

# Inspection report for Sherwood East Children's Centre

Local authority	Nottinghamshire
Inspection number	362564
Inspection dates	11-12 November 2010
Reporting inspector	Lois Furness AI

Centre governance	Local authority
Centre leader	Marina George
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected
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Linked school if applicable	Not applicable
Linked early years and childcare, if applicable	Treetops Daycare

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 two additional inspectors.

The inspectors held meetings with the centre manager, the local authority district co-ordinator, staff, parents, a number of representatives from partner agencies and members of the advisory board. They also spoke informally with centre staff and users.

The inspectors observed the centre's work and looked at a range of relevant documentation including the centre's operational plans, evaluations, key policies and safeguarding procedures.

## Information about the centre

Sherwood East is a Phase 2 children's centre developed from a Sure Start Local Programme, which gained full designation in January 2007. It provides the full core offer to a community comprising of three Nottinghamshire villages, Clipstone, Bilsthorpe and Edwinstowe. The nucleus building is in Clipstone, which is sited adjacent to Tim Rice Infant and Nursery school. There are two other buildings, one of which is in Bilsthorpe on the Crompton View Primary school site and the other in Edwinstowe, on the site of King Edwin Primary school. Tim Rice Infant and Nursery school and Crompton View Primary school were inspected at the same time as this inspection and the inspection reports are available on the Ofsted website. Most of the staff work across all three sites.

The reach for the centre is 895 children and it serves an area of mainly 30% deprivation with a small minority in the 70% band. Nearly all families are White British although there are an increasing number of Eastern European families settling in the area. Children's skills and knowledge on entry to Early Years Foundation Stage provision are below that expected for their age. No child attending the centre has been assessed using the common assessment framework (CAF) nor are there any looked after children under the age of five in the reach area. Approximately 20% of

children are living in households dependent upon on workless benefits. Governance is by the local authority and an advisory board contributes to the strategic management and direction of the centre. Extended services such as full daycare, after-school and holiday provision are provided by private businesses.

## Inspection judgements

**Grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate**

### Overall effectiveness

**The effectiveness of the children’s centre in meeting the needs of and improving outcomes for users and the wider community**

**3**

### Capacity for sustained improvement

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

**3**

## Main findings

The centre provides a friendly caring environment for children and their parents and carers and meets the needs of its users satisfactorily. It makes good provision for children’s learning and development and those users who attend the centre clearly enjoy the activities. They feel safe, and comments such as ‘This centre is a haven for me’ and ‘I have really developed my confidence by coming here,’ reflect the satisfaction of many parents and carers. They feel respected and particularly appreciate the support of staff in helping them to lead healthy lifestyles.

Although those who engage with the centre are pleased with its work, the take-up of services is variable, being better in Clipstone than Bilsthorpe and Edwinstowe. The centre is not engaging sufficient families in the full reach area. There is limited involvement of users who have special educational needs and/or disabilities and therefore the promotion of equality and diversity is satisfactory. More remains to be done to gain precise information and data about the needs of families within the reach area, in order to target specific groups such as teenage mothers, young families and lone fathers.

Leadership and management of the centre are satisfactory and the centre runs smoothly. Cultural diversity is celebrated appropriately, for example through display, and there are information leaflets available in a range of languages for those who speak English as an additional language. Staff work hard to promote inclusion and most groups are made welcome. Parents with limited English language skills are helped with interpretation. One young Polish mother said, ‘I would be lost without this centre. I have no family here. I would have been all alone.’

Safeguarding is satisfactory. Procedures for child protection and the safer

recruitment of staff are secure but, at times, risk assessments are not carried out meticulously enough.

The governance of the centre through the advisory board is supportive and a good range of partners ensures comprehensive information sharing. However, as yet it is not providing sufficient challenge to ensure that future planning and evaluation is relevant to the needs of the community. Insufficient reach level performance data is available from the local authority to enable the centre manager to accurately measure the impact of services and to inform improvement planning.

Although key strengths and development areas are known, evaluation lacks rigour and staff do not ensure users are sufficiently involved in decision-making processes. Even though there are signs of good improvements for example outcomes at the end of Early Years Foundation Stage, it is too early for the centre to be able to demonstrate that its actions are having sustained positive outcomes for children and families in the community. The capacity for further improvement is satisfactory.

## What does the centre need to do to improve further?

### Recommendations for further improvement

- Implement strategies to engage with those who do not currently access the centre's activities, especially young parents, teenage mothers, lone fathers and children and their families who have special educational needs and/or disabilities.
- Develop the skills of all staff in using different approaches to involve children and more parents and carers in the decision-making processes.
- Work with the local authority and partner agencies to gain precise data and information about different user groups and their needs, in order to improve provision and better monitor and evaluate the impact of all services.

## How good are outcomes for users?

<b>3</b>
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Children attending the centre are encouraged to eat healthy snacks and behave in ways that are safe for themselves and others. Users say they feel safe and there is a strong commitment to multi-agency working to establish arrangements to support families' safety. Case studies show how carefully planned home visits are helping families to develop greater understanding of how to keep their children safe. Schemes and activities such as the day carers' scheme, the two-year pilot, specialist family support and Home Talk provision help to promote safety in the home. Structured parenting programmes such as 'Incredible Years' are highly effective in supporting those users who are experiencing difficulties with their children's behaviour. One parent commented 'This has been a lifesaver for me. It has helped me to keep my sanity'. Satisfactory support processes are available for those who have a child protection plan. Safeguarding documentation is thorough, although practice does not consistently reflect the good documentation.

Outdoor facilities are good and children are encouraged to be active in their play.

During the inspection one group of children were observed happily and suitably dressed splashing in water in the outdoor environment. Activities for parents, such as 'Cook and Eat', are contributing well to adults' understanding of healthy eating. One parent commented 'The Cook Art class has helped me to present attractive looking food to my child who was such a fussy eater'. On-site prenatal and antenatal care enables parents to learn about how to keep healthy during pregnancy. Baby massage is offered and this has increased awareness of effective communication between parent and baby. Two parents have volunteered to be breast feeding peer counsellors to encourage other parents to breast feed their children. However the impact of this has not yet been evaluated. The centre is satisfactorily using its partnership with health to try to target potentially vulnerable groups, such as teenage mothers. However, leaders know more needs to be done especially in rigorously seeking information to evaluate if their services are having an impact on outcomes for key aspects such as breast feeding, obesity and smoking cessation.

The extent to which users enjoy and achieve is good. There are many opportunities provided for parents and carers and children to play and learn together. For example, Home Start, Jelly Babies, Baby Family Play sessions, Wobbly One's, Step Up to school and the Dad's group. Centre data confirms that children's attainment at the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage is rising. As a result, of effective specialist speech and language support, children's speaking and listening skills are improving and the gap between the lowest 20% of children and those achieving expected levels is beginning to narrow. The 'Step Up to school' group has been particularly successful in supporting children's transition to statutory full-time education and enabling parents and carers to help with their children's learning. Although children's skills are improving, there are too few opportunities for adults to improve their academic skills and employment opportunities. There are individual success stories but there are few links to courses that result in accredited qualifications and Job Centre Plus is not a visible presence on site.

Relationships are good and staff such as the family support workers provide excellent role models of how to treat one another with respect. Observations show participants have a secure understanding of respecting everyone's ideas, one person speaking at a time and confidentiality. Although a parents' forum is in place, this has been mainly representative of Bilsthorpe parents and has only recently included Clipstone parents. The centre leader recognises that the centre is not involving enough users and professionals such as childminders in decision-making.

*These are the grades for the outcomes for users*

<b>The extent to which children, including those from vulnerable groups, are physically, mentally and emotionally healthy and families have healthy lifestyles</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The extent to which children are safe and protected, their welfare concerns are identified and appropriate steps taken to address them</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The extent to which all users enjoy and achieve educationally and in their personal and social development</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which children engage in positive behaviour and develop</b>	<b>3</b>

<b>positive relationships and users contribute to decision-making and governance of the centre</b>	
<b>The extent to which children are developing skills for the future and parents are developing economic stability and independence including access to training</b>	<b>3</b>

### **How good is the provision?**

<b>3</b>
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The centre effectively promotes purposeful learning, development and enjoyment for all the children who attend. There is evidence of good quality early intervention work regarding speech and language which has positively influenced children’s communication skills. Personal development is also improving as children learn to share and take turns during activities. The ‘All All about Me’ records have the potential to be useful records of progress, but as yet the information from the different group sessions that children have attended, is not effectively collated. However, the recent employment of a full-time teacher is helping to improve provision further.

Parents and carers enjoy the group sessions, which supports them in developing parenting skills such as behaviour management. One parent spoke of how the centre had helped her during times of crisis and was full of praise for the help and advice she had received. Volunteering opportunities provide parents and carers with the chances to develop personally and to progress on to future volunteering or employment. One parent proudly told an inspector she was going to take up childminding as result of the support she has received from centre staff. Four more volunteers run the popular ‘Play Stay and Tidy Away’ session. Fathers have been encouraged to attend the centre and the ‘Dad’s group has been well attended. Guidance information is available in the form of leaflets and posters and visitors are invited to the centre, for example to talk about fire safety. There are links with a variety of partners such as Job Centre Plus, local training providers, employment agencies, Families Information Service, community groups, the allotment association and sports development. However, most of these services are provided on a drop-in basis and parents and carers are not clear about the range of support available.

Staff know the families who use the centre. There is close attention to child protection and all staff are in the process of being trained in the use of the common assessment framework (CAF). Families approach staff with confidence and recognise the centre as a place of safety. The good range of services supports users’ emotional as well as physical well-being. Parents comment that, ‘Family support workers are always there for you.’ A good range of support services are in place including health visitors and social care workers. The community involvement team have strong links with the family support workers, who identify families who need extra support. Nevertheless, the engagement of all families especially the more vulnerable is in need of improvement. This is a current focus for the leadership and links directly to the lack of firm data available to aid assessment. Even so, the leadership is aware of the need to develop outreach services to target some vulnerable groups more vigorously.

*These are the grades for the quality of provision*

<b>The effectiveness of the assessment of the needs of children, parents and other users</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The extent to which the centre promotes purposeful learning, development and enjoyment for all users</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which the range of services, activities and opportunities meet the needs of users and the wider community</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The quality of care, guidance and support offered to users within the centre and the wider community</b>	<b>3</b>

### **How effective are the leadership and management?**

<b>3</b>
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Centre staff work well together and show a strong commitment to making a difference to the families with which they work. However, the effectiveness of leadership and management and the centre's capacity to improve is currently satisfactory because of two factors. One is the lack of detailed information about different groups and their needs, and the other is the rigour of self-evaluation and the sharpness of planning for future improvement. Governance is supportive and the role of the advisory board is developing. The membership reflects the centre's commitment to partnership working. The Chair, who is a parent, is particularly proud of her role. However as yet, governance does not hold the leadership to account for the centre's outcomes and challenging improvement targets are not set. The annual conversation with the local authority is a useful document for identifying the strengths and weaknesses of children centres within the cluster. However it does not provide this centre with clear enough information about what is needs to do to improve. There are regular performance management arrangements and supervisions in place for staff to develop their own professional expertise through training opportunities and considering all this, the centre provides satisfactory value for money.

The centre has many good arrangements to ensure safeguarding. Child protection procedures are secure and appropriate recruitment and vetting checks are made on staff. Entry to the premises is effectively monitored with a variety of systems in place to ensure all visitors are identified. Staff training is updated regularly. However, all staff do not carry out rigorous enough risk assessments at the start of all group sessions. In addition, documentation is not readily available for parents to inform them of who to speak to if they have any worries about safeguarding.

Inclusion and the promotion of equality of opportunity and diversity are at the heart of the centre's work. Staff try hard to remove barriers for all users to the activities and services on offer, for example, by varying the times and venues of courses and providing crèche facilities. However, they do not ensure that all groups in the reach area, whose circumstances make them vulnerable, such as children and their families with special educational needs and/or disabilities, are targeted effectively for support.

*These are the grades for leadership and management<*

<b>The extent to which governance, accountability, professional supervision and day to day management arrangements are clear and understood</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The extent to which ambitious targets drive improvement, provision is integrated and there are high expectations for users and the wider community</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The extent to which resources are used and managed efficiently and effectively to meet the needs of users and the wider community</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The extent to which equality is promoted and diversity celebrated, illegal or unlawful discrimination is tackled and the centre fulfils its statutory duties</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The effectiveness of the centre's policy, procedures and work with key agencies in safeguarding children and, where applicable, vulnerable adults</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The extent to which evaluation is used to shape and improve services and activities</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The extent to which partnerships with other agencies ensure the integrated delivery of the range of services the centre has been commissioned to provide</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>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</b>	<b>3</b>

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

Tim Rice Infant and Nursery school and Crompton View Primary school.

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaining about inspections', which is available from our website: [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://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](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk).

## **Summary for centre users**

We inspected the Sherwood East Children's Centre on 11-12 November 2010. We judged the centre as satisfactory overall.



We greatly appreciated the opportunity to talk to a good number of you who attended the various activities we visited during the inspection, such as Home Start and the Baby Clinic and Incredible Years. You gave us lots of useful information and it is good to know that you are pleased with the centre's work. We agree your centre is friendly and caring where there are many activities which you clearly enjoy. We agree when some of you said that the centre tries hard to include all you and helps those of you who are learning to speak English. We think your children progress well during their time at the centre and this gives them a good start for when they start at school in Nursery. Some of you said you found the 'Step Up' to school course very useful and we could see how well this was helping you to support your children's learning.

It is good to know that you feel safe and we think that the centre's safeguarding procedures are satisfactory. Many of you told us how the staff have helped you to become more confident. We saw this for ourselves, when some of you attending 'Incredible Years' shared with others some of your successes and difficulties in managing children's behaviour. We think staff are good at showing you respect and helping you to lead healthy lifestyles. Some of you told us that the cookery courses such as 'Cook and Eat' have been particularly useful in helping you to prepare healthy meals and we agree.

However although we are glad that those of you who attend the centre regularly are pleased with its work, we noticed that not all families from all three villages are taking the opportunity to attend the activities. Families in Clipstone appear to attend more activities than those in Bilsthorpe and Edwinstowe. We think the centre needs to explore why this is and make sure it is providing the right services for all of you. To be able to do this we think leaders need more information from the local authority and other partners about how well their work is influencing you and your families. We also think that you and your children should have more opportunities to tell staff about the things that are working well as well as making suggestions about how the centre could improve its work. However, we think that the centre is making some good improvements, for example to your children's development and we think the capacity for further improvement is satisfactory

The full report is available from your centre or on our website [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk).