

Inspection report for Drove Children's Centre

Local authority	Swindon
Inspection number	383429
Inspection dates	14–15 March 2012
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Date of previous inspection	Not applicable
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Linked school if applicable	Drove Primary School
Linked early years and childcare, if applicable	Drove Children's Centre Nursery and Creche

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.

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

The inspectors held meetings with representatives of the centre's advisory board, the governing body, parents, and with the senior leadership team. Other partnership agencies linking with the centre and member of the staff and users of the centre were also consulted.

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

Information about the centre

Drove Children's Centre is situated in the centre of Swindon. It is run from a large site in the grounds of Drove Primary School and is a designated phase two centre offering full core provision. This includes early education integrated with childcare, family support and outreach to parents, child and family health services and adult education. The centre is run and managed for the local authority by the primary school governing body.

The centre is in an area of significant social and economic deprivation. There are 904 families with children under five and 1,131 children under five in total in the reach area. The percentage of lone parents at 12.7% is slightly below the Swindon average. The centre serves a very culturally diverse area with 89% of Black and Minority Ethnic families. Around 39% of children are living in households dependent on workless benefits and the centre serves one of the 30% most deprived areas nationally. On entry to early years provision the majority of children's skills, knowledge and abilities are very low in comparison to those expected for their age.

Among the range of activities offered by the centre are a crèche and nursery, breastfeeding groups, local community baby clinics and health services. The centre has links with community paediatric services and special needs groups as well as groups supporting those suffering from domestic violence. It provides a range of adult education and courses, for example English for speakers of other languages, designed to support parents back into employment. The centre also delivers a range of services from other sites in the area such as 'play and stay' and 'tea and toast' groups. The centre is open 52 weeks a year on weekdays, between 8.00am and 6.00pm.

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

1

Capacity for sustained improvement

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

1

Main findings

Drove Children's Centre makes outstanding provision for its users and is an exceptionally welcoming and friendly place. From the time one enters and is warmly greeted by the reception staff, families are made to feel special and staff go out of their way to meet their individual needs. All families spoken to were extremely positive about the centre and staff, variously describing it as, 'It's like being part of a family. They're so good at spotting when things go awry', to 'This place has been a lifeline to me.' Families feel comfortable with the centre staff: 'They are safe; they know the children so well.'

Inspirational leadership by the whole management team is a key factor in the excellent provision and outcomes achieved. The centre is exceptionally well organised and communication is excellent. As a result the day-to-day running is highly effective.

The outcomes for families are outstanding. They enjoy and value the very wide range of activities offered. Children make exceptionally good progress in developing the skills they need to successfully transfer to primary school. There are excellent opportunities for adults to develop their literacy and numeracy skills through a wide range of courses. Those who teach English for speakers of other languages are of particular value to the many families from minority ethnic backgrounds and enable them to gain the basic skills necessary for them to be able to find work.

Staff are extremely committed and dedicated. They care passionately about the centre and its users. They have an excellent understanding of the reach area they serve and the challenges it presents. They have excellent partnerships within the community and work closely with other agencies in order to make the best possible provision. Advisory board members in their meetings ensure that services are fully utilised and the provision for users is cohesive and has a positive impact on their lives.

The wide range of services offered meets the needs of the families extremely well because provision is constantly analysed and evaluated. For many, the courses have provided life-changing opportunities. One of the main aims of the leadership is that the centre should significantly enhance life chances for its families and this it does exceptionally well.

Supervision is highly effective and ensures provision is constantly evaluated and improved or amended. The self-evaluation processes are robust and take into account the views of all families, including the children. This means that priorities for development are accurately identified. Safeguarding procedures are extremely rigorous and ensure all of the families are kept safe. The centre has excellent relationships with parents and consults with them widely. A parents' forum is also in the process of being set up but is not yet fully established so this form of feedback is not yet fully effective.

The strong teamwork, relationships with and commitment of all stakeholders ensure that there is ongoing monitoring of the quality of all services offered to ensure that it is of the best. The monitoring and support carried out by the governing body and the local authority are robust and support development extremely well, thus ensuring that the centre has an excellent capacity to further improve.

What does the centre need to do to improve further?

Recommendations for further improvement

- Ensure that the parents' forum is fully established using an appropriate structure which will encourage all users to actively participate and contribute their views and ideas.

How good are outcomes for families?

1

The excellent in-house promotion of healthy lifestyles means that families with young children gain an outstanding understanding of healthy eating and the importance of hygiene and exercise. The excellent and comprehensive support programme has led to a high take-up of healthy lifestyles by an ever increasing percentage of families. Being active outdoors, playing and being outside in the crèche and nursery all form part of the daily routines for children. Data supplied by the centre show that a high proportion of mothers are continuing to breastfeed and there has been a very strong

focus on weight reduction. Both these measures have contributed to childhood obesity rates falling at a rapid rate. The excellent links with the community health services and clinics held by the health visitors and community paediatrician are all having a high impact on the lives and health of the families using the centre.

Many parents spoke to inspectors and praised the many ways in which the centre has helped them. They spoke warmly of how the centre staff have provided sympathetic and infinitely practical support in times of crisis. Staff have helped them to access the services they need whether these be in accessing benefits or practical support after suffering from domestic violence. Case studies illustrate how targeted support has had a highly positive impact on the emotional well-being of vulnerable parents and children, for example, those experiencing family breakdown and those subject to child protection plans.

Safeguarding procedures are extremely robust and as a result families feel safe and protected. Families who have experienced domestic violence are relaxed at the centre because they feel safe for both themselves and their children. Children show themselves to be very safe and very happy and show that they know how to keep themselves safe, for example, on the apparatus outside. They are developing an excellent awareness for their ages of the importance of being safe in all situations when using equipment in the play areas. Staff supervise children extremely well during the day and case studies show that the support they provide for parents is having a very positive impact on parenting skills, particularly in the area of behaviour management. There are excellent arrangements to work with children on the child protection register and those subject to the Common Assessment Framework process and they are very effectively monitored.

There is excellent support for parents and their children to improve the quality of their play experiences, have fun and learn together. Parenting programmes and support are highly effective in engaging hard to reach families and improving vulnerable mothers' confidence and self-esteem. The centre disseminates information about further learning and help with children's learning extremely thoroughly. Children make excellent progress from their starting points. The focus on helping children develop their early communication and language skills has contributed greatly to the significant narrowing of the gap between the lowest achieving 20% at the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage and the rest. In 2009/10 there was a difference of 37.5 in the points scored by children in the lowest 20% and the rest – with their average points score being 47.2. In 2010/11 because of actions taken the average points score of the lowest 20% had risen to 63.82 and although there was still a gap of 20 points this is significantly reducing. The excellent relationships between the school and the centre mean the transition to school is seamless.

Children are helped to modify their behaviour at the centre through a specific programme. This has been very successful with very young children enabling them to develop basic behaviour and social skills, for example, saying please and thank you. Case studies illustrate the centre's success in moderating behaviour through actions taken to relieve stress in times of crisis through practical help and advice.

Families make extremely positive contributions to the community. The feedback they provide, through either written or verbal evaluations, shows how much they value and enjoy the activities provided. Parents attend advisory board meetings and actively participate in the governance and decision making processes. They have been pivotal in setting up the parents' forum, although this is not yet fully established, as an additional means for users to feedback to the centre.

Families are very appreciative of courses, for example 'Juggling the Money' which helps them budget effectively, and also of the financial advice they receive. Parents, including targeted groups, are individually highly supported to achieve economic independence through access to appropriate training of a high quality, which leads on to possible job opportunities. In particular, families from minority ethnic backgrounds have found that the English for speakers of other languages classes that they have attended have enabled them to find work, access benefits for themselves, gain promotion and hugely improve their life chances. There have been excellent outcomes from a very wide range of adult learning programmes, with a significant number achieving qualifications as stepping stones to further learning, volunteering and employment opportunities.

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

How good is the provision?

1

The centre engages a high percentage of families in and beyond the reach area. The needs of target groups are meticulously assessed and most appropriate methods of meeting needs are decided and action taken. Excellent, robust systems are in place to support staff in measuring outcomes for all users. Key performance indicators show that results are of a high order. For example, rates of breastfeeding had begun to drop a little. It was established that there was some conflict in the advice being given to some Muslim mothers as to how long breastfeeding should continue. By

sympathetic interaction with local community leaders and more outreach working with the mothers, sustained breastfeeding has been re-established.

There is an excellent balance of outreach and in-house services. The drop-in groups provide very good opportunities for family support workers to meet with young and lone parents in a relaxed atmosphere. The groups provide excellent opportunities for the young mothers to meet and socialise with others. In addition the sessions help their children's learning as the activities provided offer varied experiences across all learning areas and develop their social and emotional development extremely well. Babies and mothers both benefit greatly from the drop-in sessions with the midwives or health visitors and sessions such as baby massage provide outstanding opportunities for social interaction as well as producing calm and relaxed babies. Provision to help children learn is of high quality in the crèche and the nursery. The creche provides excellent opportunities for babies and young children and the centre is actively promoting the PEEP structure which provides the children with the necessary social and learning readiness skills for moving on to nursery and school. The centre works effectively with other agencies to ensure that assessments, for example those carried out for disabled children and those with special educational needs, are robust and well informed.

There is a wide range of activities for all families to access and attendance at courses is high. They include English for speakers of other languages, previously mentioned, and others of a more holistic nature, for example Indian head massage. These provide opportunities for parents to create employment opportunities for themselves and enhance life chances. Practical courses such as 'Juggling the Money' and cooking lead to better parenting skills. The centre runs activities specifically for fathers for which there is a high take-up. Activities such as Dad's Camping are hugely successful in bonding fathers and children. However, after feedback from families many of these activities have been extended to whole family activities.

Attendance rates at the centre are very high and family support workers and staff promote the engagement of more families through home visits, leaflet distribution and excellent one-to-one contact. All the evidence demonstrates that care, guidance and support are exceptional for all families especially those in target groups. The referral system is excellent so that practical assistance and support are provided extremely quickly and efficiently and often bring about closure sooner. Centre staff are lateral thinkers and always prepared to 'go the extra mile'. There is excellent support for families in times of crisis as shown by numerous case studies. Partnerships between professional agencies are outstanding and contribute highly effective support to the most vulnerable families. The guidance offered is of the highest quality, tailored to individual needs and long term when required. One user commented, 'This place has saved my life. I wouldn't have got through the last two years without it. The staff at Drove have helped me with so many things.'

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	1
The extent to which the centre promotes purposeful learning, development and enjoyment for all families, including those in target groups	1
The quality of care, guidance and support offered to families, including those in target groups	1

How effective are the leadership and management?

1

Governance is very strong and accountability arrangements are clear. There are strong links and liaison between the governing body, advisory board and day-to-day management. Excellent levels of communication mean that things run very smoothly. The governing body provides excellent supervision of the centre's services and monitors these extremely effectively through visits and observations. Governors are very challenging as to the centre's performance and have high expectations of the centre to meet the very challenging targets it is set. The highly professional supervision for all staff feeds into an excellent performance management structure. The links between strategic planning and service provision are highly effective.

Inspirational leadership from the leadership team, along with wholehearted commitment and dedication from all centre staff, leads to determination to do its best for families. The excellent and analytical self-evaluation enables key priorities to be set that will benefit all families and members of the community. It is supported by evidence of the impact on outcomes for users. The evaluation has led to changes in provision, for example, more outreach to minority ethnic mothers to support them in breastfeeding and child rearing.

The centre is committed to promoting the equality and diversity and it promotes inclusive practice for families and disabled children or children who have special educational needs. To this end it is committed to an approach which takes account of the views of all families and the governing body. Excellent safeguarding arrangements are in place. Rigorous checks have been made on all adults, staff and volunteers who work at the centre and there is robust training for all staff in safeguarding and child protection. Policies and protocols are all very clear and all records are kept very securely. Procedures to ensure the safety of families who use the centre, such as risk assessments, are excellent.

The centre has established an extremely wide range of partnerships and services in order to make high quality provision which has a positive impact on the lives of the families. Particular strength are the links with a local college to provide English for speakers of other languages courses, links with health services such as midwifery, health visitors and community paediatrician, and the excellent link with the school.

A very high percentage of families are very pleased with services the centre provides. There is a wide range of means for families to feedback on services provided. Families often become involved directly in management, the advisory board or volunteer work. Resources are exceptionally well managed; for example, in order not to duplicate and replicate services, the centre will work with other providers to benefit the centre and its families. This demonstrates the extremely effective way in which the centre's resources are managed. The centre has highly positive impact on the community it serves. It consistently seeks to improve already excellent outcomes by increasing or modifying the outstanding provision that engages the majority of families. The centre provides outstanding 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	1
The effectiveness of evaluation and its use in setting ambitious targets which secure improvement in outcomes	1
The extent to which resources are used and managed efficiently and effectively to meet the needs of families, including those in target groups	1
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	1
The extent to which partnerships with other agencies ensure the integrated delivery of the range of services provided by the centre to meet its core purpose	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	1

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

The inspection findings of Drove Children's Centre Nursery and Creche.

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Summary for centre users

We inspected the Drove Children's Centre on 14 and 15 March 2012. We judged the centre as outstanding overall.

Thank you for making us feel so welcome and contributing to this inspection by sharing your experiences of the children's centre with us. Many of you told us how friendly and welcoming everyone is. You gave us a very positive picture of the centre and this was very helpful when we came to make our final judgements.

The centre is very successful because of the strong leadership provided by the headteacher, manager and centre coordinator. All the staff work together extremely well as a team and they all have highly effective relationships with their professional partners, for example the health visitors and midwives. Everyone who works at, or out of, the centre communicates very clearly with each other and as a result there is an excellent understanding of your needs and of others in the community as a whole.

Through the many activities that the centre provides we can see how much you and your children enjoy, for example, the drop-in sessions, or courses such as 'Juggling the Money'. The English for speakers of other languages courses are particularly well supported and we are pleased that so many of you benefit from these. We could see that that centre staff make sure you have plenty of support if you need it and that children are making excellent progress in their learning and development.

Parents, carers and children are all benefiting from the good provision made by the centre and you have excellent opportunities to feedback your views. We were interested to see that a new parents' forum was being established to give you yet another means of making your views known. However, this is not yet fully in place and we have asked the centre coordinator to ensure this is done and that you are all informed how it will work and how you will access it.

We would like to wish you, your children and families who live in the Drove area the very best for the future.

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