

Inspection report for Netherton Park Children's Centre

Local authority	Dudley
Inspection number	362529
Inspection dates	16–17 September 2010
Reporting inspector	Sheelagh Barnes AI

Centre governance	Local Authority
Centre leader	Helen Ruffles
Date of previous inspection	N/A
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Linked school if applicable	Netherton Park Nursery School
Linked early years and childcare, if applicable	Netherton Park Kindergarten

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 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 the headteacher and senior managers, governors and representatives of the local authority, parents and carers, health visitors, community midwife, seconded social worker, family support workers, teachers, home and hospital tuition workers and the child and adolescent mental health worker. They observed the centre's work, and looked at a range of relevant documentation.

Information about the centre

Netherton Park is a phase one children's centre, offering full core provision. It is funded solely by local authority and children's centre monies. The centre is run directly by the local authority. There is also a governing body, which is shared with the Netherton Park Nursery School. The centre comprises a maintained nursery school with 106 places, a kindergarten of 50 places for children aged from birth to four and a wide range of children's and family services. Most services are run on site but there is also an increasing amount of outreach provision. There are strong partnerships with a range of social care and health agencies. Levels of deprivation in the area range from the bottom 10% nationally to relatively advantaged families. The majority of users come from homes with some level of social disadvantage. Most families in the area are White British; approximately one fifth of the families that the children's centre has links with are from Black and minority ethnic groups. In nursery this is higher, at 42%. Children's levels of attainment on entry to early year's provision are below those expected for their age. No children are currently in receipt

of a child protection plan. In Dudley as a whole, 18% of children are from households where no-one is in work. The authority data indicates that a third of children in the Netherton Park area live in poverty, as defined by the Children in Poverty Indicator.

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 overall effectiveness of the centre is good. The centre provides a warm and welcoming reception to all who attend. The range of services it provides is good and these are well supported through good quality resources which reflect the diversity of the area. The centre runs smoothly on a day-to-day basis and relationships are good. As a result, children and adults who use the centre enjoy attending. Children take part enthusiastically in the many activities provided by the centre. They make good progress in developing skills and competencies as a result. Parents say they find this enjoyment reassuring and are happy for their children to attend. They are particularly impressed by the outstanding care the centre provides with regard to safety and child protection. Carers understand the importance of rules, such as not using mobile phones on site to photograph children. Parents say that they feel that all staff are approachable and helpful. Service partners work efficiently as a team to make a real difference to parents and families, particularly those from vulnerable groups. The centre works well to ensure equal access to all. The good leadership and management mean that the centre has a good capacity to continue to improve. Through leaflets and calls to households who have not so far used any of the services provided, staff continue efforts to make all families in the reach area aware of the range of work done at the centre.

The work the centre undertakes towards health outcomes is good. The efforts to ensure that children from all groups achieve well and enjoy their learning are also effective. The centre runs some courses for parents, for example cooking healthy food and these are greatly enjoyed. However, few of these courses lead to accredited qualifications. Staff advise parents which other providers they can go to in order to gain access to further qualifications. The centre has links with Jobcentre Plus and can arrange interviews for parents and carers if requested but few parents know

that this service is available to them. There are no regular generally advertised courses to help parents seek work such as filling in application forms, writing application letters or preparing for interview, for example. However, parents who have asked for help, say that the centre willingly provides this support when it is requested of them.

The local authority has statutory responsibility for the centre and is the centres' Accountable Body in legal and financial matters. There is also a governing body, which is shared with the nursery school, to guide the day-to-day decisions. This body has several parent representatives among its number. In addition, the centre has established a parents' forum to ensure that users' views are taken into account in decision making. However, this is relatively new and none of the parents spoken to were aware that such a forum existed. Development of the parents' forum has been rightly identified as part of the development plan for the centre for the forthcoming year.

Monitoring and evaluation are good. The centre makes good use of data in planning to meet the needs of users. However, even more can still be done. For instance, the data provided by the local authority on national comparisons is acknowledged to be difficult to interpret. Because of this its use by the centre currently is limited. As a result, the local authority intends to present this data in a simplified form in future. Further training for senior leaders is also planned for centres across the whole Dudley area to ensure best use is made of the information in all children's centres in the area. The data that the centre itself collates is good, but does not include a number of potentially helpful pieces of information; for example, it does not include entry data on how many of the children who attend have been fully immunised or the state of their dental health, levels of obesity and the proportion of mothers breast feeding. The centre leaders ensure that dental health courses are provided for children and parents which, to the children's great delight, include giving small samples of toothpaste. While this is undoubtedly successful in promoting awareness, centre leaders have no way of measuring the impact, apart from enjoyment of those who attend. Thus there is scope in matching provision even more efficiently to children's needs as well as sharpening evaluation more strategically of the impact of the activities the centre provides for families.

What does the centre need to do to improve further?

Recommendations for further improvement

For the local authority to:

- ensure data is provided in a more user-friendly format to enable the centre's leaders to interpret it more easily to measure need in the area and the effectiveness of actions taken.

For the leaders of the children's centre to:

- collate information on children's and families starting points in a systematic way, in order to demonstrate improvements attained from initiatives

undertaken

- seek to establish a higher profile and more visible links to training and Job centre Plus for parents and carers in the reach area who are seeking work
- develop the parents' forum so that more families in the area are aware of its existence and can use it to make a more positive contribution to the centre's work.

How good are outcomes for users?

2

Because of the effective work of the children's centre, the health outcomes for children from all groups, including those who are most vulnerable, are good. Parents and carers develop a good understanding of how to provide healthy diet, through training offered at the centre. A new provision of gymnastic equipment in the park nearby has been welcomed by all. Parent and toddler swimming sessions are greatly enjoyed by carers and children alike. There is a positive take-up of groups to support breastfeeding, weaning, home safety and cessation of smoking. Families benefit from the well-integrated services, including health care. The extent to which children are kept safe and protected is excellent. Those using the services at the centre are safeguarded exceptionally well. Users, including children, say and show that they feel safe at the centre and are confident to approach staff with any concerns. Parents particularly value PEEPs (Peer Early Education Partnership) and the opportunity to build their skills of learning how their children learn through play. They say such things as: 'I found it interesting and very informative. My son gets excited when I tell him we're going to PEEPS.' The support for children subject to Common Assessment Framework processes is good. Support for young pregnant teenagers under 16 is well implemented with clear advice, help and support given about sexual health.

The overall extent to which all users enjoy and achieve educationally and in their personal and social development is good. The gap between the lowest scoring 20% of children and others is being closed effectively. For children attending the nursery and Kindergarten, the development of personal and social skills is excellent. Children are developing good skills for the future. The take-up of formal childcare is good. Non-accredited courses are provided for adults, which are greatly appreciated and enjoyed. Centre workers signpost parents and carers to other providers for courses to improve employability and workplace skills. 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. Although there are representatives from parents on the governing body, the centre is seeking ways to involve parents more actively in decision making through development of a forum.

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	1
The extent to which all users enjoy and achieve educationally and in	2

their personal and social development	
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?

2

The provision is good and is based on a soundly formulated assessment of the needs of children and their families. Health visitors and others work effectively with outreach provision to assess and review the welfare needs of users. There are good links with other agencies to effectively inform assessments to meet learners' individual needs well. The provision to help children learn and develop is good. Activities, such as outdoor play and other learning experiences, such as Forest School, are particularly good. Parents are enthusiastic supporters of the centre and say such things as, 'My daughter has benefitted greatly.'

The centre knows its users well as individuals. Adult and community learning achievements are celebrated and all adults in the centre encourage users to build on their achievements. There is a good range of services for users. Provision for teenage parents and pregnant teenagers in the area is particularly strong as virtually all of this group in the reach area are provided with support. Recently, the centre leaders have tried to gain the views of Asian parents in particular through mail drops and telephone calls to homes. The information gathered is being used effectively to set up a mothers' group in a local mosque.

The quality of care and support to vulnerable families is excellent, as is the care and guidance of children who attend the Nursery and the Kindergarten. The quality of information to parents and families on smoking, alcohol and drug misuse is good. The quality of information, advice and guidance for parents seeking work is satisfactory; on a one-to-one basis, for the limited numbers who ask for it, support is strong. However, too few parents realise that the centre can provide help in this way. Links to Jobcentre Plus and advice on filling in applications for jobs or developing interview techniques are given a relatively low profile around the centre.

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	2

meet the needs of users and the wider community	
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 leadership and management of the centre are good at all levels and are the main reason for the good quality of the provision and the positive impact on users. Governance is good and systems to ensure accountability are secure. The value for money provided by the centre is good because activities are thoughtfully planned.

Safeguarding arrangements are exemplary. Child protection arrangements are excellent and records are kept efficiently. The centre ensures that all partners are trained effectively to deal with emotional and health issues and dealing with domestic violence. Policies are clear and implemented fully. Risk assessments are rigorous and monitored to a high standard.

Senior leaders are effective in promoting a good range of services which are well matched to the wants and needs of the users. Relationships are good and staff are enthusiastic and positive about the work they do. They are proud of the impact they have on the lives of the children and families who attend.

The local authority provides data of local needs analysis, so that centre leaders can target provision towards those with greatest need. However this data is relatively complex in the way it is presented. This has been identified by the local authority as an area for improvement, together with training for centre leaders across the area.

The centre provides effectively for equality and diversity. This is particularly the case for users with disabilities, who are enabled to play a full part in the work of the centre. Information which the centre collates about the progress made by children and other users is good. However, the centre does not systematically record starting points for health, for example. Although health visitors monitor the immunisations of babies born in the area, the centre does not systematically check on immunisation rates of other children who use the provision it offers. There is regular good information on care of teeth, but no record of the incidents of dental decay or fillings on intake in order to demonstrate the success of the dental health programme. The views of users are regularly sought, such as evaluations of those who have attended courses. Information about how to express their views formally and influence decisions, however, is not universally well known to parents and carers.

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	2

integrated and there are high expectations for users and the wider community	
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	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

A section 5 inspection of Netherton Park Nursery School and Netherton Park Kindergarten was undertaken as a single inspection event in the same week as the inspection of the children's 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 Netherton Park Children's Centre on 16–17 September 2010. We judged the centre as good overall.

I would like to thank all those of you who spoke to us about your children's centre. This summary is to let you know our judgements. We agree with you that the centre does a good job. We could see how happy your children are to attend and how much they enjoy their work. This is your view too and some of you said such things as 'I

love to see my son exploring and enjoying himself while I enjoy speaking to other mums.' This supports our judgement that the centre's leadership and management are good. There are clear links between planning and the services the centre provides.

We judge that the centre works well to enable you and your children to have a healthy lifestyle and we know that many of you have greatly appreciated the healthy cooking classes. The centre does an excellent job in ensuring that children and families are kept safe and protected. The way that leaders ensure that everyone at the centre has been fully trained and the risk assessments they undertake are exemplary. This is because of the high level of importance given to safeguarding by leaders and managers.

All of those who use the centre are helped to make good progress and enjoy and achieve well. Relationships are good. You told us how easy you find it to approach the centre workers if you have a question or query and how responsive they are. We know that when you have attended courses, the centre asks you to evaluate how effective you feel the course has been. However, none of those of you we spoke to were aware that there is a parents' forum for you to contribute your views and help with decision making. We think it would be a good idea for more of you, including those who cannot attend regularly, to give your views on what you would like and what would be helpful to you. The centre has already identified this in its action plan as an area for further development.

The many different groups that the centre runs, including the Nursery, Kindergarten and PEEPs all help children to develop their skills well. We know that the centre helps you as well through training, including healthy eating and basic literacy and numeracy classes. Although no courses are run by the centre that give you recognised national qualifications, we know that they do help you to find out where to go for these. Financial considerations have meant that there is no manned Jobcentre Plus access point at the centre. Centre staff will telephone for you to make an appointment with the Jobcentre, but only half of those of you we spoke to were aware that this was possible. Those who did know were very positive about the work that the centre does in helping you and sorting out problems. We have asked the centre's leaders to look for ways to make this more widely known so that more of you can benefit from this provision.

The local authority provides information for the centre about the various data it collects. This includes data so that the centre can compare how well it is doing against national figures. Unfortunately, everyone agrees that this data has not been provided in an easy format in the past. As a result, the local authority has plans to present the data in a simpler format. We agree that this will be helpful for the centre's leaders in identifying priorities and measuring progress. The centre keeps good records of how well children make progress, the numbers of you who attend courses and groups, and the views of those of you who come to the centre. It is also reaching out to find the views of those who do not come to the many groups and activities. We think that it would be a good idea to ask you such things as how many

of you have chosen to immunise your children, and how healthy you say their teeth are. We think this sort of information would help the centre to identify what aspects it can help with most. It would also help the centre to demonstrate what a good impact it has through the things it does and so justify the good value of the many activities it runs.

It was a pleasure to meet so many of you during inspection and to hear your views. We hope that you, your children and many more families who live in and around the Netherton Park area will continue to enjoy and benefit from the many services the centre offers. Thank you for contributing to our evidence by sharing your comments and thoughts so openly. I am particularly grateful for the time taken and the effort a significant number of you made to come to talk to us. Thank you.

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