

Inspection report for Shortwood Children's Centre

Local authority	Telford and Wrekin
Inspection number	362566
Inspection dates	20-21 October 2010
Reporting inspector	Deborah Udakis HMI

Centre governance	Local Authority
Centre leader	Jane Roberts
Date of previous inspection	No previous inspection
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Linked school if applicable	Shortwood Primary 104939
Linked early years and childcare, if applicable	Smiley Faces Nursery EY292008

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 one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and an additional inspector.

The inspectors held meetings with outreach workers, community involvement workers, integrated services providers, senior managers from the local authority, health and early years professionals, parents, children's centre leaders, activity group facilitators and members of the advisory board.

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

Information about the centre

Shortwood is a Phase 1 children's centre providing the full core offer. It provides a range of integrated services that include health, family support, adult training and early year's advice and guidance. Shortwood is one of two children's centres serving the reach area. Users within the community also travel to 13 children's centres across the borough to access services. The manager also has responsibility for the children's centre located in nearby in Wellington and another in Newport. The local authority holds the centre to account through strategic management and governance. The children's centre also has an advisory board.

Statistical data for the Arlestone district indicates that the area is one of high social and economic disadvantage. The percentage of workless households and those dependent on workless benefits is broadly average. Children start nursery with attainment below the expected levels. The population is largely White British but with a significant population from minority ethnic backgrounds specifically Asian families. The centre also serves an established Traveller community.

Smiley Faces Nursery, operates within the centre. This is run by a private provider. The Nursery was last inspected in July 2007 and the inspection report can be found on the Ofsted website www.ofsted.gov.uk

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

The children's centre is highly effective at meeting the needs of users and there is clear evidence of improving outcomes for users and the wider community. The centre's leaders, well supported by a highly effective team, set ambitious targets to improve the health, safety and well-being of the local community. Leaders target and adapt the provision well to meet local needs.

The centre's advisory board includes good representation from parents and carers who are extremely keen to be involved. Away from the advisory board and parent panel there are a few opportunities for parents to be involved in decision making and to shape or make suggestions of what shape the children's centre services should take. The advisory board is a recent development replacing the steering group. There are shared high levels of confidence within the centre leadership that the advisory board will provide highly effective support and challenge.

The leadership and management of the centre inspire trust and encourage and promote excellence. For example, the exceptional range of multi-agency partnerships and the highly effective outreach support all contribute to an improving outlook for children and their families. The centre management team is extremely strong with a highly commendable commitment to further improve services to meet the needs of the community. The existing strong infrastructure provides an outstanding platform to drive forward improvement and ensure that improvements are sustained.

Outcomes for children and their families are good. They are continuing to improve as a result of the extremely effective multi-agency working which provides a seamless service for parents and children. This also provides value for money as duplication of work is largely eliminated. Professional partners expressed high levels of confidence in the work of the children's centre and this view was unanimous amongst those who contributed to the inspection.

The attention to children's and their family's health, safety and safeguarding

arrangements and their positive behaviours and relationships with others are all outstanding. The exemplary use of assessment to clearly identify the personalised needs of the child and family significantly contributes to the success of the work of the centre.

Community cohesion is well promoted through the warm welcome visitors receive on arrival. The children's centre provides an inclusive and proactive outreach to families: its work with vulnerable families is particularly successful. Equality and diversity practices and procedures are very effective and support the work of the centre. The sensitive support provided by staff across the agencies results in outstanding care, guidance and support. The 'Freedom' programme and 'Incredible Years' initiative are excellent examples of the services offered to users which have led to improved emotional well-being.

Evaluations and the collation of data provide valuable evidence in respect of user satisfaction rates. However, while data collation is systematic, it is being further developed. The current analysis of data does not consistently provide clear indicators of the centre's performance or evidence to support improved outcomes for children and their families.

What does the centre need to do to improve further?

Recommendations for further improvement

- Improve the extent to which users contribute to decision making and governance of the centre.
- Ensure that senior leaders evaluate the longer-term impact of the provision and are able to provide evidence in respect of improving outcomes for children and users.

How good are outcomes for users?

2

Many parents and carers set out with the intention of using the centre only to access a single service, such as antenatal care, but stay on as their interest in learning new skills develops and as their confidence increases. Parents' evaluations of the success of courses and activities are particularly positive. The provision of supported day care leads to significant all-round improvements for families; for example, improved parents' skills are resulting in safer and healthier outcomes for their children. Case studies and other evaluations indicate that family learning is having a significant impact on outcomes for parents and carers.

Children's attainment is above average at the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage. They make at least good progress as they move into school. Activities designed to promote speaking and listening such as the 'Time to Talk' initiative are

effective. This means that those children who are identified as being at risk of delays in their communication, language and literacy development continue to make good progress. Parents are eager to go on to take further education courses in basic skills and in English, as the language barrier is significant for many new arrivals. The take-up of 'English speakers of other languages' (ESOL) classes is high and is improving opportunities for parents to encourage literacy within the whole family.

Obesity rates are higher than expected in the area. However, the centre has excellent partnerships and joint initiatives with health professionals but these have yet to show impact. Healthy eating courses and the centre's project on 'Healthy Eating and Nutrition for the Really Young' (HENRY) help to ensure that families are developing a very good understanding of how to keep themselves and their children healthy. In addition, the centre provides highly effective antenatal clinics and excellent breastfeeding support, regular smoking cessation groups and alcohol counselling. Development checks for two-year-olds are carried out at the health centre by health visitors who are supported by the children's centre. Parents who attend the 'Urban Gardens' provision access cooking and budgeting sessions, introducing dishes from their home countries. These sessions have been particularly well received and parents say this has helped them to feel welcome and become integrated into the community.

The importance of the role of fathers is extremely well promoted. The 'Saturday group' provides a very wide range of learning and fun-filled physical activities each week for fathers and children to enjoy together.

Partnerships between agencies, including child and family health and social services, are having a highly positive effect on children's and families' emotional well-being and physical health across the area. High-quality activities making this significant difference include teenage parenting classes, stay and play sessions, the nurturing group, parent craft and weaning advice and support.

Children are cherished by staff and their welfare and safety is at the forefront of services. Outcomes regarding safety are outstanding with highly effective parenting programmes in place which have helped parents to positively address behaviour management concerns whilst protecting the welfare of the child.

Parents say that they feel safe in the centre and have a strong sense of belonging. One parent spoke of how they 'feel at ease with centre staff' and that they feel they are not being judged by them. They trust the staff to help them in times of crisis or personal difficulties. Partnership working with health visitors, local emergency services and other partners are excellent and are helping to raise children's and families' awareness of safety in the home and their communities. Trained family development workers undertake safety visits to homes and the centre provides home safety equipment to its families, contributing to a reduction in the number of accidents in the home over the past 12 months. Family development workers provide excellent support for users who experience domestic violence and abuse, and the centre works well with agencies to resolve situations and to protect children as well as parents.

Behaviour is good. Children in the day care provision relate well to one another. Parents, including fathers and young mothers, commented on how their confidence as parents has improved as a result of the activities offered by the centre. Young children in the nurturing group and the nursery bond well with their parents and children develop their play, exploration and communication skills through a variety of interesting activities.

Parents feel that they have a voice within the centre and that services meet their specific needs. The centre has helped parents into learning, training and employment. The Citizens Advice Bureau has provided invaluable advice and support to families significantly increasing receipts of benefits and entitlements and reducing debt. Several parents said that their economic stability and independence had improved greatly as a result of the opportunities the centre has provided.

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	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?

1

The centre team know and understand their community extremely well and this informs very high-quality provision. The centre works collaboratively with families and other professionals to improve the life chances and personal development of children. The staff secure the support, trust and commitment of parents to set goals for themselves and to make important changes to improve outcomes for them and their children. Staff are very well qualified and experienced to take on this challenging and demanding work.

A wide range of users commented positively on the centre's provision, including parents of disabled children, teenage parents and parents from the Asian and Traveller communities. One parent said that they attended the parent and toddler group and 'enjoyed playing with their children' and 'wanted to be as involved as possible with them'. Each one expressed great appreciation of the support they

receive through the centre and of the positive changes that have resulted for their children and themselves.

The access to good quality, varied and accredited learning opportunities is having a constructive effect on the life chances of children with some positive outcomes for parents and carers seeking employment. Parents have benefitted a great deal from attending training courses. For example, two parents who attended the breastfeeding training have become peer breastfeeding support workers. Parents who have attended parenting programmes commented that they have developed their parenting skills and how they have implemented strategies to safely manage their children's behaviour.

Early years practitioners demonstrate good specialist skills and a good understanding of the requirements for the Early Years Foundation Stage. This, together with accurate assessments, promotes children's learning and development well. Experienced community involvement and outreach workers operate in the centre and also go out into the community. They have an excellent understanding of the families and their needs and have made a significant contribution by integrating children and their families, who may be vulnerable to isolation and discrimination, into the community. The work the staff does contributes to excellent community cohesion and inclusion.

The use of the Common Assessment Framework (CAF), Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conferences (MARAC), Team Around the Child (TAC) processes and assessments with families regarding support and advice provide an exemplar of excellence. The care, advice and support provided and the progress of vulnerable families are well documented and evaluated. Case studies show that the highly effective use of assessments help families to improve their independence. The centre is exceptionally effective as it coordinates services for families and children. It has outstanding links with family and children's services: statutory, community and voluntary. Through these, it provides very effective support for all of the most vulnerable groups, such as teenage parents, lone parents, Traveller families, Asian families, new arrivals, families in crisis and those experiencing domestic violence. One parent commented: 'We are changing the way we bring up our children with the support of Sure Start...we didn't know our children could have the services ... we didn't know what was there'.

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	2

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

The centre manager and strategic leadership team provide exceptional leadership and management. Leaders are fully focused on the needs of the immediate community. Their expertise and the skills of a high calibre, cohesive staff team combine to ensure that a high quality of service is provided across the centre's operations. Senior leaders are highly effective in ensuring children and families are safe. This is through rigorous attention to safeguarding, child protection, vetting and recruitment procedures. It is also the result of a sensitive approach to the variety of needs the centre's users present, which ensures that families feel comfortable with staff and protected.

The centre's work to promote equality and tackle discrimination against vulnerable groups is exemplary. The centre makes a very positive contribution to community cohesion and the breaking down of barriers between families of different backgrounds.

Teamwork among staff is excellent and morale is high. Staff are highly qualified and experienced. The centre is bright and welcoming and is highly inclusive. The excellent attention to providing outstanding value for money includes providing a wide range of services between this and the neighbouring children's centre. The accommodation is well equipped for family learning courses, activities for parents and carers and crèches for children. Although space is sometimes restricted, particularly in the outdoor areas, every inch is utilised well and the learning environment throughout the centre is of a high quality. Excellent safety systems are in place. Procedures to ensure that children are safeguarded are exemplary. Multi-agency partnership working and staff commitment to working in partnership with parents and families to safeguard children means that preventative and intervention strategies are highly effective.

The local authority is supportive and has a strong commitment to the governance of the centre and to the ongoing development of its role in the community. Development planning and accountability originates from the annual consultations led by the local authority. The outcomes of these consultations inform future planning of services.

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
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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	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	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	2

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

Early Years Foundation Stage Profile data
Smiley Faces Nursery EY292008 Inspection report.

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 Shortwood Primary School & Children's Centre on 20–21 October 2010. We judged the centre as outstanding overall.

The centre provides a hub of services for children, families and carers who live in its area. The agencies supporting children and families work extremely well together and are very committed to making sure that your children get the best possible start

in life, by providing you with terrific support and showing that they care what happens to you and your children. You told us how the centre is making a positive difference to your lives and those of your children. We found that the centre is outstanding in helping your children to keep safe from harm and to be healthy.

Your children who attend the centre's provision are prepared well for starting school. The centre and its partners are also providing good opportunities to help adults learn. Those of you who spoke to us told us how the centre has transformed your lives and has had an enormous impact on the well-being of your families.

The staff at the centre are extremely well qualified and experienced professionals. You explained how well staff support you, both in raising your self-esteem and confidence, but also in providing practical help and advice. Those of you who are teenage parents, and your children, benefit greatly from the excellent support provided through the Teenage Parenting project. The centre provides an excellent range of activities which are helping to improve your parenting skills. Several of you told us you believe your contact with the centre has been life changing. Community activities, such as the Saturday group, the Fun Day and health promotion days at the Travellers Site were commented on as being particularly successful.

The headteacher, nursery manager and the centre manager are passionate about improving the outcomes for children and families in the locality and are constantly looking for ways to improve the service the centre provides. For example, establishing effective relationships with families has significantly improved children's attendance at school. Those of you who speak English as an additional language or are new to English receive effective support from the bi-lingual support workers, and can attend classes where you can learn English.

Those of you who access courses at the centre are able to use the crèche facilities, knowing your children will be very well cared for and will have fun! The leaders and managers know what needs to improve to make the centre better for you, and they have the skills to carry out their plans effectively. The advisory board has recently been established and includes parent representatives. It has the capacity to support and challenge the leaders well. The centre supports groups who are potentially vulnerable very well, such as very young parents, the traveller community, parents of children with additional needs and families who have recently come to this country. It is highly successful in reaching those who are most in need.

We have asked the centre to do two things to improve it even further for you. The first is to improve the extent to which parents and users can contribute to decision making and governance of the centre. We have also asked senior leaders to evaluate how well you do in all the activities provided by the centre and what difference they make to your lives.

Thank you to those of you who met with us to tell us your views and especially those who invited us into their home. Thank you for contributing to the inspection. Your comments proved invaluable to inspectors. It was great to see that fathers are

contributing strongly to their children's care and activities in the centre. Inspectors think that with the centre's encouragement many of you now make a positive contribution to the centre's services and the life of the community.

We wish you and your families every success for the future.

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