

Inspection report for Kates Hill and Sledmere Children's Centre

Local authority	Dudley
Inspection number	366392
Inspection dates	19–20 January 2011
Reporting inspector	Joy Law HMI

Centre governance	Action For Children
Centre leader	Sue Payne
Date of previous inspection	N/A
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Linked school if applicable	N/A
Linked early years and childcare, if applicable	EY314458 Kates Hill & Sledmere Children's Centre Day 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. They observed the centre's work, and looked at a range of relevant documentation including the centre's self evaluation form, data provided by the local authority and the centre, documents and policies and minutes of the partnership board meetings. The inspectors held meetings with the local authority, centre staff, partner agencies and parents. The on-site nursery received a parallel inspection prior to the children's centre inspection. The quality of the provision was of high quality and meeting the locality's needs extremely well. The inspection report of this inspection is available on our website www.ofsted.gov.uk.

Information about the centre

Sure Start Kate's Hill and Sledmere Children's Centre is situated close to the town centre in Dudley. The centre also operates from Watson's Green Road Estate Annexe. The purpose-built centre is a former Sure Start local programme and was designated as a phase 1 children's centre in 2006. The children's centre covers the St Thomas Ward in Dudley which is one of the 10% most deprived wards in England. The ward has a significant minority ethnic community with many of the families of Southern Asian or Pakistani heritage. There have been major demographic changes in the area over the last five years with many of the minority ethnic communities moving to live in the Sledmere area, where previously the families were predominantly White British.

The centre provides a range of integrated services that include health, family support, adult training and early years advice and guidance. It takes referrals from, and supports families with, children in local schools and Early Years Foundation Stage settings. The day care also offers the most disadvantaged children in the area access to 'Time for Two's', a free education and childcare provision for up to 15 hours per week for children in the term after their third birthday.

The local authority has delegated management of the centre to the charity Action for Children. The children's centre manager manages the services provided by the centre. The Programme Management Group is responsible for overseeing the day-to-day running of the centre and its strategic development. The centre has an on-site Early Years Foundation Stage provision which offers full day care and occasional crèche facilities. The day care is provided for children from the local community and caters for a diverse range of ethnic backgrounds. The skills and knowledge with which children enter the local Early Years Foundation Stage are significantly below those expected nationally for their age.

Within the community served by the children's centre there are eight super output areas. The children's centre serves a population of 1160 children, 555 of these children in the catchment area live in the 10% most deprived communities around the town centre. There are 485 children living in workless households in the reach area of which 44.9% are living in poverty and receiving benefits.

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 outcomes for users are good. The centre is well led and managed and supported by a very committed, dedicated and effective team. They set realistic targets to improve the health, safety and economic well-being of the local community. This has ensured that families benefit from a range of good-quality services that are tailored to meet their particular needs.

The centre provides a very warm, welcoming and safe environment for all its users, who value the work it does and recognise the positive impact it has on themselves and their family lives. A particular strength of the centre is the fact that half the staff are bilingual and speak the community languages found within the centre’s reach area. Users greatly appreciate this and speak highly of the staff, as the facility to communicate in their own language enables them to feel valued and included.

The early years childcare provision is an asset to the centre and serves the local communities’ needs exceptionally well. Early intervention strategies and effective partnership working provide young children with excellent opportunities to develop their communication, language and literacy skills, and their personal, social and emotional skills, as well as aiding children’s transition into school. The centre’s childcare provision provides exemplary practice for children with special educational needs and/or disabilities and for children who speak English as an additional language.

The centre has high-quality arrangements for safeguarding all users. Parents say they feel safe and are confident that their children are safe and well cared for while attending the setting. Staff work closely with parents and carers both within their homes and the centre to help them 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 broadly accurate. Evaluations about the impact of its work are largely based upon case studies and staff’s knowledge of the

families they serve. The views of users' and staff are regularly sought and contribute to the centre's self-evaluation and driving improvement. The improvement plans show that priorities, in most cases, are based on a sound understanding of the centre's strengths and areas for further development. However, managers do not have a full understanding of the increasing problems relating to domestic abuse and substance misuse within the reach area. In addition, although there is a steady increase in teenage parents accessing the centre, the numbers continue to be low.

High-quality care, guidance and support, together with good multi-agency working, ensure that families have excellent personalised support. Parents and carers, particularly those who speak English as an additional language and those with complicated needs, speak highly of the quality of the care, guidance and support that they receive. One user reported how the 'nurturing group' had given him the confidence in parenting and the ability to work through personal issues. Other users talked confidently about how they had become better parents as a result of the centre's support, guidance and understanding.

The children's centre demonstrates good capacity for improvement. The centre manager and deputy clearly demonstrate commitment to improve the life chances of families in the local community. They are ably supported by a very caring, friendly team that works extremely effectively together and with their partners. All staff are extremely passionate about the centre and its community, as indeed are the parents and carers who use the service. There is a strong commitment to promoting equality and diversity. Staff are effective in ensuring that all children, parents and carers, regardless of differences, achieve and have the same access to a range of experiences.

Action for Children has successfully established robust procedures for supervising staff and holding them to account for the quality of their work. The manager is required to undertake regular reviews and provide written reports to the organisation. The advisory board, referred to as the programme management group, mostly demonstrates a clear understanding of the work of the centre and its priorities for improvement.

What does the centre need to do to improve further?

Recommendations for further improvement

- Develop strategies to increase the uptake of ante- and post-natal support for teenage parents in order to prevent the risk of poor health and social outcomes.
- Develop a greater understanding of the increasing problems relating to domestic abuse and substance misuse within the reach area by implementing effective preventative strategies for earlier intervention to provide more timely support to protect vulnerable adults and children from harm as a result of these issues.

How good are outcomes for users?

2

Children's healthy lifestyles are promoted well. The centre is developing good strategies to promote healthy eating, for example, through growing vegetables and supporting parents in learning about and preparing healthy and nutritious food. The National Childbirth Trust sessions and the 'Breast Feeding Buddy' scheme are well received and well attended. As a result, there are increasing numbers of mothers breastfeeding their babies and sustaining this for longer periods of time.

Parents gain knowledge and children learn from an early age about oral hygiene during the baby club and 'Stay and Play' sessions. Local health visitors jointly run the 'Jumping Beans' healthy lifestyle programme to promote the importance of exercise. Staff ensure children have access to physical outdoor play each day where possible. The health visitors also run health discussion sessions as part of the 'Apna Milan' group to support non-speaking English parents.

The children's centre has supported parents with physical and emotional difficulties very well. Parents openly and confidently talk about how their health and well-being have greatly improved and how this has had a positive impact on their ability to become better parents and improved outcomes for themselves and their families.

Children and users feel very safe at the centre. Participation in risk assessments within their home and safeguarding training have provided parents and carers with detailed information on how to create and maintain a safe environment for young children. The centre, in collaboration with partner agencies, is very effective in identifying and responding to the safeguarding needs of children and their families. The use of the Common Assessment Framework for recording and coordinating support programmes is consistent. Children with child protection plans are supported extremely well. 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.

Partnerships with schools are highly effective in improving outcomes for children. The local primary schools speak highly about the excellent partnership working and the positive effect the children's centre has in contributing to improved outcomes for young children. Hard-to-reach families, who have in the past had no involvement in their children's education, are now engaging with the school. The children's centre is working with schools to identify siblings of children that need support and are linking them in for 'Time for Two' or additional services at a much earlier stage.

Early Years Foundation Stage profile data show that key outcomes in children's personal, social and emotional development have improved over the last year. Most children make good progress given their complex needs. The gap between the lowest scoring 20% of children and others is narrowing. Baseline assessments are completed within six weeks of a child attending the nursery. Parents are actively encouraged to contribute to their children's learning through parents' sessions. They contribute to their children's learning journeys and have regular access to their children's development records.

Evaluations of activities, discussions with parents and carers and individual case studies provide positive comments on the difference that activities and support have made to parents' and carers' own and their children's well-being. Parents and carers are successfully encouraged and supported by the centre to attend a good range of training both within the centre and beyond, such as the parenting and key skill sessions which enable parents to support their children's play, learning, communication and social skills.

Staff provide strong role models that successfully support children's positive behaviour, and a culture of respect is evident throughout the centre. Parents comment about how their children's behaviour has improved considerably since attending the provision. They observe their children interacting very positively with other children, developing relationships as they learn to share and play together. 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. Parents talk passionately about how the staff support them through difficult times and that without help from the children's centre, their lives would be very different. For example, parents have been supported through dealing with post-natal depression, bereavement and domestic violence.

Volunteers, many of whom are parents, regularly help with the centre's activities and enjoy their involvement. For example, they help facilitate children's play sessions and the 'Stay and Chat' sessions, and some have become 'breastfeeding buddies'. They talk proudly of how their confidence and belief in themselves, a result of the support from the children's centre, have enabled them to go on to further training and gain qualifications. For example, parents who initially accessed the centre for support, gained qualifications, and are now employed at the centre.

Although there is little input from Jobcentre Plus to the children's centre, adults are effectively signposted to training and courses run locally. The centre has formed excellent working relationships with St Thomas Network, who successfully tailor training courses to meet demand and local needs.

The leadership, management and staff strive for continual improvement in meeting the needs of the local community they serve. They actively encourage and value feedback from parents and children which contribute to decision-making and planning of services. Feedback from users confirm that their comments are listened to and acted on. For example, more 'Stay and Play' sessions have been introduced as a result of parents requesting these. The programme management group is also represented by eight parents who successfully contribute their views to help shape the governance of the centre.

These are the grades for the outcomes for users

<p>The extent to which children, including those from vulnerable groups, are physically, mentally and emotionally healthy and families have healthy lifestyles</p>	<p>2</p>
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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 assessment of the needs of families is good. Family support officers are highly successful and crucial to the rapid improvement in services for users. They expertly assess the complicated needs of families who are 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. The use of the Common Assessment Framework is well embedded. Partnerships with other agencies ensure that assessments of all children, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, are accurate. The range of services provided includes outreach work to families, such as lone parents, and sessions within the centre, such as those with speech and language therapists. Joint training between health visiting staff and the centre's staff provide information about ante- and post-natal care, early weaning and breastfeeding.

The children's centre is working well to engage with fathers, particularly since the employment of a male outreach worker. Well-planned sessions enable and encourage fathers to establish productive relationships with their children and help them learn more about how to support their children's learning and development. The encouragement and support from staff gives fathers the confidence to become actively involved within the setting.

Parents and carers improve their skills and confidence to enable them to go on to further training and help with their children's learning. Children's and parents' achievements are celebrated well within the centre. Parents and carers are highly satisfied with the services and support they receive. Their views are taken into account and used to shape services.

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

The centre is extremely good at working in partnership with area special educational needs coordinators, family support teams and other agencies to meet children's individual needs. The centre is used effectively for supported and supervised contact with parents and children.

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	2

How effective are the leadership and management?

2

The centre is led and managed very effectively. The manager communicates high expectations and is determined to ensure that the centre is effective in improving the lives of all users. The manager has been in post since the setting first opened as a Sure Start programme and has created stability and an excellent team who are dedicated to making a difference to the children and families they serve. Engagement with users has increased from 598 in 2009 to 782 in 2010 and is still rising.

Professional supervision is strong. There are clear performance management structures and target-setting with staff, which help to ensure that their work is effective. All staff have continuing opportunities for training and many are undertaking further training to develop their skills and knowledge for the benefit of the centre.

The high quality of supervision, from which staff benefit, has been successful in establishing a very strong sense of common purpose. All staff feel valued, and managers respect the contribution each makes to improving life chances of users. Consequently, the concerted and effective work of the centre has created a safe, friendly environment where there are high expectations of its users. The centre offers good value for money because of the great care taken to provide services for users that are specifically tailored around their needs.

The local authority and Action for Children have established a programme management group which includes persons representing a range of interests, such as staff from the children's centre and local primary schools, the manager from

Action for Children, representatives from the local authority and the Asian women's centre, a health visitor and parents. The governance and accountability arrangements are clear and effective. All partners understand their roles in supporting and developing the provision which meets almost all identified needs.

Self-evaluation, based on evaluations of each activity, case studies and users' responses to provision, input from staff and the programme management group, is broadly accurate. The centre's priorities for improvement are realistic. The centre knows its users well and can demonstrate its success on an individual and activity basis because of regular evaluations by users and centre staff. Staff have a good understanding of the strengths in provision and, in the majority of cases, where further improvements can be made. They respond well to the changing requirements of the area in most cases.

Staff, parents and carers indicated that they would appreciate the opportunity to engage with midwives in additional preventative activities for teenage parents, since the previous excellent services had been reduced. The centre leaders have identified in action plans that this is a key development priority.

All provision is of good quality and helps to improve outcomes for children, parents and carers who come to the centre. The centre is successful in breaking down the barriers that vulnerable users experience, ensuring equality of access to services. For example, users report how isolated they feel before becoming involved in the work of the centre. Staff successfully ensure that the Common Assessment Framework is used effectively so that children with special educational needs and/or disabilities receive the services to which they are entitled.

Diversity is explicitly valued and promoted. Welcome signs in different languages are displayed within the setting. Every effort is made by centre staff to work with families in need, including those who are hard to reach. Good support is provided for those who feel isolated, for example, those who have no English or English as their second language.

Partnerships, in most cases, are of a high quality because a strong belief in collaborative working is at the heart of the centre's ethos. These services, together with the home-visiting outreach work have increased the attendance and take-up of services by the local community.

Although partnership working with health professionals has improved considerably over recent years, there are still weaknesses regarding partnership working with some health professionals, particularly midwives. Unfortunately, this is as a result of the shortage of midwifery services and not as a result of unwillingness to be involved. Health visitors are now working well in partnership with the centre. In addition, the centre also struggles to engage with Jobcentre Plus, but the centre has put measures in place to ensure users are signposted and supported with training and employment. However, the centre's awareness of the growing increase in domestic abuse and substance misuse is not as robust as it could be and, as a result,

timely preventative measures are not fully in place to protect vulnerable adults and children from harm as a result of these issues.

Staff are extremely diligent and understand their duty to safeguard every child. Robust procedures and protocols for sharing information, together with good partnership working, ensure that children and families at risk and in need are prioritised for support. All appropriate policies and procedures are in place and up to date.

The vetting of staff is secure, and they are well trained. All staff are aware of key safeguarding 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. The centre provides a very safe environment that is appreciated by all users and partner agencies.

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	2
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 outcome of the on-site nursery parallel inspection was used to inform judgements on the Early Years Foundation Stage provision prior to this children's centre inspection. The previous inspection 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 Kates Hill and Sledmere Children's Centre on 19 and 20 January 2011. We judged the centre as good overall. We talked with some of you, your children, 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.

The strong leadership of the centre manager and her dedicated team has provided families with a range of good-quality services that are carefully tailored to meet your particular needs. Those of you who spoke to us said that you feel the centre is 'very supportive and staff are kind and caring, and give you good advice'. Most importantly, you said it helps improve your lives, particularly for 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 utmost 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 are able to talk freely about things that matter to you or are causing you concern. As a result, you value the centre and use the services regularly.

Staff listen to what you have to say about the centre and what you need. As a result, the centre offers a good range of services and activities which are led by skilled and dedicated professionals and which are tailored for all families in the area. They are helping you to keep yourselves and your children healthy and safe. Those of you who spoke to us said that your children's behaviour and their ability to socialise have improved and that your children are much more confident, independent and happy as a result.

Those who use the centre are now much more able to stay safe and healthy and to provide for their families. 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 mothers to breastfeed and by giving advice on weaning babies onto solid food and preparing healthy and nutritious meals.

The parents we spoke to are particularly proud of their achievements. These ranged from becoming better parents to gaining voluntary or full-time work because of the skills they learnt at the centre.

The children who use the centre are also well catered for. This means that they settle well into the local nurseries and make better progress than they would if they had not benefited from the centre's services. Inspectors think that the centre could do more to increase the number of teenage parents accessing the centre, and also to develop ways of providing earlier support for families suffering from domestic abuse and substance misuse.

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'. You told us 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 the centre manager and local authority to devise ways to increase the uptake of ante- and post-natal support for teenage parents in order to prevent the risk of poor health and social outcomes. We have also asked them to develop a greater understanding of the increasing problems relating to domestic abuse and substance misuse within the reach area. We would like them to implement effective preventative strategies to provide more timely support to protect vulnerable adults and children from harm as a result of these issues.

We would like to thank everyone who came to speak to us. It was a privilege to be able to talk to 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.