

Inspection report for Sutton Central Children's Centre

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| Local authority | Nottinghamshire |
| Inspection number | 362595 |
| Inspection dates | 5-6 October 2010 |
| Reporting inspector | Godfrey Bancroft AI |

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| Centre governance | Nottinghamshire Community Health, commissioned by the local authority |
| Centre leader | Libby MacKenzie |
| Date of previous inspection | n/a |
| Centre address | Westbourne View Sutton in Ashfield NG17 2HT |
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| Linked school if applicable | Carsic Primary School |
| Linked early years and childcare, if applicable | Sutton Central Sure Start Day Care |

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.

An inspection of the registered early years/childcare provision was carried out at the same time as the inspection of the centre under Section 3 of the Childcare Act 2006. The report of this inspection is available on our website www.ofsted.gov.uk.

An inspection of the maintained nursery and reception classes, which are part of Carsic 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 additional inspectors. The inspectors held meetings with leaders, staff and parents and carers. They also conducted discussions with representatives of the local authority, the health authority, the main partner school, community groups and service partner providers. They observed the centre's work, and looked at a range of relevant documentation.

Information about the centre

The centre opened in December 2006 as a phase one Sure Start children's centre, serving the community of Sutton in Ashfield. It operates under the auspices of Nottinghamshire Community Health who are commissioned by the local authority to provide children's centre services in the Ashfield area of Nottinghamshire. There is also a local advisory group that is made up of representatives from a range of users, including parents and carers. The centre works in partnership with the education, health and specialist family support services. It offers full core provision. It is also registered to provide day care for up to 87 children. Services are provided at the centre and at other venues in the area through a multi-agency approach aimed at supporting the most disadvantaged families in the Sutton Central area. The centre shares its accommodation with the Nursery class at Carsic Primary School. The current centre leader was appointed in February 2010 and is also responsible for the children's centre at nearby Huthwaite. Many of the staff work at both centres.

The area served by the centre is ranked in the highest 30 per cent of the most deprived areas of the country. Six of its 'Super Output Areas' are consistently ranked in the highest 20 per cent. Statistical data show the area has high levels of economic and social disadvantage, including high levels of unemployment. Within the reach area, there are 584 children from birth to five years. The population is mainly White British with just three per cent coming from minority ethnic groups. Evidence indicates that children enter the Early Years Foundation Stage with attainment that is significantly lower than that expected for their age.

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

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 meets the needs of users well. The caring and sensitive approach of staff has secured the trust of users, who are very pleased with the quality of service. The centre's arrangements for safeguarding children and vulnerable adults are outstanding. As a result, the care, guidance and support at all levels are exemplary. The extent to which children are safe and protected and their welfare concerns are identified and resolved is excellent. Similarly, staff have a strong focus on knowing all users as individuals and responding effectively to their needs, including those who are potentially isolated and hard to reach. A recurring theme throughout the inspection from parents and carers was the extent to which the centre has raised their self-esteem and given them the confidence to make a positive contribution to their children's development. The centre also promotes equality effectively and celebrates diversity. This is typified by the way in which the centre listens and responds to the views of all user groups and parents and carers. Similarly staff go to great lengths to ensure that everyone is able to attend the centre's activities and that no one feels they are excluded.

The current leader has brought a clear sense of direction and galvanised the whole staff into a cohesive group, dedicated to ongoing improvement. The developments she has already implemented provide a strong indication of the centre's good capacity to sustain improvement in the future. For example, access rates to the activities provided, such as courses for adults, have improved well following special events to raise the profile of the centre in the community. The centre's effective focus on improving children's speech and communication skills and their personal

and social development is having a good impact on their learning and development.

Arrangements to evaluate the quality of provision and its impact on the community are robust and there are thoughtfully targeted and accessible plans for continued improvement. Even so, these arrangements are a relatively recent introduction and have not had sufficient time to have an impact on all the areas that require further development. Among these areas for improvement is the degree to which some key partner providers are involved sufficiently with the centre's work or have a high enough profile amongst the centre's users. For example, while the centre has traditionally provided some good opportunities for users to enter the world of work, Jobcentre Plus has not been at the heart of this work. Similarly, while there are some excellent examples of the contribution made by the health services, which are greatly appreciated by parents and carers, not enough has been done to make these services available across the area served by the centre. This is partly due to shortages of staff, such as the lack of midwives and health visitors.

What does the centre need to do to improve further?

Recommendations for further improvement

- Ensure all the key partner providers have a sufficiently high profile and are contributing fully in the work of the centre.
- Embed fully the procedures to evaluate the quality of provision and plan for further improvements.

How good are outcomes for users?

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The effective promotion of children's physical, mental and emotional health, including children who come from potentially vulnerable groups, results in good progress. This is because staff work conscientiously to raise the self-confidence and self-esteem of children and adults by, for example, never missing the opportunity to celebrate a success or recognise progress. The centre's sensory room is available for children and their parents to use if they feel the need to have access to a place of calm and quiet. All this good work is underpinned by the creation of an environment in which children can thrive because they feel safe. Partner providers for the Early Years Foundation Stage, such as the nursery class at the primary school and parents and carers readily point to improvements in children's personal and social development. Children's smiles readily illustrate their enjoyment of activities, and 'smiley faces' recording sheets are used consistently for them to evaluate their positive response to activities. Significant attention is given to the development of healthy lifestyles. While the centre acknowledges that much remains to be done, statistics show the level of parents who smoke, especially mothers who smoke during pregnancy, and the proportion of children who are obese are relatively low. The importance of eating healthily has recently been highlighted by the successful 'Big Cook, Little Cook' initiative in which children and parents and carers come to the centre to cook together.

Children at the centre behave exceptionally well and form good relationships with

each other and with adults. The satisfactory arrangements for users to contribute to decision making and to the governance of the centre are improving. There are good opportunities for parents and carers to evaluate all the activities that they or their children are involved in, and more parents and carers than ever before contribute to the work of the local advisory group.

Centre staff make good use, where necessary, of the Common Assessment Framework (CAF) to monitor children’s progress. They also take great care to involve parents and carers in this process. Similarly the centre’s work with children who have child protection plans and with those who are looked after is of a high standard.

The good provision to develop children’s personal and social skills underpins their acquisition of skills for the future. The centre also does much to support parents and carers in developing economic stability and independence. A good range of courses is available for parents to gain formal qualifications, although until very recently Jobcentre Plus has not been involved sufficiently in this aspect of provision. The centre’s volunteer courses provide a telling story of success. These courses are greatly enjoyed by those who participate in them and several have progressed to gaining employment, including managerial roles in the centre.

These are the grades for the outcomes for users

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| The extent to which children, including those from vulnerable groups, are physically, mentally and emotionally healthy and families have healthy lifestyles | 2 |
| 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 | 2 |
| The extent to which children engage in positive behaviour and develop positive relationships and users contribute to decision-making and governance of the centre | 2 |
| The extent to which children are developing skills for the future and parents are developing economic stability and independence including access to training | 2 |

How good is the provision?

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Assessment is used well at all stages and in every activity to identify children’s needs and evaluate their progress. A similar picture is evident with regard to adults, including the potentially vulnerable and those who are hard to reach. All children have learning journals in which progress is recorded regularly. These documents are detailed, up to date and carefully illustrated. Parents and carers have similar helpful provision in their ‘family journey’ records in which progress is recorded and celebrated. In this respect, outreach services make a highly valued contribution to

purposeful learning and development. There are many success stories of parents and carers who were reluctant to leave their own homes, but are now frequent visitors to centre who greatly enjoy participating in the activities and courses. Others, from similar starting points, are helped to gain employment.

In the past, courses were not always well matched to users' interests and needs. This is no longer the case and courses are popular, with attendance numbers rising all the time. The centre's outstanding care, guidance and support for users has led to very successful activities such as, the 'Incredible Years' courses which attract a good take-up and are valued by participants. In response to demand, the centre recently arranged this course in the evenings for fathers. Where appropriate, outreach workers take courses for children and for adults out into users' homes. For example, the 'Home Talk' programme to help children improve their communication skills is proving to be a great success.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

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| The effectiveness of the assessment of the needs of children, parents and other users | 2 |
| The extent to which the centre promotes purposeful learning, development and enjoyment for all users | 2 |
| The extent to which the range of services, activities and opportunities meet the needs of users and the wider community | 3 |
| 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?

2

The centre benefits greatly from strong and effective leadership at all levels and from the valued support of the community health service and local authority. Governance, provided by Nottinghamshire Community Health, working in partnership with the local authority, is effective in holding the centre to account for the quality of all aspects of its work. The views of parents and carers are also given significant consideration through the local advisory group. The centre leader, working with colleagues, partners, the community health service and the local authority has formulated an ambitious, but realistic plan for improvements. This plan is based on increasingly robust systems to evaluate the quality of provision and consider the needs of users. The centre leader has done much to ensure that everyone can have their say in how the centre operates. Staff feel valued and are confident that their voice will be heard. Just like parents and carers, staff have access to a good range of training courses, ensuring they are well qualified and up to date. For example, recent consultations with parents and carers have resulted in the availability of courses on swimming, first aid and safety in the home. The quality of consultation with users is illustrated well by the 'You said...we did' notice board, showing how the centre has responded to the suggestions of parents and carers. This is a centre in which

everyone feels welcomed, included and valued. This not only applies in the case of adults, but to children and to those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities.

Arrangements to ensure that children are protected, safe and secure, such as making appropriate checks on staff and volunteers, meet current requirements fully. The centre also provides effective support for those who face challenges in their lives, such as domestic violence. Excellent liaison between all the agencies who contribute to the work of the centre mean that, should any problem arise or safeguarding concern be raised, staff are well placed to give support of the highest quality, minimising the risk to both children and adults. A significant focus of the centre's work is the promotion of equality and the celebration of the diversity of those who live in its reach. As a result parents and carers feel valued and are included well in the activities provided by the centre. The centre also supports those within its reach in understanding the rich cultural tapestry of other parts of the United Kingdom and further afield. The centre uses the available resources well and gives good value for money.

These are the grades for leadership and management

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| The extent to which governance, accountability, professional supervision and day to day management arrangements are clear and understood | 2 |
| The extent to which ambitious targets drive improvement, provision is integrated and there are high expectations for users and the wider community | 2 |
| The extent to which resources are used and managed efficiently and effectively to meet the needs of users and the wider community | 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 | 1 |
| The extent to which evaluation is used to shape and improve services and activities | 2 |
| The extent to which partnerships with other agencies ensure the integrated delivery of the range of services the centre has been commissioned to provide | 3 |
| 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 | 2 |

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

The findings of the recent report for the day care provision on the same site were considered, as well as the findings of the inspection of the Early Years Foundation Stage at the primary school on the same site

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaining about inspections', which is available from our website: www.ofsted.gov.uk. If you would like us to send you a copy of the guidance, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

Summary for centre users

We inspected the Sutton Central Children's Centre on 5–6 October 2010. We judged the centre as good overall.

Firstly, thank you to all those parents and carers who gave their time to talk with the inspectors about the work of the centre. Particular thanks go to those parents and carers who welcomed the inspectors into their homes. Our inspection findings agree with the positive views you expressed about many aspects of the centre's work. One parent described the centre accurately as being, 'Like an extended family.' A positive recurring theme throughout the inspection was the way in which the centre gives you and your children confidence to share your experiences and to provide the help your children need.

We are impressed by many aspects of the centre's work. The staff make everyone welcome. They are always willing to listen to any concerns or problems and to do their best to sort things out. They are good at sharing information about how well children are progressing and at responding to their needs. Many of you told us that the centre has given you valuable help during the early years of bringing up your children, laying the foundation for their educational, social and physical development. The staff know you all as individuals and we know that you trust them to treat you with sensitivity and to observe the need to keep things confidential. The centre is also very effective at ensuring that children are safe at all times and at providing guidance about safety at home and in the community. Certainly, it is very clear that the children enjoy attending the centre and taking part in activities it provides. Your children make good progress, particularly in their speaking and communication, social and physical development.

Parents and carers also benefit greatly from the courses provided, catering successfully for their well-being and that of their children. Inspectors are very impressed by the success of the courses for volunteers. The centre has an excellent track record for helping those who volunteer to gain qualifications. This is well

illustrated by those who have progressed to working at the centre, with several in managerial roles.

Rapid improvements are evident since the appointment of the current centre leader and she is eager to promote further developments. The centre has certainly gained a higher profile in the community, and more people are aware of the services it provides. Some of the improvements are relatively recent and there is more to do. With this in mind, the inspectors have asked the centre leader, staff and local authority to work together to build on the procedures introduced to measure the success of the services and to guide the planning for the next stages of development. We are also asking the centre to ensure that all the key partners are fully involved in the centre's work.

Finally, the inspectors would like to thank you once again for sharing your views and telling us about the work of the centre.

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