters caringly for members of all groups and establishes good relationships with the families who come into the centre, it does not always analyse the impact of its services on each target group specifically. Centre leaders ensure sound use is made of skills of staff and centre resources. Information about provision made and outcomes for victims of domestic violence who have asked for help are recorded carefully. As a result, all those involved in this work know this work is effective. The extent to which the centre enables individual users to progress to further employment, education or training is satisfactory. However, outcomes for

those not in work are not recorded or analysed as a whole. The centre does not collate overall figures for families who have accessed benefits as a result of signposting families to advice or guidance. Similarly, the impact of specific activities, such as oral health advice, breastfeeding guidance or smoking cessation can only be evaluated in general terms. The promotion of equality and diversity is satisfactory.

Senior leaders ensure a satisfactory range of enjoyable services are matched to the wants and needs of the families who use the centre. They are aware, however, of the need to extend the range of users to include more from vulnerable and hard-to-reach groups, such as families with disabled children or parents and lone parents. Effort has recently been put into trying to promote the centre's work, in particular with supporting healthy lifestyles. Vitamin drops have been distributed and courses arranged to support healthy diet. However, the impact of these have yet to be evaluated, although those few who have attended courses are enthusiastic about how much they enjoy them.

The centre provides satisfactorily for equality and diversity. Equality of opportunity is given suitably high regard and all staff work to ensure that activities are inclusive. The welcoming atmosphere is something parents and carers are particularly pleased with. There is disabled access to the centre. Regular sessions are given to teach signing. Celebration of cultural diversity is good. Safeguarding arrangements are satisfactory, including those for child protection. Criminal record checks are completed appropriately. The centre has clear policies for safer recruitment and risk assessment, which are appropriately implemented in practice. Safeguarding training is regular and up to date, but the centre has limited data to support early intervention.

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	3

<p>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</p>	<p>3</p>
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Any other information used to inform the judgements made during this inspection

The inspection report of Dallow Community Nursery School, undertaken in 2008 and the inspection Dallow Primary School in 2012 were taken into account. The provision at Dallow Community Nursery was judged to be outstanding, enabling children to make outstanding progress.

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Summary for centre users

We inspected the Dallow Children's Centre on 28–29 February 2012. We judged the centre as satisfactory overall.

Thank you to those who spoke to us during inspection and gave us your views of the centre and the work it does. You told us how much you appreciate the help and guidance of the staff, particularly when you are experiencing difficulties. We agree with you that those who work at the centre make it bright and welcoming. Centre staff plan well for your children, when they attend sessions. We saw how happy your children are at the centre and how confident they are growing as a result. The centre enables you and your families to develop healthy lifestyles, keep safe and prepare for economic well-being satisfactorily. Some of you told us of how well the centre staff have helped you when you have had problems.

The managers of the centre are provided with information about those who live in the reach area, such how many babies have been born and the proportion of families with disabled children or disabled adults. We have asked the centre leaders, together with partner agencies, to continue to build on this data. We have also asked them to use it to focus sessions where there is greatest need for all families in the reach area.

We know that staff take note of how well your children are developing and monitor this well. However, there has been less monitoring of how effective sessions are for you as adults, particularly those run by other groups on behalf of the centre and those at other places that centre staff tell you about. It is difficult, therefore, for the centre to evaluate how well it is doing compared to others, both locally and nationally. It cannot easily evaluate the effectiveness of the sessions it provides for you. We have asked the centre leaders work more closely with partner agencies to record how well you get on or how successful groups are, such as those provided to help you gain further qualifications or jobs or to stop smoking.

We have also asked the leaders to improve the way they make plans to develop the centre. Currently, managers outline areas where they wish to see improvement. The costs of these plans are carefully worked out. However, there is not enough detail about exactly what level of improvement is required and by when. The plans are not sufficiently focussed on the specific needs of the most vulnerable or target families.

We hope that you, your children and the families who live in and around the Dallow Children's Centre will continue to enjoy and benefit from the services it offers. Thank you for contributing to our inspection by sharing your comments and thoughts so openly.

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