

Inspection report for Arnbrook Children's Centre

Local authority	Nottinghamshire
Inspection number	383362
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Reporting inspector	Rajinder Harrison

Centre leader	Mandie Jobling
Date of previous inspection	Not applicable
Centre address	Home Close Bestwood Lodge Drive Nottinghamshire NG5 8NE
Telephone number	0115 9165010
Fax number	0115 9165011
Email address	amanda.jobling@nottshc-chp.nhs.uk

Linked school if applicable	Arnbrook Primary School
Linked early years and childcare, if applicable	EY312595 - Arnbrook Playgroup

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 linked early years provision (under section 49 of the Childcare Act 2006) and partner primary school (under section 5 of the Education Act 2005) was carried out at the same time as the inspection of the centre. The report of this inspection is available on our website: www.ofsted.gov.uk.

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

The inspectors held meetings with the centre manager, a representative from the local authority, members of the advisory board and a range of providers, centre users and centre staff.

Inspectors observed the centre's work including provision at the centre and other sites. They looked at relevant documentation including the centre's operational plans, self-evaluations, key policies and safeguarding procedures.

Information about the centre

Arnbrook Children's Centre was designated as a phase two centre in 2006. It is situated on the edge of Nottingham and covers the Arnbrook area of Arnold. It serves communities that live in one of the 19% of most deprived areas in the country. The area served by the centre is densely populated and socially very mixed; 444 children in the area are aged between nought to five years old. The centre offers provision in partnership other centres to maximise services for families in the wider area. Most families are of White British heritage; around four percent represent a wide range of minority ethnic groups. An average proportion of families claim benefits as the incidence of worklessness is broadly average. Within the area the centre serves, levels of poverty, unemployment, poor health and low levels of literacy and numeracy are no higher than found nationally. A high proportion of children from the reach area enter early years provision with skills, knowledge and abilities that are below the levels expected for their age.

The centre offers a range of health, social care and family support services; crèche facilities are arranged to support activities on site. Day care provision is available through private providers and childminders in the area. The centre offers a range of activities during the school holidays.

The centre is one that the local authority has commissioned the Community Health Partnerships to run on its behalf. Governance arrangements are with the local authority and the advisory board which has representatives from a range of providers and parents who live in the local community.

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

The centre's overall effectiveness is good. Many parents and carers describe the centre as 'brilliant' and 'fantastic'; a typical comment from one parent being: 'It is like an extended family; I feel valued here'. The centre has established itself as a valuable resource that is benefitting an increasing number of families. Centre staff work effectively and serve the community well. Staff provide very good support to families in times of crisis. Safeguarding procedures are good. Parents and carers said that they and their children are safe at the centre and that the support they receive helps them to stay safe. Outreach support is good and referrals are followed up promptly; this has raised confidence in the community that help is always at hand.

Engagement of families is good. An increasing number from key target groups participate in centre activities and services; where necessary, the centre provides transport or offers home visits. In partnership with other providers, the centre offers a good range of services and is particularly effective in encouraging children, and young and/or lone parents to participate. Families enjoy the many good sessions provided and benefit from support, for example regarding housing, benefits and counselling. The response to the holiday activities was especially encouraging, with many of those attending coming from the key target groups.

Children's overall achievement has improved over the last two years. From well below age related starting points, the achievement of children who attend activities at the centre is at levels typical for children at the age of five. They make good

progress; the gap between the lowest achieving 20% and the rest has narrowed significantly. Adults improve their parenting skills through the good support and activities at the centre. Adult learning providers offer a range of courses that equip adults to seek employment. The numbers participating increased last year. Case studies show that some adults gain qualifications and progress to employment or further education and training. However, the centre does not have sufficient information on adults' progress to monitor outcomes more accurately, particularly to ensure that more adults from target groups are successful.

Provision to promote healthy outcomes is satisfactory. Health providers, including onsite clinics, promote aspects of health well. Through sessions such as 'Big cook-Little cook', the centre increases families' understanding of how to stay healthy effectively. Health providers and centre staff keep a watchful eye on families where health concerns are identified and intervene appropriately. The centre is less successful in promoting breastfeeding and fitness regimes, so that more children and their families sustain good habits long term. Breast feeding rates at six to eight weeks are below the national levels and obesity levels for children at the age of five remain no better than average.

Leaders and staff are committed to improving provision and reaching more target families. The centre meets the duties that apply to it for equality and diversity well. Families where children or their carers have special needs or are new to learning English are supported well. Support for individual families is very good; families who use the centre feel safe and valued. While evaluation activities are systematic, the centre does not always have the data it needs to assess the full impact of its work and to develop more ambitious targets, for example for health, adult learning and engagement of families who do not currently use the centre. Staffing deployment is stretched to sustain every activity. To address this and promote self-help, the centre is training volunteers. Parents are involved well in decision making; a number have organised very successful holiday activities and special events. An improving trend in participation levels and performance outcomes for target families, particularly in their learning, together with overall good quality of provision and leadership and management, demonstrate a good capacity for sustained improvement.

What does the centre need to do to improve further?

Recommendations for further improvement

- Improve health outcomes by working more effectively with partners to increase breastfeeding rates and reduce the obesity levels for children at the age of five.
- Improve the availability and analysis of data to assess the impact of the centre's work and set precise and more ambitious improvement targets in all areas of the centre's work.
- Ensure that all partners work together more effectively to secure better outcomes for families who do not currently participate in centre activities.

How good are outcomes for families?

2

Families, particularly those from the key target groups, benefit immensely from the advice and promotion of safety through the various courses, including first aid and home safety checks. As a result, they understand well how to keep their families safe. As one parent said, 'I couldn't have coped without the help I received – staff got me through my depression; they helped me keep my family safe and together.' Referrals are followed up promptly. Swift action is taken, particularly where there are child protection concerns because all services implement the required common assessment procedures fully. The centre promotes healthy living satisfactorily. Cookery courses and outdoor events are very popular and often full. Attendance at health clinics is generally good; staff identify issues and provide support as early as possible, for example, for children with speech and language difficulties. However, the centre does not have clear information as to how many mothers who smoke continue to do so during pregnancy. Data indicate that the number of children who are obese by the age of five years old, at 10%, is about average; despite good advice about healthy eating, families are not adopting good habits long term. Breastfeeding rates are below average; the centre does not do enough to encourage more mothers to sustain breastfeeding beyond six to eight weeks.

Children who attend the centre achieve well. In 2011, around 30% of the adjacent primary school's Reception Year children were from target families supported by the centre. Results at the end of their Early Years Foundation Stage show that almost all of these children achieved six points or more on the Foundation Stage Profile. Children make good progress because centre staff tailor support carefully and monitor each child's progress closely. High emphasis on promoting their personal development and communication skills are significant factors that are helping to improve the life chances of these children. Good-quality activities prepare children and their families for school effectively. Activities, such as 'Mini movers' and 'Toddler talk', provide families with good opportunities to meet others while improving their children's development and adults' confidence and self-esteem. Adults benefit from good quality courses that develop their parenting skills; staff model good practice that parents can replicate at home. Case studies show that a good number of parents acquire skills that enable them to seek employment or access further education or training. The centre is particularly good at encouraging young parents to participate in readiness for work when their children start school. However, the data are not sufficient to clearly show what the long-term outcomes are for all target groups.

Parents form trusting relations with staff and say that staff 'go that extra mile' to support families. Families show respect for others and appreciate that the cultures and values of others are integral to good community relations. They talk confidently about how their children's learning and behaviour have improved because as parents, they have developed better parenting skills by attending activities. One parent said: 'Staff helped me to manage my child's behaviour and instil routines – my child sleeps much better since I stopped giving him sugary food in the afternoons.' Children behave well and develop valuable skills for the future, such as cooperation and independence. Centre users have good opportunities to voice their views about provision through evaluations and consultations. Parents organise events and trips to

enhance community provision; raise funds so more families can participate and influence decision making so that provision meets local needs more effectively.

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	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	2
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 delivers activities in schools and other venues as well as in the centre so that families have relatively easy local access to services. Staff organise transport and other support to increase participation from those most in need. Locating key services, for example, the baby clinic at the centre is proving beneficial because parents and their children enjoy the facilities and form friendships while they wait to be seen. Assessments, user feedback and effective planning enable the centre to develop its provision and support target families effectively. Families have good access to advice on issues such as housing, benefits and employment. Case studies demonstrate that the centre is very effective in supporting individual families who, due to their circumstances, are particularly vulnerable. Outreach services for individual families are often very good. Increased referrals but fewer child protection plans reflect that families are being supported successfully. The range of services meets the needs of most users effectively; participation rates from most groups are good; the centre is less successful in engaging more fathers. Information regarding the participation rates of adults who access education and training is limited.

The centre promotes learning and development well through sessions, such as 'Baby massage' and 'Stay and play'. Crèche facilities ensure parents can leave their children safely to attend parenting sessions. Young parents are integrated well. Bilingual support helps those new to learning English access provision effectively. Typical feedback from parents includes comments such as: 'We enjoy coming here; my child loves being with other children', and 'It's helping me and my child to learn and make new friends.' Support is targeted at families where disability is an issue and professionals, including speech therapists are involved well where relevant. The primary school acknowledges that the centre prepares children well for school. The promotion of home safety is very good; first aid courses, home safety checks and the

provision of home safety equipment have had a significant impact on reducing emergency admissions of young children to hospitals. Pre- and post-natal guidance is good; the centre is vigilant in identifying families that need support and that agencies, such as social care, are involved appropriately. Activities to promote breastfeeding and healthy lifestyles are less effective.

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

Parents speak highly of the respect staff show when parents seek help and advice from the centre. Feedback from users indicates that the centre promotes good community relations. The centre manager and staff work hard to support families. The centre meets its statutory duties for promoting equality and celebrating diversity well. Action to promote equality has resulted in good engagement with target groups such as families in crisis, children with disabilities and young parents. Numbers of users, particularly among families identified as most in need, have increased.

Staff understand their roles and responsibilities well and are supervised effectively. Day-to-day management is good. Staff have a good understanding of the policies and procedures to ensure the protection of all users. All staff have had training in safeguarding. Systems regarding the vetting and recruitment of staff are effective. The centre prioritises staffing to support families in times of crisis; child protection is high priority and staff understand their role in identifying and reporting concerns and do so promptly. Safeguarding meets current statutory requirements.

The centre is moving effectively towards a comprehensive one-stop service to its community. Services are integrated reasonably successfully with some more embedded than others, making partnerships satisfactory overall. Communication between providers is generally good but the centre does not always have the data it needs to set more precise and ambitious targets for example, regarding health and adult learning, to secure consistently good outcomes for more families in the reach area.

Governance and accountability arrangements are generally good; there are clear links between strategic planning and service provision. The local authority and the advisory group monitor the centre's work regularly. Parent representation in decision making is good; parents are involved well in initiating improvements. The centre's evaluation of its activities has resulted in an increase in participation levels. With

limited data from some providers, the priorities for improving outcomes in its delivery plan, while appropriate, are not sufficiently precise to measure the outcomes rigorously in all areas of the centre's work. Target setting, while improving, is not sufficiently challenging to increase overall outcomes more rapidly.

The centre uses feedback from users and providers well to develop its provision. The centre's many strengths include: very good support for families in crisis; very good guidance on home safety; good relations with most of its partner providers; effective involvement of parents in decision making; effective arrangements with other centres to maximise resources and extend provision; good outcomes for families regarding learning and achievement. The centre gives good value for money.

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	3
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	2
The extent to which partnerships with other agencies ensure the integrated delivery of the range of services provided by the centre to meet its core purpose	3
The extent to which the centre supports and encourages families in the reach area to engage with services and uses their views to develop the range of provision	2

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

The linked school and playgroup were inspected at the same time as the inspection of the children's centre. Findings from this inspection were not available at the time of writing the children's centre report.

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Summary for centre users

We inspected the Arnbrook Children's Centre on 7–8 March 2012. We judged the centre as good overall.

Thank you for taking the time to talk with us, sharing your views and contributing to the inspection of your children's centre. Those of you who use the centre benefit from good-quality provision. The centre is a warm, welcoming place. It provides you with very good, practical advice on care and safety that you say you find invaluable in helping you support your families at home. Those of you who attend the good quality parenting courses say that these have helped you to manage your children's behaviour and support their learning and development. You said that you feel safe at the centre because staff are very supportive and that they look after you and keep your children safe. We found that staff have a good understanding of child protection procedures and that they all have up to date training.

Your children's behaviour at the centre is very good. Many of you find the cookery and keep fit activities really interesting and enjoyable; they help you and your children learn about how to stay healthy and you would like more such activities. We think that the centre could do more to increase breastfeeding rates and encourage more families to improve their health by taking more exercise and choosing healthier menus so we have asked the centre staff to do this.

We found that children have fun and enjoy the many activities the centre offers. They make good progress in their learning and are prepared well for school. You enjoy sessions such as 'Baby massage', 'Toddler talk' and 'Stay and play' with your children. The centre works with adult learning and training providers so that you improve your own education and employment opportunities.

We found that the centre tries hard to help everyone. It is keen to promote equality and diversity. It is particularly good at making sure young parents are supported well and have good opportunities to achieve well. The centre manager and all staff are working hard to support every family. Many of you have benefited through the very support it offers when families need help quickly. We have asked the centre to do more to engage with families in the area who do not use the centre currently.

The centre listens to you and asks you what you think of the services and activities it offers; it encourages you to organise activities such as trips and social events that benefit families in the area. We were particularly impressed to learn that you raised funds so that families could go on a coach trip at affordable costs. This helps the centre to evaluate the services it provides but managers do not always have the data they need to contribute to this so we have asked them to obtain and analyse the data more so that they can improve provision even further and set targets that benefit more families.

Thank you to those of you who took the time to come in and talk with us and for letting us join you in some of your sessions. We wish you all the best for the future.

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