

Inspection report for North Leverton Children's Centre

Local authority	Nottinghamshire
Inspection number	362535
Inspection dates	13–14 October 2010
Reporting inspector	Sheelagh Barnes

Centre governance	North Nottinghamshire College
Centre leader	Janice Hunt
Date of previous inspection	N/A
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Linked school if applicable	North Leverton Primary School
Linked early years and childcare, if applicable	N/A

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 maintained nursery 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 two additional inspectors.

The inspectors held meetings with parents, staff, outreach workers, health workers, representatives of the North Nottinghamshire College, a representative of the local authority, heads of other local children's centres and the area coordinator for children's centres in Bassetlaw.

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

Information about the centre

This is a small, rural, phase 1 children's centre providing the full core offer. It shares a site with the village primary school. Most services are run on this site, but there is also some outreach provision at other local schools and community venues. The centre base site is open four days a week. Local, childcare provision is provided by childminders. The centre is funded by local authority and children's centre monies. Full opening was delayed by the flooding of the village in 2007. The local authority has delegated governance to North Nottinghamshire College. There is relatively little deprivation in the area and very few families rely on benefits. The great majority of families in the area are of White British heritage. The proportion of families where no-one is in work is small. There is no Jobcentre Plus surgery on site, but parents and carers are 'signposted' to provision in the nearby town. Children's skills and knowledge on entry to early years provision is broadly in line with that expected nationally. No child attending the centre currently is looked after, has a child protection plan, a statement of special educational need, or has been assessed under the common assessment framework (CAF).

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

3

Capacity for sustained improvement

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

3

Main findings

The effectiveness of the centre is satisfactory. It meets the needs of the parents who use the centre regularly, although it is not fully effective in encouraging the wider community to make use of its services. Parents who are frequent visitors are enthusiastic supporters. One parent said they would be 'lost without the children's centre.' There is a core of parents who use the centre each week, some of whom are on the parents' forum. Through the forum, they have opportunity to have input to arrangements for social events and activities, such as the Christmas party, the healthy walks in a local park and the sessions to include dads. All of these activities are enjoyed greatly by those who partake.

The responsible body monitors the work of the centre satisfactorily. However, there are currently no parent representatives on the advisory board. Adult users are not always actively involved in making decisions about the direction the centre will take. Centre leaders are aware that they need to further develop systems to extend the opportunities for parents and carers to influence the way the centre develops. Equality of opportunity is satisfactory.

Capacity for sustained improvement is satisfactory, because self-evaluation does not go far enough. The centre is provided with data, through the local authority, to enable it to establish a baseline from which to evaluate the impact of its actions. However, until very recently, much of this has been in different formats, making comparisons difficult. In addition, the centre has collated very little information of its own. For example, when signposting parents to courses run at other venues, it does not systematically track their successes. No records have been made of the numbers of parents who smoke, or of child immunisation rates. This has been identified as an area for improvement in the annual conversation with the local authority. Just over half of the families in the area have had contact with the centre. Staff and volunteers work hard to evaluate the impact of sessions provided at the centre. Parents who attend sessions at the centre are asked for their evaluations, but those who do not

attend are not asked why they do not choose to come. One parent commented in written feedback that she did not realise how well the centre would meet her needs until she actually came.

Safeguarding arrangements are satisfactory. The centre has suitable procedures for child protection and the safe recruitment of staff and volunteers. All requirements for child protection are met.

What does the centre need to do to improve further?

Recommendations for further improvement

- Ensure the local authority and centre leaders systematically gather and collate data to establish a baseline on which the centre can build.
- Rigorously use information from evaluations to enable planning to more effectively meet the needs of all in the area and to measure progress made.
- Involve all users more actively in evaluation of services and in shaping the work of the centre.

How good are outcomes for users?

3

Relationships at the centre are good. There is a warm and welcoming atmosphere, which enables parents and children to feel relaxed and 'at home'. Consequently behaviour of children is good. Children are supported in developing healthy lifestyles, for example, by having continuous access to the outdoor provision, attending physical activities, growing vegetables and developing an understanding of healthy eating. This is because staff place suitable emphasis on promoting this. However, some health outcomes for users are difficult to assess as no data is kept on them, either at the centre or locally. For instance, there is little data, as yet, on the proportion of mothers sustaining breast feeding, cessation of smoking amongst parents and carers, or dental health of children. Satisfactory care is taken to ensure the safety of children on the site. Procedures for child protection are good, as is the care taken to ensure venues are free from anything which could cause harm. However, the centre is aware that some safety policies and systems require review and this is planned for the immediate future.

Children who come into the centre enjoy the activities hugely and make good progress in their learning. This prepares them well for starting school and is greatly appreciated by parents and carers. There are limited opportunities, however, for the adults themselves to improve their skills and qualifications. Funding changes for adult learning have meant that North Leverton is no longer a priority area for this. Individual success stories reflect the care that staff take, which is very beneficial to those involved. However, there are few links to Jobcentre Plus and to training courses that result in accredited qualifications. The centre points the way to other venues, for parents who ask, but has not systematically collated information about attendance at these, or monitored ensuing successes.

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	3
The extent to which children are safe and protected, their welfare concerns are identified and appropriate steps taken to address them	3
The extent to which all users 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 users contribute to decision-making and governance of the centre	3
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?

3

The enjoyment and appreciation of those who use the centre regularly is undeniable. Support from centre staff and family workers was highly praised by the parents interviewed. Multi-agency working is coordinated effectively to identify need at an early stage. Strategies are put into place with clear targets to reach, such as home visits for a family where a child has speech and language needs. Health and social needs are assessed on a one-to-one basis and staff work together to resolve issues identified.

Contact has been made with just over half of potential users. Only a quarter of the small number of those in homes where no-one is in work have registered with the centre. Assessment of the needs of the wider community in the area served by the centre is developing. Those who the centre does know about are served well. Outreach provision for these families enables them to be supported to deal with stressful circumstances. For example, the support that has been given in helping to establish bedtime routines or help with potty training is much appreciated. Staff have been trained to undertake assessments using the common assessment framework, should this be required.

There are a number of sessions each week for parents and carers to attend with their children. The assessment of the needs of the children at these times is developing well and is appropriately linked to the Early Years Foundation Stage profile. There are limited opportunities for the centre to provide courses for adults. This influences potential provision. For example, there are no facilities to run cookery courses on site. Those activities which do run are mainly craft, although a first aid course and a tasting session were much enjoyed by those who came. Users seeking courses to develop their skills and qualifications are generally directed to other venues. This is also the case regarding guidance on benefits and seeking employment such as from Jobcentre Plus. Although there is not a regular opportunity

for those who need it to meet Jobcentre staff at the centre, this is now planned to be available on a quarterly basis in the near future. Support in helping with smoking cessation or preparing to re-enter the world of work tends to be provided elsewhere.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The effectiveness of the assessment of the needs of children, parents and other users	3
The extent to which the centre promotes purposeful learning, development and enjoyment for all users	3
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	3

How effective are the leadership and management?

3

The leadership and management of the centre are suitably focussed on improvement. Limited space and centre staff time restricts some activities. Overall, systems for assessment are satisfactory. Staff working with young children who attend the centre all make suitable use of the Early Years Foundation Stage framework. They are developing effective systems to identify the next steps for each child. Planning takes good regard of child-initiated and adult-led opportunities. Assessment related to evaluation of the impact of actions with the full range of users, including adults, is not as strong, but is satisfactory and developing. In part, this development has been inhibited by the lack of clarity in data provided to the centre by the local authority. This has made it difficult to establish a baseline or to measure improvements against local and national performance. Currently, limited use is made of data and its evaluation in order to support a wider clientele through outreach. There is limited monitoring of outcomes for key target groups. This is identified as an area for improvement by leaders and managers and there are suitable plans to improve this. The centre has a commitment to the promotion of inclusivity and there are plans for it to be designated as a reporting centre for racial equality. As a result, provision for equality and diversity is satisfactory.

Safeguarding arrangements are satisfactory overall and some aspects of this are good. For example, child protection procedures and checks carried out on staff and volunteers are rigorous. Some other safety policies are in need of review and

clarification of practice, although day-to-day running of the centre is safe. Staff training is up-to-date and records kept effectively.

Governance is satisfactory. The accountable body has a satisfactory understanding of the strengths and areas for improvement of the centre. They rely on the centre leader and area coordinator to provide details of how well the centre is progressing towards its goals. The work with key agencies, such as health and social care is good and relationships between various departments are effective. However, there is currently no representation on the advisory board by parents or carers; this limits the impact families can have on decisions about the direction the centre takes in developing. The parents' forum has limited input on major decisions. Because many of the staff work in other children's centres as well as this one, the centre venue cannot be open for sessions every day. The centre provides satisfactory 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	3
The extent to which ambitious targets drive improvement, provision is integrated and there are high expectations for users and the wider community	3
The extent to which resources are used and managed efficiently and effectively to meet the needs of users and the wider community	3
The extent to which equality is promoted and diversity celebrated, illegal or unlawful discrimination is tackled and the centre fulfils its statutory duties	3
The effectiveness of the centre's policy, procedures and work with key agencies in safeguarding children and, where applicable, vulnerable adults	3
The extent to which evaluation is used to shape and improve services and activities	3
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	3

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

The inspection of North Leverton Primary School.

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 *North Leverton Children's Centre* on *13–14 October 2010*. We judged the centre as satisfactory overall.

This is to thank those of you who took time to talk to us and to write to us. Your comments about your experiences and those of your children at the centre were most helpful. Those of you who use the centre regularly are full of praise for the work it does and the way it improves things for you, your families and your children. You told us how friendly staff are and how they help you with your children's development. We can see that this is the case. We also see how much your children enjoy coming to the various activities. We saw that staff work satisfactorily to keep children and families safe and healthy. We know many of you enjoyed the yoga sessions.

Because of constraints on both venue and staff time there are some times when courses cannot start up straight away when another finishes. Other courses, such as cookery, cannot take place due to lack of a suitable venue. Currently there are no courses on site for adults to improve academic skills or qualifications. This provision is by other agencies and held at other sites. In part this is due to funding changes for adult learning. The centre promotes each individual's learning and development satisfactorily.

We know that staff take note of how well your children are developing. There are some other aspects, however, that the centre does not measure as much as it could. In part this is because some of the data it has been provided with by the local authority is difficult to compare with other data it provides. It is difficult, therefore for centre leaders to see how well the centre is doing compared to others, both locally and nationally. We think that centre leaders could collate some information for themselves. It would be useful to keep records, for example, of how many of you ask where to go for courses and how well you get on as a result, or how successful groups are, such as those provided to help adults to stop smoking.

When courses have run, we know staff ask those of you who have attended how you felt it went. We are asking them to go further and ask those who think the centre is

not for them why this is. We know at least one of you thought that the centre had little to offer you until you came to see for yourself and then decided it was exactly what was needed! We know some of you help with planning activities, such as the Easter bonnet parade and food for the party at Christmas as part of your work in the parents' forum. However, none of you are currently on the advisory board. We have asked the centre to extend the input of ideas from parents and carers. This way you can play a more active role in how the centre develops further.

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