

Inspection report for Ladybrook Children's Centre (Ladybrook, Broomhill, Cumberlands)

Local authority	Nottinghamshire
Inspection number	362512
Inspection dates	4-5 November 2010
Reporting inspector	Lois Furness AI

Centre governance	Family Action, commissioned by the local authority
Centre leader	Claire Meek
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected
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Linked school if applicable	Not applicable
Linked early years and childcare, if applicable	Mansfield Children's Community

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.

This inspection was carried out by one additional inspector and one Early Years Inspector.

The inspectors held meetings with a range of users, staff, a wide range of partners and with representatives of the local authority. They observed the centre's work and looked at a range of documentation, including the centre's operational plans, its evaluations and safeguarding procedures.

Information about the centre

Ladybrook Children's Centre is located in a building shared with Mansfield Children's Community who manage the building and who provide early years and daycare provision for children. This provision was not inspected at this time. Services are delivered from the centre and at a number of different venues across the reach area. The area is ranked in the highest 30 % of the most deprived areas of the country. Two of its four 'Super Output Areas' are consistently ranked in the highest 20%, and one in the highest 10%. Statistical evidence shows the area has high levels of economic and social disadvantage, including high levels of unemployment. The vast majority of the reach population are White British with an increasing number of Eastern European families settling in the area.

The centre opened in 2006, and is a phase one centre operating under the support of Family Action, a charity which has been commissioned by the local authority to provide children's centre services in this district. There is also a local advisory board, made up of representatives from a range of users, including parents and carers. The centre offers the full core offer. The centre manager has recently taken up a new appointment. During this time of transition, before the new manager takes up her post in December, the centre is managed by the programme manager, who has overall responsibility for this centre and a nearby centre at Pleasley Hill. Within the reach area, there are 932 children from birth to five years. Evidence indicates that

children enter the Early Years Foundation Stage with attainment that is 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

‘All staff are very welcoming; they cannot do enough for you’ and, ‘The centre has made a massive difference to my life’. These comments expressed by some parents and carers help to explain why Ladybrook is a good and rapidly improving centre, and outcomes for users are good. The centre is strong at keeping users safe and protected, and in promoting their emotional health and well-being. This is because of good partnership working, which ensures that services are well integrated and cohesive. Relationships between agencies are productive, and there is effective transfer of information between key partners. Provision is adapted well to serve the needs of the community, including those who are most vulnerable and impacts positively on their lives. There are many instances of the family support workers providing excellent support for families during periods of crisis. Comments such as, ‘No matter how I am, or what I do, my family support worker respects me’, exemplifies the excellent relationships that exist. In addition, the centre works effectively to keep users engaged, and increasing numbers of parents and carers are taking advantage of the range of opportunities to improve their parenting and vocational skills. However, the opportunities for them to develop their basic skills of literacy and numeracy are not as extensive. Staff and other adults give a high priority to safeguarding children and their families, and the quality of care, guidance and support provided by the centre is good. Equality and diversity are valued in the day-to-day work of the centre and thorough policies and procedures effectively promote this aspect of its work.

Senior leaders set the tone, communicate high expectations and are determined to ensure the centre is effective in improving the lives of all families. Clear roles and responsibilities, smooth day-to-day management and excellent relationships mean that staff work very well together to improve outcomes for users. Staff are passionate about the centre and its community. There is a wide representation of partners on the advisory board and this provides both challenge and support to the senior leadership team. Senior leaders have a good understanding of the strengths in

provision and the developments needed. For example, they know further work must be done to reach all families in the area served by the centre, including those who are reluctant to engage. The local authority has recently improved its processes for providing the data needed to analyse and evaluate performance across a range of national indicators. This is not yet complete and several indicators at reach level are unavailable, for example smoking cessation figures, and the percentage of mothers, supported by the centre, in sustaining breastfeeding. This lack of information reduces the rigour of any evaluation of the centre's performance and restricts the accuracy of setting targets for improvement. However, the accuracy of self-evaluation, the quality of the services observed, the strength of partnership work and the increasing engagement with users, demonstrate the centre's good capacity for sustained improvement.

What does the centre need to do to improve further?

Recommendations for further improvement

- Encourage the local authority to provide the centre with precise reach level data from the health authority to enable it to show impact on users' outcomes.
- Implement strategies to engage with the most disadvantaged and vulnerable groups in the community, who do not currently access the centre's activities.
- Increase opportunities for adult learning with regard to the promotion of literacy and numeracy skills.

How good are outcomes for users?

2

Users respond well to the centre's promotion of healthy diets and of regular exercise by attending sessions such as 'Big Cook, Little Cook' and 'Funky Monkeys'. One parent commented that, 'the butter squash soup on Halloween night was delicious' and she hoped it was in the Big Recipe book. The parental satisfaction questionnaires indicate that an increasing number of families are eating the recommended five fruit and vegetables each day, and the nearby allotment provides freshly grown produce to eat at snack time. There is a high take up and good retention rates in parenting classes such as 'Weaning Support' including the baby cafe and 'Play and Weigh'. Evaluations and discussions with parents and carers show these classes develop successfully the skills necessary to promote healthy lifestyles.

Good procedures ensure children are safeguarded effectively. Parents and carers say they feel safe in the centre and they trust staff to help them in times of crisis or personal difficulties. Well-established partnership working with health visitors, police and the fire service is helping successfully to raise children's and families' awareness of safety in the home and their communities. Good support programmes such as 'First Aid in the Home' and 'Stay and Play' provide helpful strategies to improve parenting skills. Family support workers effectively engage families with a range of issues such as behaviour management. One parent and carer very enthusiastically commented on the effectiveness of the 'building blocks' course: 'I did not think I needed the course, but I was wrong! The things I have learnt have helped to make life better, happier and easier.' Transition work is good and the Little Stars' transition

group provides useful preparation for children starting in nursery.

All staff provide strong role models that successfully support children’s positive behaviour, and a culture of respect is evident throughout the centre. The centre, in collaboration with partner agencies, is very effective in identifying and responding to the needs of children whose circumstances make them vulnerable. The improving use of the Common Assessment Framework (CAF) ensures the children identified are effectively supported. There is good evidence of improved outcomes for looked after children and those with child protection plans. Case studies featuring family support workers illustrate how effective their support is in helping parents and carers to become more confident and successful in managing their family lives. These positive features are contributing to improved outcomes for Reception children attending local primary schools. For example, Early Years Foundation Stage profile data shows that the key outcomes in children’s personal development and literacy skills have improved over the past two years. The gap between the lowest scoring 20% of children and others is being closed effectively. The Home Talk programme has been particularly effective in developing children’s speaking skills. Non-accredited courses provided for adults, for example courses on nail art, are greatly appreciated and enjoyed. Opportunities for more academic courses are not as extensive, although centre staff signpost parents and carers to other providers for courses to improve employability and workplace skills. Also, there is a strong commitment to supporting volunteer workers which provides a secure pathway into adult learning.

Those who access the centre’s provision benefit well. The views of those who have attended courses are sought and questionnaires sent to homes in the reach area. There are representatives from parents on the advisory board and the ‘Friends of Ladybrook’, a parents’ forum, are proactive in informing the board of their ideas.

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	2
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 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	3

How good is the provision?

2

The centre works very effectively in partnership with different agencies such as

school leaders, speech and language therapist and the family support workers. Contact between the teams is effective and this helps to create a successful, integrated multi-agency approach. Procedures for identifying vulnerable families are generally effective and ensure that most are not overlooked. However, the lack of accessibility to crucial data from the health authority and the local authority means it is difficult to target precisely some of those families in need of support. The assessments made of children with special educational needs and/or disabilities are robust and well informed. The staff evaluate children's learning as they undertake different activities for example, engaging in play activities at the toy library. The findings are then discussed at team meetings, and are used to plan the small steps in learning that are appropriate to their needs. Good records are kept of children's learning and the 'All about me' book provides useful information about children's development. The bilingual box is used very effectively to support the learning of those families who are at an early stage of learning English.

Relationships between users and all staff are excellent. Parents and carers spoken to are adamant that staff will always listen carefully to them. If they are not confident enough to speak directly to staff, they use the 'comments, complements and complaints' board knowing they will be responded to either verbally or by letter. There is effective tailored support to develop the well-being of families through an extensive programme of activities and services. For example, a wide range of antenatal and post-natal services help to support mothers, whilst fathers are encouraged to attend all support groups so they can learn more about how to promote their children's learning and development. The centre provides good quality services, which are helping to improve outcomes for families attending the centre and for those who receive more targeted support in their homes.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

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	2
The quality of care, guidance and support offered to users within the centre and the wider community	2

How effective are the leadership and management?

2

The centre manager is highly respected by the staff and the centre users. As one staff member said, 'She is knowledgeable and is always willing to listen and offer support'. The manager communicates high expectations and effectively manages the performance of staff. The advisory board are well informed of the centre's work through good quality reports. The Chair, who is a parent and grandparent, is proud

of her role and is determined to make a difference to the lives of the people of this community. Strategic planning is embedded in the centre’s work, and members of the advisory board are becoming much more involved in self-evaluation processes. The effectiveness of good self-evaluation is evident in improving outcomes, and the many positive comments made by users. Even so, leaders recognise that more must be done to market the centre to those families who are not yet using the facilities. The lack of precise statistical data hinders the centre’s ability to better match resources to users’ needs. Even so, staff are deployed effectively and resources are managed well. The centre provides good value for money.

Safeguarding is given a high priority. Policies and procedures to ensure the protection of children and to keep everyone safe are effective, users say they feel safe. Security measures are appropriate and supervision is vigilant. Staff are clear about their roles in safeguarding, training is up to date and the required Criminal Records Bureau checks are made to ensure safe recruitment. Equality and disability legislation is fully implemented and all necessary policies are in place. Accessibility to the centre’s facilities is good and effective levels of support are provided for any individual user with a disability. Staff tailor support services to the needs of individuals well especially those who face challenges in their life, such as domestic violence.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The extent to which governance, accountability, professional supervision and day to day management arrangements are clear and understood	2
The 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	2
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	2
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 inspectors looked at the latest outcomes for the pre-school providers and schools with Early Years Foundation Stage children in the centre's reach area, including Mansfield Children's Community Centre.

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 Ladybrook Children's Centre (Ladybrook, Broomhill, Cumberlands) on 4–5 November 2010. We judged the centre as good overall.

Thank you to everyone who took the time to come and speak to us. You gave us lots of useful information. We are pleased to know that you feel the centre is making a difference to your lives. We agree with you that the centre is a friendly and welcoming place; full of staff you can trust to help and support you. We found the centre was really good at helping people at times in their lives when they most need it. This is because action is taken quickly and different people and organisations work well as a team to support you and your children. We think staff try very hard to make sure you know the importance of leading a healthy lifestyle and the 'Big Recipe' book provides some very good ideas for you to make foods that are good for you.

We agree when you say staff make sure you and your children are kept safe. We know staff think this is very important and the leaders of the centre are very careful to ensure that all safeguarding checks are rigorously carried out. We think all staff successfully make sure that everyone feels included and has the opportunity to take part in the activities available. We know you appreciate the focus groups and the courses that the centre provides. Some of you gave us examples of the courses you have found useful, such as the weaning group and the baby cafe. Some of you are keen to volunteer to help in the centre, which is good to know. We understand that this has helped some of you gain employment. However, we think that the centre could do more to help you to improve your basic skills of literacy and numeracy.

Senior leaders and the advisory board are determined to ensure the centre is effective in supporting you and your families. They work very closely together and we were pleased to hear the 'Friends of Ladybrook' make sure if you have any suggestions then these are shared with staff. Although many of you attend the centre regularly, some families within your community do not make use of the services available. We have asked leaders to try to increase the number of families

using the centre. We also think leaders need more specific information from the local authority about how well their work is influencing you and your families, for example, in helping some of you to stop smoking. We think there are many good things happening and the centre has good capacity for improving further. Thank you again for your help, and we wish you every success for the future.

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