

Inspection report for Eastwood Children's Centre (Eastwood N & S)

Local authority	Nottinghamshire
Inspection number	362471
Inspection dates	4–5 November 2010
Reporting inspector	Alison Veall HMI

Centre governance	Nottinghamshire Community Health, commissioned by the local authority
Centre leader	Karen Ellis
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected
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Linked school if applicable	Springbank and Lynncroft Schools
Linked early years and childcare, if applicable	Wollaton Village Day Nurseries

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 Early Years Inspector

The inspectors held meetings with leaders, staff, parents and carers. They also conducted discussions with representatives of the local authority, the health authority, community groups, focus groups and service partner providers. They observed the centre's work, and looked at a range of relevant documentation.

Information about the centre

Eastwood Children's Centre is situated in the former mining town of Eastwood, Nottinghamshire. The strategic management of the centre is provided by Nottinghamshire Community Health who is commissioned by the local authority to provide children's centre services in the Broxtowe district of Nottinghamshire. The centre is housed in a single story modern building within the grounds of Brookhill Leys Primary School. It is a phase 2 children's centre having previously been part of a sure start local programme.

Eastwood is among the 12% most deprived wards in the country. The community it serves is mainly white British. Data suggests that approximately 8% cent of its community is made up of Black and minority ethnic families. The area is characterised by high levels of unemployment and social deprivation. Evidence indicates that children enter the Early Years Foundation Stage with attainment that is generally lower than that expected for their age. Childcare and regular stay and play sessions are provided through partnerships with the Pre-School Learning Alliance, Springbank Primary School and Wollaton Village Day Nurseries. There is also crèche provision on its main site.

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 good and in some aspects outstanding provision at Eastwood Children’s Centre is as a result of exemplary partnership working; strong and committed leadership and management; the drive and commitment of all staff and the support given by the centre’s advisory board. The centre is attractive and welcoming. Throughout the building a wide range of good quality toys and equipment are available. These are well used by children when parents or carers are attending courses, meetings or just dropping in. Professionals who use the building for meetings with parents and carers comment upon the centre’s willingness to ensure children are provided with toys and equipment to keep them occupied during such meetings. A broad range of activities take place within the centre and within other venues around its reach area.

Centre users are unequivocal in their praise of the centre and its staff whom they trust implicitly. Throughout the inspection the only comments read or received were of a positive nature. Examples include, ‘staff are fantastic, friendly and helpful, me and my children love it here’, ‘nobody looks down at you it is fantastic’, and ‘you might not like what they say sometimes, but you know they are doing their job’. Administrators play a vital role in supporting the delivery of services and in the protection of staff when lone working. A significant strength of the centre is the enthusiasm and commitment shown by the whole staff team who cooperate well with partner agencies such as health visiting and midwifery services. Staff morale is high. They consistently deliver outstanding care guidance and support through a full range of services. It is the range of services and excellent partnership working which ensures that safeguarding arrangements for children and vulnerable adults are exemplary.

Excellent partnership working with health professionals ensure that new and prospective parents benefit from onsite pre and post-natal midwifery and health visiting services. The centre gives good support to mothers who breast feed. Healthy eating is developing well as a result of parents and carers involvement in the centre’s allotment, and cook and eat sessions. The provision of healthy snacks and good role modelling by staff has increased parents’ understanding of healthy eating. There are good opportunities for parents and children to learn and play together through

provision such as baby massage, the sensory room, stay and play and work in the allotment. The combined efforts of the centre, its early year's partners and the speech and language service very effectively focus on improving children's speech and communication skills and their personal and social development. This is having a good impact on their learning and development. Parents and carers access a wide range of courses which include Domestic Violence Awareness, Incredible Years Training, Money Matters and Volunteer Training which are all developing their knowledge, self esteem and confidence. The volunteer training also leads to volunteering opportunities. For some this does lead to paid employment, however this is not yet happening in significant numbers.

The children's centre has recently undergone staffing changes as a result of the previous centre manager leaving. Her replacement with a manager from another children's centre who previously worked at Eastwood has ensured a seamless transition for families and staff. Data collection has not been easy as a result of the incompatibilities of local and health authority information technology systems. However, rigorous interrogation of the information available; the centre manager's knowledge of the reach; good support from the children's centre coordinator; senior management colleagues and the staff team has ensured that the vast majority of children and families within the reach area are involved in some kind of activity within the centre or on outreach. The centre's advisory board provides good support and an element of challenge. However, inconsistent attendance at meetings by external partners means that it is not always in a strong position to act as a 'critical friend' and effectively hold the centre to account. Self-evaluation of the centre is accurate and the team's well-established reflective practice demonstrates good capacity for improvement. The centre evaluates rigorously the activities and courses it provides. Its high expectation for users continually drives the improvement of services. Feedback from consultation with parents and carers evidences that all users are satisfied or very satisfied with the services the centre provides.

What does the centre need to do to improve further?

Recommendations for further improvement

- ensure that adult learning opportunities support increased numbers of parents and carers into paid employment and improved economic stability
- strengthen the partnership board's understanding of its strategic responsibilities so that it is more effective in holding the centre to account for its work

How good are outcomes for users?

2

Excellent partnership working and a highly effective 'team around the child' approach ensures that children who are subject to a child protection plan are extremely well supported. Through good safety advice and raised awareness by the centre children, parents and carers are developing a good understanding of how to keep themselves safe. Fire safety checks and equipment are provided by the local fire service. Parents who have been subject to domestic violence are given excellent support by health and family support staff who have contacts with a range of agencies who can offer

information, support and protection if required.

A wide range of child and family health services enhance children's, parents' and carers' emotional well-being. Children's physical health is developing well as a result of attendance at baby massage, tummy time, access to the forest school and the children's centre allotment. They also have regular access to outdoor activities whilst at stay and play and in the crèche. Mothers comment positively about the support they have received from the centre and from other mothers who act as peer supporters in relation to breast feeding. Breast feeding rates at the centre are good. They exceed the national averages in respect of continued breastfeeding at 6 weeks. This is as a result of targeted support by health professionals, the information and support available in the children's centre and the rapid response initiative developed by the centre staff. Parents and a relatively new member of staff are involved in the ongoing development of the allotment. Parents comment on how it has developed their understanding of the benefits both in terms of health and the cost of growing their own vegetables. Photographs evidence a wide range of children involved in the allotment. They are obviously proud of their achievements. Cookery sessions where parents and carers learn about good weaning strategies have had varying degrees of success. However, parents who did attend were very positive in their feedback and made comments such as, 'I now know my baby can eat chunkier food than I thought' and 'fruit and vegetables are better, cheap and easy'.

Children, parents and carers play and learn together through a wide range of good opportunities. The centre has developed very strong links with local schools and early year's settings. Termly meetings give staff the opportunity to discuss new initiatives and to discuss practice, therefore ensuring consistency in provision. As a result children make good progress in their learning. All staff are aware of the next steps in learning for every child. A very successful Ready for Nursery project has run as a result of a combined initiative by the children's centre and a local school. Children and their parents and carers are given the opportunity to spend time in the nursery they will be joining. These sessions have proved very popular with parents. Feedback to the centre identifies that when children begin nursery they settle very quickly and are in a much better position to learn than those who do not attend. Children's communication, language and literacy skills, personal and emotional development and creative skills are developing well. Parents and carers undertake a range of courses including Level 1 and 2 literacy and numeracy with a small number completing GCSEs. There is evidence that for some it is satisfactorily improving outcomes and leading to paid employment. This is not yet happening in significant numbers. The centre is very effective in ensuring that users make a positive contribution. They are actively encouraged to participate in the decision making of the centre. Their feedback on a range of issues and through a variety of mediums is meaningful and regularly used to shape services. Parents are active members of the advisory boards and hold positions of chair and vice chair.

The extent to which children, including those from vulnerable groups, are physically, mentally and emotionally healthy and families have	2
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healthy lifestyles	
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 very effectively personalises services in order to meet the specific needs of users. The environment is safe and secure and children's well being is given the utmost priority. Extremely effective partnerships exist with a wide range of external agencies. This ensures that all assessments, such as those carried out under a children in need plan are robust and well informed. The centre creatively and effectively identifies ways to support individual children and families and offers a rapid response when help is requested or a need is identified. Provision is enhanced through the committed work undertaken by the health and family support team. Outreach work supports families who are hard to reach or those who for whatever reason find coming into the centre difficult.

The inclusive nature of the centre ensures that children with special needs and disabilities are supported through a wide range of initiatives. The inclusion support and health and family support workers provide outreach support, guidance and effective signposting to a range of agencies, such as the child development centre. The children's centre teacher supports childcare staff in the delivery of good quality play and learning opportunities for children with additional needs. The centre's sensory room also provides a welcoming and stimulating environment.

A qualified teacher and a speech and language therapist based at the children's centre acts as an effective link between the different childcare and education provisions. Agreed strategies are implemented and all staff access a range of training such as Talking Matters and Lets Interact. This approach ensures consistency and has been one of the factors which have brought about good levels of improvement in the progress children make. The centre and its partners are effectively narrowing the gap in children's attainment.

Community development staff work tirelessly with a range of external training and employment agencies in an effort to identify courses which meet user's interests and needs. They signpost to relevant organisations and will offer support during meetings and interviews. For some parents and carers they identify a range of courses that will

help to build confidence and basic skill knowledge. For others they look towards National Vocational Qualifications and further education. Parents talk positively about training and ongoing support and information from the centre. They tell how courses such as the Incredible Years Training have made a significant difference. Parents say such things as 'It has helped me to think about safety' and 'I now know how the messages I give affects my child's behaviour'. The Story Sacks course is also very popular. The current one is over subscribed and further courses are planned for the new year. The staff team are committed to ensuring that as many parents and carers as possible access courses, thereby increasing their confidence and their chances of suitable volunteering opportunities and paid employment.

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	1

How effective are the leadership and management?

2

Leadership and management are consistently good at all levels and outstanding in aspects relating to safeguarding and partnership working. Recent changes at children's centre manager level have been implemented very effectively resulting in a seamless transition for children, families and staff. Clear governance arrangements between Nottinghamshire Community Health and the local authority ensure that lines of accountability are understood. Arrangements between Nottinghamshire Community Health and the local authority to manage performance are well established. The local authority provides robust challenge to the senior children's centre coordinator and his management team. This occurs through the annual conversation, regular one to one meetings, specialist team meetings and through the local strategic partnership group. The local advisory board currently provides support and an element of challenge. It is not currently in a strong position to act as a 'critical friend' as a result of inconsistent attendance at meetings by external partners. The centre management team are aware of this and are looking at strategies to improve on this.

The centre's ambitious development plan evidences high aspirations for its users. The plan identifies a wide range of strategies on how it will seek and use their views to evaluate the service, ensuring that its activities and opportunities meet their needs well. The plan has clear and measurable targets to enable the centre to fully demonstrate the impact of its work. The impact statements linked to the plan evidence how this is a working document and how some of its areas for development

have been achieved but others, are still in progress. All courses and activities are currently evaluated and the findings are used effectively in future planning.

Staff state that they feel valued as individuals and that their contributions are recognised. High quality supervision and team work has created a sense of common purpose which has helped to create a safe and secure environment. They show a great deal of respect for their leadership team and users of the centre. Supervision arrangements are good. All staff that have a dedicated safeguarding role are given additional supervision by a safeguarding lead nurse. Staff who undertake outreach work are supported very well by the centre manager and administrative staff. Administrators operate a telephone monitoring system when staff are working out in the community. This system is triggered if for any reason they do not return to the centre as planned.

The centre is very positive in its approach to the cultural, religious and ethnic differences of its users. It makes a valuable contribution to community cohesion and to breaking down the barriers between families of different backgrounds. However, it is aware that work still needs to be done in relation to the development and delivery of English for Speakers of Other Languages courses. Preventative work is the key to the success of the children's centre in securing very good outcomes. Safeguarding arrangements are excellent. The 'team around the child' approach ensures that a wide range of professionals work together extremely well to safeguard and protect children and families. Families are afforded extremely good levels of support. Parents are very well informed of the centre's policy on protecting children and sharing information with other relevant agencies. Observations of health and family support workers evidence the open and honest messages that are given to parents and carers. Safe recruitment practices are robust and follow Nottinghamshire Community Health procedures. Evidence of Criminal Records Bureau checks are held in a single central file.

There is a strong commitment to ensuring the children's centre's sustainability. Sharing of resources with other children's centres in the Broxtowe district ensures that they are used and managed efficiently, effectively and creatively. The centre provides good value for money.

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	2

statutory duties	
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

The inspectors looked at the inspection outcomes for the pre-school providers and schools with Early Years Foundation Stage children within the centre's reach area.

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

As many of you know we inspected the Eastwood children's centre on 4 and 5 November 2010. I would like to first of all thank you for the welcome you gave us and for the time that you gave up to talk to us. Particular thanks go to those of you who were willing to let us visit you at home.

As part of the inspection we visited a number of activities, looked at the centre's documentation, and talked with a range of children and adults including: parents, staff, community representatives and partnership workers. The information given and the stories shared with us enabled us to judge that the centre is good overall with some outstanding features. To make sure that it stays this way we have asked staff to continue to support you in your search for training and employment so that more of you can improve your economic well-being and independence. We know that you are willing to share your ideas and concerns with the parents who are on the advisory board. We have also asked the centre to ensure the continued

development of this board so that it can meet all its obligations by providing effective challenge as well as support.

You told us how your children's centre has supported you and how your self-esteem and confidence has grown. It is evident that you are very proud of your achievements and those of your children. You told us how it had become easier to ask for help and how the centre had helped some of you in dealing with isolation and a range of other personal issues. You also told us about the friends you have made. Many of you said that the centre was fantastic and you do not know what you would have done without it. It was reassuring that so many of you were willing to talk to us. The centre obviously means a great deal to you, your children and in some cases your extended families.

You told us how much you appreciate the fact that the centre staff go out of their way to listen to your views and to create a caring and safe environment. We can see that the centre does all it can to get you involved and staff work really hard to ensure that all the activities are exactly what you need.

The senior leadership team and the staff make a real commitment to you and the centre. No wonder you trust them and use their expertise to support you when you need help. Some of you told us about how the Ready for Nursery sessions had helped your child to settle into their new environment and how it helped you to know what was expected of them and you. You also said that the onsite support from the speech and language therapist meant that you were able to seek advice quickly.

Thank you very much for your welcome and openness with inspectors. We thoroughly enjoyed talking to you, sharing your stories and learning alongside you.

We wish you every success in the future.

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