

Inspection report for Braunstone Sure Start Children's Centre

Local authority	Leicester City
Inspection number	362448
Inspection dates	2–3 November 2010
Reporting inspector	Paul Weston HMI

Centre governance	Action for Children
Centre leader	Kim Harris
Date of previous inspection	N/A
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Linked school if applicable	N/A
Linked early years and childcare, if applicable	EY295699 Sunflowers Neighbourhood Nursery

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 one additional inspector. The inspectors held meetings with the centre manager, senior management team, representatives from the advisory board and local authority, a range of agencies and parents and other users of the centre.

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

Information about the centre

This phase 1 Sure Start children's centre is located to the west of Leicester city. It provides the full core offer. It has been subject to a recent organisational review by Leicester City Council and is networked with Rowley Fields and West End children's centres where staff from all three locations work as a neighbourhood team. A neighbourhood advisory board provides advice and assistance to all three centres. Braunstone is managed by the charitable organisation 'Action for Children' on behalf of the local authority. The centre delivers integrated services from one main location and also from several venues in the area. These include Maynell's Gorse Travellers' site, the women's refuge and the Brite Centre. The centre has partnerships with a range of social care and health agencies. It is linked to the Sunflowers neighbourhood nursery, a local cooperative social enterprise delivering 'not for profit' childcare to local families. It also has close links with the Brite playgroup.

The large majority of families in the area are White British heritage, with an increasing proportion, currently around a quarter, from a wide range of ethnic minority groups. The centre serves an area of significant disadvantage. Over two-fifths of children are from households where no-one is currently in work and many are in receipt of benefits. The area has significantly higher numbers of teenage pregnancies and a tenth of the adult population has claimed incapacity benefit over the past two years. Children's levels of attainment on entry to early years provision are below those expected for their age. At the time of the inspection, nine children were in receipt of a child protection plan.

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

This is a centre that truly lives its values of 'Passion, Equality and Hope'. It provides a warm, welcoming and safe environment for all its users. The quality of its care and guidance for users and safeguarding arrangements are both outstanding. Relationships with families are strong. They appreciate the work it does and recognise the positive impact it has on their lives. A typical view expressed by a user is that 'by coming here, it helps me be a better mum'. Central to these successes are effective multi-agency partnerships. Health visitors, community midwives, Jobcentre Plus and the voluntary sector all work closely together which enables the centre to offer high quality services to the whole community.

Children, including those who are vulnerable due to their circumstances or with disabilities, gain much from the imaginative range of activities on offer. The centre is particularly successful in improving children's personal, social and emotional development with most children making good gains in this area. For example, children who attend the 'Stay and play' sessions and crèche benefit particularly from focused support to develop their speech and language, and social skills. Speech and language therapists and family support workers further enhance this work. By the time children join Reception classes in their chosen primary school, the skills and experiences of girls are broadly similar to those expected for their age across the areas of learning. However, those of boys lag behind, particularly in speaking and listening and their literacy skills. In addition, their personal and social skills and are also well below those expected.

A key strength of the centre is the good leadership provided by the centre manager and her assistant. The high priority given to safeguarding ensures that all procedures are rigorous and robust. Swift action is taken when necessary to ensure that children remain safe. Staff work closely with carers to confirm that they also understand and adopt safe practices. The centre has a good record of improving the safety of children subject to a child protection plan. There is a strong commitment to promoting equality and diversity.

The centre's self-evaluation is mainly accurate. Evaluations about the impact of its

work are largely based upon case studies and staff's in-depth knowledge of the families they serve. Users' views are sought regularly through formal evaluations and informal conversations. These are well supported by the local authority's excellent data package. As a consequence, all staff know what needs to be done to help improve life for people in the area. This means that the centre has good capacity for further improvement. Although subsequent action plans contain appropriate priorities, targets for improvement are not sharp enough. This prevents leaders from accurately evaluating the full impact of the centre's work.

The recent local authority review of children's services has led to a number of organisational and operational changes. These have generally been well managed with no loss of impetus or quality of service for users. The recently convened neighbourhood advisory board has appropriately spent time discussing and agreeing operational systems and protocols. This work is now complete, but not yet fully embedded to enable board members to focus rigorously on the work of the centres and hold them to account for standards and quality.

What does the centre need to do to improve further?

Recommendations for further improvement

- Work closely with local settings, providers and schools to raise the attainment of boys in communication, language and literacy, and personal, social and emotional development
- Ensure planned actions for improvement are specific and measurable, enabling centre leaders to evaluate the impact of provision more robustly
- Embed the work of the neighbourhood advisory board to maintain high quality integrated provision in south-west Leicester.

How good are outcomes for users?

2

A broad range of programmes is offered to families which help improve their physical and emotional health. Good provision of ante- and post-natal support is provided at midwifery clinics. Sexual health is also promoted well where, for instance, a significant number of women have been tested for Chlamydia. Health visitors provide good advice about a wide range of issues such as breastfeeding, smoking cessation, dental services and immunisation in the many drop-in clinics or at 'Stay and Play' times. Activity evaluations and discussion with parents show that these have been of great benefit in helping parents and carers understand how to improve the health of their children. Comments such as 'this is an invaluable source of information, sharing, playtime and friendship for both mums and babies' is typical of many.

Parents demonstrate improving knowledge and skills in the preparation of a balanced diet and understanding about healthy food through good dietetic support as part of the 'Widening Participation Project'. Children who 'Stay and Play' sessions and crèche enjoy the opportunities to play outdoors and relish the healthy snacks prepared on

site. Good opportunities are taken to access the nearby park and leisure centre to promote physical exercise.

Children and families are safe at the centre and the family support team gives parents and carers good advice on health and safety in the home and outdoors. Participation in the citywide 'Safe and Healthy Homes' project has provided parents and carers with detailed information on how to create and maintain a safe environment for young children. Family Support Workers effectively engage families with a range of issues such as behaviour management, development delay guidance and improving self-esteem. Those children with child protection plans are extremely well supported and families are helped to understand how to keep children safe. Domestic violence groups, including 'Freedom', enable staff to support parents and carers effectively.

Staff provide strong role models that successfully support children's positive behaviour and a culture of respect is evident throughout the centre. The centre, in collaboration with partner agencies, is very effective in identifying and responding to the needs of children and their families. The use of the Common Assessment Framework for recording and coordinating support programmes is consistent. Case studies featuring family support workers illustrate how effective their support is in helping parents and carers to become more confident and successful in managing their family lives. These positive features are contributing to improved outcomes for Reception children attending local primary schools. For example, Early Years Foundation Stage profile data shows that key outcomes in children's personal and literacy development improved significantly last year. The gap between the lowest scoring 20% of children and others is also being effectively closed. However, although boys made good improvements in 2009, their skills are well behind those of girls in communication, language and literacy, and in their personal, social and emotional development.

Evaluations of activities, discussions with parents and carers and individual case studies comment positively on the difference that activities and support have made to parents' and carers' own and their children's well-being. Parents and carers say they feel 'included' and comment on the difference that the centre has made to their confidence, aspirations and achievements as well as their children's progress and development. High numbers of volunteers regularly help with centre activities. Many of these go on to further training and gain qualifications. The Jobcentre Plus outreach worker based at the centre has conducted over 280 interviews over the past 12 months. Over 50 people have been referred to further training at venues such as Leicester College. Adults are also effectively signposted to training and courses run at a number of local venues in close proximity to the centre. As a result of the good work of the centre, fifteen lone parents started work in the past year.

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	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	2

How good is the provision?

2

The centre meets its core offer well. All provision is of good quality and helps to improve outcomes for children, parents and carers who come to the centre. Every effort is made by centre staff to work with families in need, including those who are hard to reach. Good support is provided to those who feel isolated. For example, good support is provided for the local Traveller community. Transportation to and from their site, tailored classes such as healthy eating and crèche provision helps them access all that the centre has to offer and helps include them in the community. This initiative has also led to a number of additional benefits. For instance, a number of Traveller children have taken up the opportunity to participate in the two year Nursery Education Grant pilot at Sunflowers neighbourhood nursery. Partnership with childminders is strong and they regularly access the services provided by the centre. The recently appointed children's centre teacher is also establishing productive links with local settings and neighbouring primary schools. Addressing the needs of boys is a key priority for this work.

Assessment of individual cases is robust, especially for children and families referred to the centre by external agencies or for those who self-refer. Families are then provided with timely, high-quality multi-agency support that meets their needs well. Health service professionals indicate that they would appreciate the opportunity to engage in additional preventative activities such as administering immunisation and providing contraceptive advice at the centre. This, they believe, will meet the needs of those families who find it difficult attending other clinics and surgeries. The Common Assessment Framework is well embedded and strong partnerships with other agencies ensure that assessments of all children, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, are accurate. There are clear programmes in place to promote the health and social well-being of users, including a strong emphasis on providing emotional support to boost their confidence and raise their self-esteem.

Excellent care, guidance and support, together with good multi-agency working, ensure that families access personalised support. This includes parenting groups, one-to-one guidance and advice in the centre or at home, family support and

specialist health services. Just having fun at events such as the play and learning workshops or 'Go Green' project attracts users to the centre and opens their eyes to other aspects of its provision. The 'dads' group' is particularly successful because it enables fathers to establish productive relationships with their children and helps them learn more about how to support their child's learning and development.

Parents' and carers' successful engagement in employment or training is assured through the crèche provision and access to the Jobcentre Plus services. This ongoing support offered by the centre enables parents and carers to be proactive in improving outcomes for their children. In addition, the nearby multi-access centre which offers a wide range of services supporting people into work. Family support officers are highly successful and crucial to the rapid improvement in services for users. They expertly assess the complicated needs of families vulnerable due to their circumstances. They work with families directly or engage the appropriate service to meet a specific need, acting as advocates for users.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The effectiveness of the assessment of the needs of children, parents and other users	2
The extent to which the centre promotes purposeful learning, development and enjoyment for all users	2
The extent to which the range of services, activities and opportunities meet the needs of users and the wider community	2
The quality of care, guidance and support offered to users within the centre and the wider community	1

How effective are the leadership and management?

2

Governance and accountability arrangements are clear and understood. There are good and explicit links between strategic planning and service provision. 'Action for Children' have a strong relationship with the local authority through quarterly contract compliance meetings and twice yearly meetings with the Head of Service. Until recently, the neighbourhood advisory board was in a stage of transition. Centre leaders and the local authority know that now that it is has been established, it needs to increase its focus on holding the centre to account for its performance. The local authority and centre leaders have identified in action plans that this is a key development priority.

The centre is led and managed effectively. Senior leaders set the tone, communicate high expectations and are determined to ensure that the centre is effective in improving the lives of all users. Clear roles and responsibilities, smooth day to day management and good relationships mean that staff work very well together to improve outcomes for users. Staff are passionate about the centre and its community. They are effective in ensuring that all children, parents and carers, regardless of differences, achieve and have the same access to a range of

experiences.

Self-evaluation, based on case studies, users' response to provision and input from staff and the parents' forum and focus groups, is largely accurate so the centre's priorities for improvement are fitting. The centre's development plan sets out the main priorities for action, reflecting leaders' clear understanding of aspects which require improvement. However, the targets for improvement are too vague. They do not specify precisely what the centre is seeking to achieve, which prevents them from making accurate evaluations of the impact of work. Nevertheless, staff have a good understanding of the strengths in provision and where further improvements can be made and they respond well to the changing requirements of the area, for example by establishing a 'dads' group'. Professional supervision is strong, with clear performance management structures and target setting with staff, helping to ensure that their work is effective.

The centre has high-quality arrangements for safeguarding all users. All appropriate policies and procedures are in place and up to date. The vetting of staff is secure and relevant training is up to date. All staff are very aware of key policies and are vigilant in identifying and responding to any potential dangers that users may encounter. Staff are effective in ensuring the ongoing safety, emotional health and well-being of children and their families. All staff understand their duty to safeguard every child. Robust procedures and protocols for sharing information, together with high-quality partnership working, ensure that children and families at risk and in need are prioritised for support. Childcare providers and workers have continual access to training and many are undertaking further training to develop their skills and knowledge for the benefit of the centre. Diversity is explicitly valued and promoted as the recently erected welcome signs in different languages around outside of the centre clearly illustrate. The centre also promotes inclusive practice for children with disabilities. Accommodation and resources are used creatively to meet the needs of users and to ensure that the centre provides good 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	2
The extent to which ambitious targets drive improvement, provision is integrated and there are high expectations for users and the wider community	2
The extent to which resources are used and managed efficiently and effectively to meet the needs of users and the wider community	2
The extent to which equality is promoted and diversity celebrated, illegal or unlawful discrimination is tackled and the centre fulfils its statutory duties	2
The effectiveness of the centre's policy, procedures and work with key agencies in safeguarding children and, where applicable, vulnerable adults	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

The Sunflowers neighbourhood nursery was last inspected in January 2010. It was not inspected fully as part of this children's centre inspection. The report of this inspection is available on our website www.ofsted.gov.uk.

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 Braunstone Sure Start Children's Centre on 2–3 November 2010. We talked with parents and carers, staff, a wide range of partners and members of the local authority linked to the centre. We observed the centre's work and looked at a range of documents. We judged the centre as good overall with outstanding procedures for care, guidance and support, and safeguarding.

Under the careful guidance of the manager, staff provide excellent care, guidance, and support for all you who use the centre. Those of you who spoke to us said that you feel the centre is 'very supportive and helpful staff give you good advice'. Most importantly, you said it helps improve your lives, particularly those of you who are facing difficult challenges. Your children's centre staff team has drive and ambition; they meet regularly to discuss the centre's work and plan for improvement. All staff place the upmost importance on you and your families and always provide a listening ear for you. They are passionate about creating an extremely warm and welcoming environment where you feel at home and able to talk freely about things that matter to you or are causing you concern. As a result, you value the centre, which means you have no hesitation in using the services regularly.

The centre offers a good range of services and activities for all families in the area, which are led by skilled and dedicated professionals. They are helping you to keep yourselves and your children healthy and safe. The children's behaviour at the centre is good and you and your children are safe there. Staff provide you with access to

safety equipment and advice on how you can prevent accidents in and around your home to keep your children safe. They are helping you to keep yourselves and your children healthy by encouraging mums to breastfeed and by promoting healthy eating through cookery courses.

The staff at the centre encourage you to engage in play with your children from a very early age at sessions such as 'Stay and Play', the 'PEEPs' group and play and learning workshops. We could see how much you and your children enjoy the activities you access at the centre and the positive effect these are having on you and your families.

To develop further the work of the centre we have asked staff and the local authority to help boys develop their speaking, listening and literacy skills and the way they play and get on with each other. By concentrating on these skills at an early age, it will ultimately help boys to be better learners at school and later on in life. We have also asked them to make sure the targets in the centre's plans are clear so that you know what the centre is trying to achieve. The centre then can use this information to let you know if they have been successful. Finally, we want the neighbourhood board to check that the centre is on track to achieve all the things it is setting out to do. You can help with this last point by joining the board if you are interested and helping to manage the centre.

We would like to thank everyone who came to speak with us. It was a privilege to be able to talk with you. Your honest and open discussions with us helped us immensely during the inspection. We thoroughly enjoyed spending time at your centre and we wish you and your families the best for the future.

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