

Inspection report for The Maden Community and Children's Centre

Local authority	Lancashire
Inspection number	367270
Inspection dates	3–4 February 2011
Reporting inspector	Priscilla McGuire

Centre governance	Lancashire local authority
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Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected
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Linked school	Not applicable
Linked early years and childcare	EY320571 Maden Early Years and Childcare Centre

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.

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.

This inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors. The inspectors held meetings with centre staff, representatives from the local authority, other external organisations including health services, a local college and parents and carers. They observed the centre's work, and looked at a range of relevant documentation.

Information about the centre

Maden Community and Children's Centre is a phase one centre which serves a disadvantaged area of East Lancashire. A significant number of families in the area are not in employment or, are employed in very low paid or low skilled jobs. Most families are of White British heritage but there is a small representation of families from minority ethnic backgrounds. There are pockets of significant disadvantage within the reach area and health deprivation is a problem in some wards. However, children's skills on entry to the Early Years Foundation Stage is slightly higher than the national average.

The centre is located in a large, spacious, multi-level building; formerly the Victorian Maden Baths. In conjunction with other agencies, the centre provides a range of universal services including adult learning courses, family support, childminding network support and health clinics. Childcare is provided through a nursery and a crèche. Some services are delivered through outreach provision at various venues within the local community either as part of a partnership agreement or as part of a commissioned service. Targeted services are also provided.

The centre previously came under the governance of a charity named Spurgeons but is now governed by Lancashire local authority.

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 users and the wider community

1

Capacity for sustained improvement

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

1

Main findings

Maden Community and Children's Centre provides outstanding services which lead to excellent outcomes for users and the wider community. The centre is at the heart of the local community and is well recognised by professionals, the local authority and users for its exemplary practice. The centre has made a significant contribution to the development of best practice guidance for other children's centres in the area. Leadership and management are excellent and the centre manager and her highly professional team are very committed to improving the lives of the community.

The range and quality of provision is excellent. The highly productive partnership arrangements and relationships centre staff share with statutory, voluntary and private organisations contribute significantly to the range of universal and targeted services offered. There is also strong support for childminders in the area through the childminding network which actively promotes both the training and development of childminders.

Managers and staff at the centre have an excellent knowledge of the needs of the community. They also use their exemplary partnerships with other organisations, ongoing evaluation, data analysis and research to ensure the provision they offer is high quality and meets the needs of users and the community. A project monitoring and reporting cycle process is systematically used to collect data and qualitative information about the extent to which each activity meets prescribed outcomes.

Evidence from health professionals, social care agencies and from users demonstrate the positive and significant difference the centre makes to the lives of families. For example, since the centre started to organise holiday activities for families, social care teams have noticed a significant reduction in the number of referrals they receive.

Health promotion is outstanding and the centre contributes well to improving health outcomes within the community. Health provision is carefully matched to local priorities and needs and includes health clinics, smoking cessation support and

emotional health support. Opportunities for adult learning are excellent and take up rates and progress of many users are impressive. The benefits to users who have completed courses at the centre have in some cases been life changing.

Many learners from Maden and other children's centres have also benefited from the formal training programme for volunteers. The centre is working with the local college to offer additional benefits to volunteers by developing an accredited community volunteering programme.

The centre works very effectively with other agencies to safeguard and protect children and vulnerable adults. Safeguarding is very effectively embedded into regular practice and is actively promoted in the centre through, for example, a planned annual campaign to promote different aspects of safeguarding.

Participation rates by different groups are constantly monitored to promote inclusion and equality and to ensure no user is excluded from accessing services. Staff display a sensitive approach to the needs of users with special educational needs and/or disabilities and adapt resources or equipment as required to meet their needs.

Although the centre makes excellent use of quantitative and qualitative data from a range of sources, the implementation of a new management information system requires further development.

Given the outstanding outcomes and provision and the strong focus on continuous improvement, the centre has excellent capacity to maintain its outstanding provision and make improvements whenever required.

What does the centre need to do to improve further?

Recommendations for further improvement

- Continue to work with the local authority to develop and fully implement the new Management Information System.

How good are outcomes for users?

1

Overall outcomes for users are outstanding. The centre is particularly effective at contributing to the improved health of the local community. Staff work exceptionally well and very strategically with the local health services to improve health outcomes by, for example, offering services to help reduce smoking rates in the area, reducing substance misuse rates and promoting the emotional and physical health of families. An excellent relationship with the local 'Stop Smoking Service' has been instrumental in helping a significant number of people who include users and members of the

wider community, to reduce or to stop smoking. The success of the centre in promoting healthy living is recognised by professionals. Healthy eating is also particularly well promoted at the centre. For example, monthly promotions of different types of fruit and vegetables are planned throughout the year. Visual displays of the fruit or vegetables of the month, such as bananas, asparagus or sweet potato are placed on walls around the centre and accompanied by samples at the centre's reception desk which users can take home to use. Evidence also shows that work by the centre to promote oral health has been very successful and has led to an increase in the number of families registering with a dentist and receiving dental treatment.

Adults and children report that they feel very safe and protected at the centre and when using services arranged at other venues by the centre. Security arrangements and risk assessments are robust. Staff at the centre work very effectively with other agencies to ensure the needs of children on child protection plans, children in care or with other support needs, are well met. Staff also use the Common Assessment Framework very effectively to ensure they make informed judgements about the type of intervention that is most appropriate for a family.

Children make excellent progress in developing skills that will help them in the future. They are well prepared for school and their transition to school is well managed and is a positive experience. Children enjoy activities arranged by the centre and make excellent progress during their attendance at the nursery in the centre and at the crèche. Adults also make excellent progress at the centre. Through the 'Parent Child Empowerment Programme' targeted at first time parents and through other parenting programmes, parents develop very effective parenting skills which enable them to improve their skills in managing the behaviour of their children or in other cases, improve their relationships with their children.

Users actively contribute to the operation of the centre. Parents are represented on the advisory board and are, therefore, involved in governance of the centre. Other users including children regularly contribute views about the centre and its activities through evaluations, consultations, surveys and feedback to centre staff. Users feel valued and feel that their views make a difference. The centre is very much at the heart of the local community and its role in promoting community cohesion is well recognised by local organisations and users.

Managers at the centre invest in the development of volunteers and the training provided to volunteers is exceptional. One volunteer who completed the volunteer training programme said: 'It reinforced my desire to work in the community.' Volunteers on the Mum2Mum programme which is a peer support programme for new mothers, are also well trained, well supported and receive an informative newsletter, a resource pack and meet regularly for group supervision and discussions.

Outcomes for users who participate in learning and training organised by the centre

are outstanding. Adults develop skills that have helped them gain confidence or other life skills or enabled them to progress to employment and education. Many users have benefited from adult learning courses in literacy, numeracy and ICT and have gained relevant qualifications. Some users have then progressed onto courses in health and social care and childcare at the local college. Others have progressed from volunteering into employment. The centre is successful in raising aspirations of users and enabling them to develop the skills to increase their employability and economic independence. Suggestions for training and adult learning opportunities are actively promoted to users. Requests are then matched to availability by the Training and Employment Liaison officer, who liaises very effectively with the local college, Jobcentre Plus or other organisations to identify the most appropriate course or activity for an individual user.

These are the grades for the outcomes for users

The extent to which children, including those from vulnerable 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 users 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 users contribute to decision-making and governance of the centre	1
The extent to which children are developing skills for the future and parents are developing economic stability and independence including access to training	1

How good is the provision?

1

The quality of the provision at the centre is excellent. The centre meets the needs of users well by providing a package of integrated services and support. Users benefit greatly from the location of a wide range of services in one building that is local to the community. For example, the crèche has provided an essential service for users who would otherwise have been unable to benefit from courses or other activities at the centre.

The range of services and activities organised by the centre is very impressive. In addition to nursery and crèche provision, services and activities offered include the 'stop smoking service', health clinics, baby massage sessions, adult learning courses in literacy, numeracy, ICT and confidence building, and 'Buttercups Club' which is a new breastfeeding support group that enhances the peer support breastmatters programme. Parenting classes and 'Baby Buddies' drop-in sessions are also offered. During the summer holidays, activities such as a 'Theatre Week' are also offered.

Rooms used for courses are spacious, of a good quality and are well equipped with whiteboards and data projectors. The overall quality of accommodation at the centre is excellent.

The assessment of the needs of users is particularly good. Centre staff are skilled at ensuring their assessment of users' needs is accurate and appropriate. Centre staff work very effectively with other agencies to ensure they find the most appropriate support or resource to meet the needs of families. They also have a very clear understanding of professional boundaries and know what level of intervention is required by families and by whom. Staff from the local social care teams commented on the 'relationship of trust' that they enjoy with centre staff and on their significant contribution to safeguarding children.

Learning and development is particularly effective with strong emphasis placed upon the achievement of measurable outcomes. All activities and events are linked to the Every Child Matters or Early Years Foundation Stage outcomes. Centre staff identify in advance how an activity or event will promote learning and development for families. Evaluation is then based on the success of an activity or event in achieving the planned outcome and also on participation rates. User evaluation is also very well embedded into centre practice and users' views contribute very effectively to the development of provision.

Outreach work is very effective. Centre staff promote services and support to vulnerable families through home visits and also through working with established groups in communities. For example the 'Discover Together' programme is taken out to existing community groups such as the mother and toddler groups. The programme not only promotes centre services but also includes information and guidance on other welfare and training opportunities.

The quality of care, guidance and support for families is excellent. Staff make a sensitive and individual response to the needs of families, some of which are quite complex. 'I wouldn't have known what to do without the lifeline of this place – I would have lost my kids because I couldn't cope' was the comment from one user. Staff work well with other agencies to help families overcome in some cases, multiple barriers. Case study evidence demonstrates the effectiveness of the centre in providing the right support at the right time during times of crisis. Evidence also demonstrates the very positive outcomes to users that are a direct result of the work by staff to provide direct support or to liaise with other agencies to provide support or intervention at the right time.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The effectiveness of the assessment of the needs of children, parents and other users	1
The extent to which the centre promotes purposeful learning, development and enjoyment for all users	1

The extent to which the range of services, activities and opportunities meet the needs of users and the wider community	1
The quality of care, guidance and support offered to users within the centre and the wider community	1

How effective are the leadership and management?

1

Leadership and management are excellent. The centre manager very successfully managed the change from the centre being governed by a charity to being governed by the local authority. The highly effective management of an integrated range of services and resources located in one building contributes to the excellent provision and outcomes. Value for money is very good and all resources and accommodation are well used. Rooms at the centre are rented out as part of an income generation strategy. The centre manager and other staff have also been successful in obtaining commissions for services which provide additional funding.

The vision and direction for the centre are informed by effective strategic and operational planning. Governance arrangements are well established and accountabilities and reporting lines are clear and well understood. Performance management by the local authority and within the centre leads to continual improvements. Improvement planning is at the core of the centre's operational strategy. The centre has also commissioned external research as part of the ongoing strategy to continually develop the provision.

The management team actively collect and analyse quantitative and qualitative data about the reach area and about the community. Since changing over from being governed by a charity to being governed by a local authority however, a new management information system has been implemented. Managers recognise the need for further development of this system to ensure it generates robust data.

Safeguarding is a high priority for both the local authority and the centre. Early intervention to prevent problems from escalating within families is also linked to the priority to safeguard and protect children and vulnerable adults. Information sharing is very effective in ensuring intervention is timely and appropriate. Statutory requirements for safeguarding are exceeded to the extent that staff from the centre are actively involved in training or supporting staff from other organisations to implement effective safeguarding practice. 'The centre is very proactive in using the Common Assessment Framework' said a representative from the local Social Care team. Case study evidence proves the effectiveness of the centre in responding quickly to safeguarding issues and protecting children at risk from harm.

Inclusion and equality is strongly promoted by centre staff. Some users who have previously experienced exclusion because of disability for example, have been made to feel very welcome and valued by the centre. The need to engage more fathers in

activities has been recognised and activities targeted at fathers and working parents are offered on Saturdays. A 'fathers group' meets regularly on the third Saturday of every month. Staff are constantly reviewing strategies to engage more fathers in activities.

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 extent to which ambitious targets drive improvement, provision is integrated and there are high expectations for users and the wider community	1
The extent to which resources are used and managed efficiently and effectively to meet the needs of users and the wider community	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 evaluation is used to shape and improve services and activities	1
The extent to which partnerships with other agencies ensure the integrated delivery of the range of services the centre has been commissioned to provide	1
The extent to which the centre supports and encourages the wider community to engage with services and uses their views to develop the range of provision	1

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Summary for centre users

We inspected the Maden Community and Children's Centre on 3-4 February 2011. We judged the centre as outstanding overall.

During our visit we looked at the centre's plans and documents and talked to staff, members of other organisations who work with the centre and we also talked to some of you. We appreciate the time you took to talk to us and to contribute to the inspection process.

You told us how much you and your children enjoy attending activities at the centre or out in the community where you live. For some of you the centre has been life changing. For many of you the crèche has provided an essential service that you really appreciate.

Maden Community and Children's Centre is very much at the heart of the community and we know that the practice at the centre is viewed as exemplary by many other organisations. We believe that the centre offers an exceptional range of services and support. The wide range of services and support that are offered in the same building is a real benefit to the community.

Some of you also told us about the positive impact the personal support you received from staff at the centre has had on your lives. The staff at the centre are clearly very committed to improving the lives of people in the community and work exceptionally well with other organisations to provide excellent levels of care, guidance and support.

We were also impressed with how well the centre provides services to promote good health for everybody in the community. The relationship between centre staff and the local health services is excellent. We also found that the centre works really well with the local college and adult learning services to provide training courses. Many of you have benefited from opportunities to gain qualifications that can help you progress into college or employment. The opportunities to train as a volunteer at the centre is also something that many of you value and we recognise the volunteer training programme as something really special.

You told us that you feel safe at the centre and we know from talking to staff and other organisations that safeguarding has a very high priority at the centre and that staff do everything they can to make sure both you and your children feel safe not only at the centre but also at home.

The manager and her staff are always trying to improve the quality of what they do and we know they are working with some new computer systems to analyse data about how well the centre is performing. We've asked the staff to continue developing the new systems to ensure they get the information and statistics they need to monitor the quality of the services that are offered.

Thank you once again for taking the time to talk to us and we wish you and your families all the best for the future.

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