

Inspection report for Edgeley and Cheadle Heath Children's Centre

Local authority	Stockport
Inspection number	383434
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Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected
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Linked school	106016 Lark Hill Nursery School
Linked school	106056 Lark Hill Primary School
Linked early years and childcare, if applicable	Not applicable

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 nursery 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 additional inspector and one early years inspector.

The inspectors held meetings with the children's centre manager and other centre staff. They spoke with parents, and representatives of the parents' forum and advisory board. Discussions were held with representatives from the local authority, health professionals and other partner organisations that 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

Edgeley and Cheadle Heath Children's Centre in Stockport, Greater Manchester was established in February 2008 in purpose-built accommodation and fully designated as a phase two centre in April 2010. The centre shares a site with Lark Hill Nursery School and Lark Hill Primary School. It provides two multi-purpose rooms and space for confidential appointments with health, education and employment workers. It also provides activities at a number of community venues.

The local authority provides the governance for the centre which has an advisory board with an independent Chair, parents and representatives of partner agencies. The centre also hosts the 'Parents' Voice' which acts as a forum to consider the services of the centre and to channel the views of users of the centre to the advisory board. A full-time centre leader provides the day-to-day management of the children's centre, with the support of an early years teacher. The centre has two child and family support workers, a parent engagement worker, a centre family worker and two part-time business support staff.

There are five primary schools in the reach area, a pupil referral unit, two nursery schools, 30 childminders and seven other early years settings. Children's skills on entry to early years education are below those expected for their age. The reach area has varied levels of

deprivation, with five of the ten super output areas in the top 30% of deprivation, one of which is in the top ten per cent of deprivation. This is classed as a priority area together with another smaller pocket of deprivation. There are approximately 1180 children under five living in the reach area, of which 150 live in the priority areas. Overall, 27% of children are classed as being in poverty, with 20% of children living in households dependent on workless benefits. In one of the priority areas, 41% of children are classed as being in poverty. The reach area has a higher rate of notified domestic violence than the authority overall. It also has higher rates of children subject to a child protection plan or in care of the local authority. Most of the families in the area are of White British heritage, with a very few of Asian, Asian British or Eastern European heritages.

The centre offers ante-natal and parenting support clinic sessions, developmental checks with health visitors, family support, early years activities, adult and family learning activities, outreach, holiday activities, drop-in sessions and access to advice and guidance services.

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

The centre's provision and outcomes for children and families are satisfactory overall. The centre is good at providing support, advice and guidance to users attending the centre. In addition, safeguarding, partnership working and the opportunities users have to contribute to decision making are good and are well documented. Leadership and management are satisfactory overall. The effectiveness of the centre's work is monitored through self-evaluation and is generally accurate. However, data received from partner organisations are not gathered or used efficiently to measure its impact on outcomes and set challenging targets for further improvement. Managers have taken action to tackle this. For example, a recent analysis of data shows an improvement in the level of obesity for children in the Reception Year. Although this is above 10% and higher than the national and local averages, it is an improvement on the previous year. However, the centre has no other data, such as information on obesity of children under five in the area. It is therefore unable to demonstrate the impact of the recent promotion of a range of healthy activities and improved nutrition.

Appropriate governance arrangements are in place, with clear accountability to the local authority and to the active advisory board. Parents' and partner organisations' views are well represented on the board. The quality of care offered by the centre has been strengthened by the development of a 'Supporting Families Pathway.' This has improved the sharing of information between partners and the coordination of integrated early intervention. It has also improved links with the social care team and enabled the children's centre and partners to offer additional services and support to children subject to a child protection plan or in care of the local authority. The centre is well regarded and makes a significant difference to those who use it, many with circumstances which make them vulnerable. One parent said, 'I would have never come into the centre to be part of this training before, and now I'm learning so much. It helps me and my son.'

In the last year there has been a fall in the number of children who are making expected progress in the Early Years Foundation Stage, at a time when local and national trends are improving. To remedy this, managers have identified priorities to further improve communication, language and literacy skills. The centre is working with its advisory board and partners on setting targets to monitor improvement but, as yet, it is too early to see the impact.

The centre has increased the number of registrations well in the last year from 32% to 52% overall. There has been an increase in the areas of greater priority, but in one pocket of deprivation still only a small minority of families are registered. Managers and partners have put plans in place to tackle this, including the registration of the families at their initial contact by the midwives and further use of outreach venues. The centre's recent self-assessment is mostly accurate and has identified weaknesses and gaps in provision and outcomes. The local authority and advisory board have set out essential priorities for improvements. With partners they have completed a process of 'outcome-based accountability' to improve the rigour of action planning. Most of the weaknesses identified in the previous period have been tackled well, and overall performance has improved. The centre's capacity to improve is therefore satisfactory. Safeguarding is robust, as is the process of risk assessment which the centre uses well to ensure the safety of users.

What does the centre need to do to improve further?

Recommendations for further improvement

- Improve outcomes for families by:
 - working with the local authority and health service partners to ensure that the data provided are relevant, up to date and specific to the immediate reach area
 - using the data provided to identify sharp, measurable targets for monitoring the impact of the centre's provision on outcomes for families, including those in target groups.
- Raise levels of attainment in the Early Years Foundation Stage by:
 - effectively promoting communication, language and literacy skills
 - using systematic assessment to monitor progress.

- Develop further the good work with partners to increase the registration of families in the area, particularly of those in the areas of highest deprivation.

How good are outcomes for families?

3

The centre has worked well with partners to improve the attendance at antenatal and postnatal sessions. Case studies show some success in supporting young parents to access these sessions. All of the parents attending for their babies' assessments at six weeks have taken up the offer of mental health checks to enable earlier identification of issues. Case studies and the reduced stress scores for parents taking part in parenting groups show the impact of good support for parents' and children's emotional health. Effective partnerships, including close work with the portage service, have enabled earlier identification of better support for disabled children. Improved use of screening by partners has enabled speedier referrals for speech and language therapy. An element of healthy eating is included in all of its activities which are well received by users. The centre runs successful 'cook and taste' courses as well as exercise sessions for parents and children. Individual coaching for exercise and nutrition is also available for families who need extra support to make progress. Some progress has been made in reducing obesity after it increased in the previous year. The centre has identified the continued reduction in obesity as a priority for the current year, but it has not yet set precise measurable targets for improvement.

Safeguarding of children and families in the centre is given high priority. One centre user explained, 'All staff at the children's centre make me feel very welcome and safe.' This comment echoes the view of many. Advice on safety is thorough and included in many of the activities and courses in the centre. Staff model good and safe practice in the centre and in outreach venues. Parents describe in their written evaluations how the centre has given them confidence in keeping themselves and their children safe. The centre promotes first aid courses and hygiene awareness effectively and provides safety equipment for use in homes. The rates for emergency admissions to hospital for children under five years are decreasing but are still higher than the average for the authority. The centre and partners make good use of the Common Assessment Framework (CAF) to make a thorough assessment of needs and to ensure coordinated multi-agency support. Families trust the staff and confidently share concerns with them. For example, collaborative working between the centre and a women's centre has led to increased reporting of domestic abuse.

Parents and children enjoy their opportunities to play and learn together. For example, a varied range of popular courses on parenting skills help support the development of children's communication and language skills. Many users describe the value of them and one user said she had increased her confidence in how to play with her baby.

Overall, the gap between the lowest achieving 20% in the Early Years Foundation Stage profile and the rest is being reduced. However, it is not narrowing as quickly as the local and national averages. The centre has not met targets for improving children's

communication, language and literacy skills, although data about personal, social and emotional development show good progress.

Employment services provide appropriate advice about benefits and support for returning to work and training. Many of the adult learning courses include individually tailored advice about access to further study and qualifications. Families feel that their views are valued. One parent stated, 'We feel we have an equal voice on the advisory board,' and they are fully involved in decision making about the centre and its priorities.

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	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	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.	3

How good is the provision?

3

The centre staff and partner agencies work well together and share their understanding of the area. This enables them to effectively develop services and activities that meet local needs. Staff make good use of drop-in sessions to respond to immediate concerns and provide good guidance across a wide range of issues. However, some areas of the reach have much lower rates of registration and involvement, including the priority areas of highest deprivation from where it is harder to access the centre.

Integrated working enables partners to make very effective early interventions. They are strongly committed to providing good-quality care and thorough monitoring of assessments, referrals and outcomes. Sensitive and well-considered assessment ensures that families receive the most appropriate support. Close working with specialist agencies ensures issues such as domestic abuse, drug misuse or mental health are appropriately supported. Case studies show how the care, support and guidance offered have been effective in preventing family problems from escalating to social care. Users talk of the positive impact of the centre's work on their lives, for example, 'I'm more happy and confident as a parent.' The support for adult learning is good in some areas. Secure information, advice and guidance enable access to parenting skills and engagement on short courses. For some this has led to users accessing further training and qualifications.

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.	2

How effective are the leadership and management?

3

The local authority has developed a new structure enabling the children's centre to extend the current practices regarding the integration of early intervention services for families. This builds on extensive research and existing established practices in safeguarding and early intervention. The local authority oversees the work of the centre well in many aspects, with some effective monitoring systems including reviews and the use of a model of outcome-based accountability. The cycle of self-evaluation is thorough in ensuring the extensive involvement of parents and partner organisations. Centre 'Parents' Voice' sessions play an important part in discussing priorities for the centre. Users are asked to evaluate the services provided and contribute their ideas. In addition, action planning links well to strategic considerations for the service and to targets set nationally and locally. However, data about the work of the centre are not sufficiently up to date and data from partner organisations currently do not identify the priority zones in the reach area. This limits the centre's ability to measure the difference the centre is making and to ensure targets offer appropriate challenge. However, outcomes are broadly satisfactory and improving and the management has planned further improvements for data collection and their use.

The centre is managed well, with effective supervision and professional development of staff who clearly understand their roles and responsibilities. Feedback from users of the service indicates a high level of satisfaction with services provided. The centre works closely with partner organisations and other children's centres to provide an integrated service, with partners each having a clear understanding of their responsibilities. They make the best use of premises and resources to suit activities and meet the needs of the users engaged. However, not all priority areas are successfully reached and, therefore, the centre provides satisfactory value for money.

The centre has good arrangements for safeguarding, and staff, partners and volunteers are appropriately trained to ensure they understand the policies and procedures. The centre fully complies with safe recruitment practices and ensures that Criminal Records Bureau Disclosure checks are obtained. In addition, the centre uses annual declarations of suitability to check that all staff remain suitable to work with children and vulnerable adults. Staff are well trained to recognise concerns regarding domestic violence.

The centre sets inclusion of children and their families at the centre of its work. It is welcoming and promotes equality and celebrates diversity. The centre has established some women-only exercise classes, so that local Asian women can take part. The good referral

process for disabled children and their families ensures early recognition of any additional support and adjustments required to remove barriers to participation.

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 secures 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	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	2
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

Edgeley and Cheadle Heath Children's Centre shares a site with Lark Hill Nursery, which was also inspected in March 2012. Information from that inspection was taken into account in this report.

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Summary for centre users

We inspected the Edgeley and Cheadle Heath Children's Centre on 14 March 2012. We judged the centre as satisfactory overall.

We are grateful to those of you who were able to tell us about your centre. The centre is improving and offers good care, guidance and support to families who are attend. You told us how you appreciate the drop-in sessions where there is additional good advice and guidance available. Leaders and managers are committed to improving the centre and outcomes for families. The advisory board, which some of you are part of, and the local authority govern the centre well. Partners such as health services and schools play an important part in the centre. We recognise that much of the success of the centre is because the different agencies work together very closely. Recent improvements are making

that close relationship work better, with better sharing of information and coordination. This means that, when problems arise in a family, they can get help earlier, often before it becomes more serious.

The centre is well regarded and makes a big difference in many people's lives. One parent told us, 'I would have never come into the centre to be part of this training before, and now I'm learning so much. It helps me and my son.' We heard how the centre helps families to become healthier and how it helps parents be more confident that they are giving their children the best start in life by the way they bring them up. You told us you feel that the centre is a safe and welcoming place and how it helps families become safer at home. We heard how there is help and support for many of the problems such as domestic violence, depression and anxiety, or with finding training or work.

There are some accurate data to show improved outcomes but in some areas it is difficult to judge the impact of the centre's work. For example, it's hard to judge if the healthy eating initiative is making a difference to the numbers of children in the area who are overweight. This makes it harder to plan improvements so we recommend that the local authority and partners improve the information they have about the area and bring it up to date. We also recommend that the centre does more to help children improve their communication, language and literacy skills.

Finally, we saw that the centre has increased its registrations well in the last year to just over half of the families in your area. However, in some of the areas of greatest need only a small number of families are registered. Therefore, many families are still not benefiting from the services on offer. Managers and partners have put plans in place to tackle this, so we have asked that they work hard to register more families and increase outreach activities. We feel that the centre will be able to make satisfactory improvements.

Thank you for your contributions to the inspection.

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