

Inspection report for Ibstock Sure Start Children's Centre

Local authority	Leicestershire
Inspection number	383457
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Reporting inspector	Joanne Harvey HMI

Centre leader	Paul Harrison
Date of previous inspection	Not applicable
Centre address	Ibstock Community College Central Avenue Leicestershire LE67 6NE
Telephone number	0116 305 5993
Fax number	0116 305 5993
Email address	paul.harrison@leics.gov.uk

Linked school if applicable	Ibstock Community Primary School
Linked early years and childcare, if applicable	Ibstock Day Nursery EY 226219

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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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: 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 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.>

This inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and an early year's inspector.

The inspectors held meetings with the children's centre coordinator, the locality partnership Coordinator, other staff, representatives from partner services and from the local authority, as well as talking to parents. They observed the centre's work including activities provided at the centre, and looked at a range of relevant documents and policies, safeguarding arrangements and data.

Information about the centre

Ibstock Sure Start Children's Centre is a phase two centre which works within a cluster of seven other centres in the North West Leicestershire locality. It has been fully operational since February 2008. A children's centre coordinator is responsible for the management of the eight centres. A locality partnership coordinator provides the strategic oversight to the locality. The body responsible for the locality governance is the Locality Partnership Group. The locality provides programmes and activities in response to the identified need through the commissioning of services.

The small centre shares a building with a day nursery which is managed by the governing body of Ibstock Community College which is also situated on the same site and both are reported on separately. The facilities were extended at the time of opening and include a reception, shared with the nursery, a large and small family room in which most sessions take place and three other offices, the use of which is flexible according to need. The centre is open five days a week, 48 weeks of the year. The centre covers the wards of Hugglescote and Ibstock and Heather and has 710 children under the age of five in its reach area. Families travel to the various centres in the locality to join a range of services that include health, family support,

adult learning, early years provision, advice and guidance. Though only covering an area of 8.9 square miles, the Ibstock reach is made up of both rural and urban areas and few families are situated within walking distance of the most local facilities or transport links. The centre's work is also supported by a play bus that takes services out to the community. There is no linked commissioned childcare though the centre shares the site with Ibstock Community College, the governing body of which manages the day nursery housed in the same building.

Children's skills, knowledge and abilities on entry to the Early Years Foundation Stage are broadly in line with those expected for their age; however, there is some variation in the reach area. The families who live in the reach area are mainly White British. Levels of unemployment are in line with the rest of Leicestershire but with pockets which are higher. Some 10.1% of the under five population living in Ibstock are living in income deprived households. Since April 2011, the centre has begun to focus its services on targeted groups across the locality. The service has been through a period of transition along with other services in the locality.

Inspection judgements

Grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Overall effectiveness

The effectiveness of the children's centre in meeting the needs of and improving outcomes for families

3

Capacity for sustained improvement

The centre's capacity for sustained improvement, including the quality of its leadership and management

3

Main findings

Ibstock Sure Start Children's Centre provides a satisfactory level of early childhood services to parents, prospective parents and young children in the reach area and the neighbouring areas. The quality of services provided on site and beyond by the family outreach worker and partner health professionals, for example, is good. Not all services are yet of equally high quality because plans are not always adapted well enough to respond to the specific needs of users. At present, the centre's systems for monitoring and feedback are not applied sufficiently rigorously to ensure consistency in this regard.

Centre users report their appreciation and enjoyment of all that the centre has to offer and that they make a real difference to the quality of their lives. However, the take-up of services remains relatively low and the centre has not fully engaged with the wider community to more accurately determine need. Leaders are aware of this and have put strategic plans in place to address it, including consultation with a

provider to focus on improving the take-up of services. In the interim, some opportunities are being missed to reach out and to engage with members of the community. Never the less, due to the swift response of senior leaders to the recommendations from recent inspections in other centres in the locality, there is now more careful scrutiny in the selection of the service providers and the services commissioned so that provision is improving. The centre remains satisfactory because there are not yet enough good features to secure good outcomes for the majority of families in the centre's reach.

The work of the senior improvement advisor, along with range of carefully targeted play and learn sessions has helped to ensure that outcomes for children have improved swiftly and securely. As a result, their progress is good, as evidenced in the Early Years Foundation Stage profile scores where the gap between the lowest achieving 20% and the rest is closing and, indeed, children increasingly exceed the levels expected for their age by the time they leave the Early Years Foundation Stage. Furthermore, targeted work in partnership with local schools has ensured that children enjoy a smooth transition into school. There are examples of adults being supported to develop their confidence and skills to return to education, training and volunteer work and to apply and be successful in gaining employment. Adults are often signposted to these services with other agencies but systems to evaluate progression or outcomes for adults over time are embryonic.

Parents report their improved understanding of how to keep their families healthy and safe through, for example, specific sessions on healthy eating and exercise or the guidance on safety which they say is woven through all the sessions they attend. There are sound procedures to safeguard children and other users. All parents spoken to said they and their children feel safe in the centre and are secure in the knowledge that they are treated respectfully. The views of centre users are now collected, analysed and acted upon. There is not yet an organised and consistent approach to ensuring that they can contribute to decision making.

Governance and leadership are satisfactory. There has been a strong improvement at the strategic level, through for example, the work of the locality partnership coordinator, to establish clear action planning for the locality, which includes the Ibstock Sure Start Centre. This has secured the more precise targeting of resources and services, a transparent and focused commissioning process, appropriate training and a new system for the collection and analysis of data. Action planning does not include enough specific targets with interim benchmarks for monitoring progress towards success. The process of change has been managed well so that relationships with partners and users have remained positive. Partners report that they appreciate the clear direction they are given, though not enough is done to capitalise on the information they hold about the needs of target groups in the area. The commitment of staff to improve the lives of users is in no doubt. However, more needs to be done to ensure the swift implementation of the strategic plan by leaders, staff and partners at centre level. The centre demonstrates a satisfactory capacity for improvement.

What does the centre need to do to improve further?

Recommendations for further improvement

- Strengthen leadership and management and improve outcomes by:
 - bringing more rigour to efforts to reach out to and engage with members of the community, particularly target groups who are not accessing the services
 - working with partners to further extend the information gathered about the needs of families and using this information to inform future planning
 - further developing the governance of the centre by improving the extent to which parents contribute to decision making
 - ensuring targets are always specific and measurable and including interim benchmarks to facilitate rigorous monitoring of progress towards success
 - establishing a clearly defined and executed programme of monitoring, evaluation and feedback, to ensure services are of equally high quality
 - ensuring all leaders, staff and partners play their full part in swiftly implementing the strategic plan.

How good are outcomes for families?

3

Healthy lifestyles are suitably promoted within the centre and through outreach and partnership work. Early contact with target groups is established through midwives and health visitors. A good proportion of mothers including pregnant teens attend ante- and post-natal services either at Ibstock or other centres in the locality, where they become more confident in identifying and addressing babies' needs and are signposted to other services where appropriate. For example, as a result of attending baby massage one mother reported that she was 'getting to know baby better' and another that she had taught the technique to her baby's father and they had used it at home. Others report that they are better able to identify and deal with children's emotional, behavioural and health needs. The proportion of mothers sustaining breastfeeding remains an area of focus for future targeted support. The proportion of children who are obese or overweight is higher than usually found. As a consequence, the centre offers Active Tots and nutritional advice sessions. The 'Here to Help' group is particularly popular and successful with parents reporting that as a result of attendance they 'think twice about giving sugary drinks' and avoid using sweets as an incentive to promote positive behaviour. The promotion of smoking cessation is mainly signposted to other centres and there is no data available currently to indicate the degree of success.

Children in need or on child protection plans and those who are looked after do well. The Common Assessment Framework (CAF) is used effectively to provide multi-agency support for families. Staying safe is promoted effectively across all activities. Children were seen to behave safely and sensibly and adults to respect the rules of the centre and show respect for one another.

Parents are increasingly invited to contribute their views and give feedback on the

sessions they attend. They are not routinely involved in participating in decision making and the management of the centre. Many are trained to become volunteers who play a valuable part for example, in encouraging the confidence of families new to the centre. Leaders have recognised that once trained, the valuable skills they develop are at present underused so have recently appointed someone to ensure their work is coordinated and fully utilised.

Achievement of children who have accessed the centre has shown significant improvement. Groups such as 'The Mighty Creatives' and the work of the library community outreach worker have successfully encouraged early language and personal, social and emotional development. Parents and carers are proud to write about and display their children's achievements on 'The Tree of Achievement'. Positive feedback is received about, for example, how accessing the community play bus, toy library and 'rhythm and rhyme' sessions have given parents confidence to support children's learning at home. The learning in children's centre worker and adult learning service have helped to ensure that a number of those using the centre have attended courses, begun volunteering or commenced paid work. Referrals to the Citizens Advice Bureau service have resulted in a number of families receiving increased welfare benefits or being able to manage household budgets or debt 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	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

Provision is improving because of the much more rigorous approach taken to identifying where need is greatest and the more careful commissioning of those services best equipped to meet identified needs across the locality. Targets have been established to raise expectations of what can be achieved. Within the centre, assessment is used satisfactorily to identify the needs of those who use the provision and to evaluate their progress. For those accessing the services provided by the family outreach worker, the assessment of their needs and progress is of good

quality. The information is then used well to plan activities to meet developing needs. Examples of good assessments were also seen in records of case studies such as for those accessing 'Living Without Abuse' sessions and those subject to CAF. A close eye is kept on children's performance in all areas of the Early Years Foundation Stage so that services can be closely targeted on the weakest areas and, as a consequence, gaps in learning are closing. Elsewhere, more informal assessment and user feedback tends to focus on enjoyment, interest and confidence-building and fewer opportunities are taken to modify plans to meet the differing needs of users. Leaders have recognised that there is still more to be done to identify the needs of those not registered with the centre.

An appropriate range of services, activities and opportunities is offered to meet the needs of families, often undertaken by partnership agencies. Health visitors and midwives are well established in the centre. Their work is supplemented, for example, by workers trained to support with breastfeeding and baby massage which help to promote parent and child bonding. Dietetics and nutritionist support is also available. Fathers are encouraged to attend with their partners and say they are made to feel welcome. For teenage parents, there is experienced support from the family outreach worker at another centre. Effective support is given for those experiencing domestic violence. Compelling case studies evidence how, through attending sessions such as 'Living Without Abuse', participants' confidence and emotional health has been bolstered sufficiently so that they have been able to take control of their lives and take up paid employment. A budget is available to facilitate the installation of home safety equipment and training. A successful programme of trained volunteers is coordinated by Homestart to provide home-based support or volunteers to support the family outreach worker within the centre. Partnerships are also well established with the learning in children's centre worker and other adult learning services. Some partnerships have been relatively recently commissioned and there has not been time to fully evaluate their impact.

Staff provide a welcoming and secure environment. This is particularly the case in the two family rooms where the atmosphere is cosy, relaxed and stimulating when necessary for adults and children. Users hold staff in high regard and form trusting relationships with them. The view expressed by one which was representative of others spoken to was that because of the centre's work 'life is more calm now, before I didn't know where to turn'. Others said that they were provided with 'leaflets and information about where to go to access other services but if they had any questions or needed urgent advice there was someone to talk to'.

The lack of secure data in some areas has previously hindered the centre's ability to have confidence in demonstrating the impact of its provision on outcomes. This has been addressed with the implementation of a new data tracking system. A more secure baseline has been established but there has not been enough time to demonstrate results over time.

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

Leadership and management are satisfactory and ensure satisfactory value for money. The swift response to recommendations in other centres in the locality has resulted in strengthened arrangements for governance, accountability and the commissioning of services. These arrangements are clearly understood by stakeholders and expectations have risen. The focus is on improving outcomes for users and targeting services to those in need. Strategic planning is clear and has some, but not always enough, clearly measurable targets with interim benchmarks to check on success. Though the evaluation of strengths and weaknesses and what needs to be done to improve is accurate, planning for swift implementation and rigorous monitoring at the centre level sometimes lacks the same level of urgency and attention to detail. There are fewer identified targets and timelines. Therefore, some variation remains. For the Early Years Foundation Stage, monitoring and evaluation are led well by the Senior Improvement Advisor with thorough analysis and swift action taken as a result. Consequently, improvements over time have been clearly demonstrated. Leaders are looking forward to the final part of a new data system going live in April this year which will allow them to be more secure in measuring the progress made for other users.

The centre demonstrates its commitment to promoting equality and diversity suitably throughout its services. Users value the way they are treated with respect, encouraged to widen their circle of friends, share their concerns, and that steps are taken to make sure they are included. For example, a crèche is provided and transport arrangements financed. The new monitoring system has a focus on monitoring all known groups to check that any gaps are narrowed. Research is being undertaken to determine how to engage more families with members who have disabilities. Partnerships with parents are developing satisfactorily. For some across the reach, they are strong and have enabled parents to make a good contribution to improving outcomes for their own children and for others by contributing to the centre resource through, for example, volunteering. Leaders are aware of the need to engage more families in the reach area and to ensure that parents are included in a systematic way in governance. Locality surveys indicate high levels of satisfaction in several key areas. The family outreach worker is particularly praised for always 'going the extra mile'. A few areas remain where less than half of those surveyed are satisfied. Some say that communication is not clear enough and that they do not know enough about what the centre has to offer.

Following the reorganisation of service delivery, partners old and new report that relationships are positive, more focused and their impact is strengthening. There is increased involvement in regular meetings to share information and best practice. It is early days for some and the centre has yet to capitalise fully on the wealth of information partners hold about families in the reach area.

Safeguarding is prioritised. All recording of concerns around children are well documented up to date and in good order. Criminal Records Bureau procedures comply with requirements and all necessary checks are made on adults working in or on behalf of the centre.

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
The extent to which the centre supports and encourages families in the reach area to engage with services and uses their views to develop the range of provision	3

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

Ofsted inspected the centre concurrently with the inspection of Ibstock College and Ibstock Day Nursery. Inspectors shared the evidence of some of the common aspects of the Early Years Foundation Stage and safeguarding procedures.

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Summary for centre users

We inspected the Ibstock Sure Start Children's Centre on 7–8 March 2012. We judged the centre as satisfactory overall.

Thank you for taking the time to talk to us and offer your opinions of the centre. Many of you told us that you enjoy coming to the centre and appreciate the help, advice and support you receive. Many of you said that it has made a significant difference to your lives. We agree with you that relationships are universally positive and the quality of some of the services you receive are good. For example, several of you could not speak highly enough of the family outreach worker of whom one said 'she is the centre to us'. The help received from health service professionals and other partnership providers is seen as a vital opportunity to not only to improve your understanding of how to keep healthy and safe but as a gateway to other services. In times of crisis, you told us that the help you have received has been vital.

Outcomes for children are good. They make good progress with their learning and any gaps are spotted quickly and closed. They are also helped to settle into school quickly and happily. Some of you told us how your confidence has grown and skills improved after attending training courses, becoming volunteers or returning to paid employment. Others told us about the help they have received in maximising benefits and managing debt. Leaders of the centre are aware that some inconsistency remains in the quality of services and the centre is developing its work to check where improvements need to be made. They know that not enough has been done to make sure that as many families as possible are taking advantage of all the centre has to offer. However, leaders have acted swiftly and correctly in targeting services at those most in need and in setting targets for those who deliver the services so that provision continues to improve.

There are sound procedures for safeguarding children and adults. All parents spoken to said they and their children feel safe in the centre, are treated respectfully and there is always someone to go to with any worries or concerns. The centre is now collecting your views and acting on your feedback but there is not yet a recognised and routine way for you to contribute to decision making. There has been a clear improvement to leadership. For example, in the way plans are made for the future. Staff across the locality and their partners meet regularly to share training and the best way of doing things. They also now set targets for how things need to improve, though some of these targets don't make it clear enough how they will be measured and how progress will be checked along the way. Partners report that they appreciate the clear direction they are given, though not enough is done to capitalise on the information they hold about the needs of target groups in the centre's reach area. The commitment of all staff to improve the lives of those who use the centre is in no doubt. However, more needs to be done to make sure that plans are put in to place quickly. Nevertheless, the improvements which have been made in a relatively short space of time show that the centre has demonstrated its capacity to continue to improve.

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