

Inspection report for Market Drayton Area Children's Centre

Local authority	Shropshire
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Centre governance	Shropshire Local Authority
Centre leader	Julie Duncan
Date of previous inspection	N/A
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Linked school if applicable	Longlands Primary School Market Drayton Infant School
Linked early years and childcare, if applicable	Longlands Pre-school URN224132 Longslow Ladybirds Playgroup EY303776

The inspection of this Sure Start children's centre was carried out under Part 3A of the Childcare Act 2006 as inserted by section 199 of the Apprenticeships, Skills, Children and Learning Act 2009.

Introduction

The inspection addresses the centre's contribution to:

- facilitating access to early childhood services by parents, prospective parents and young children
- maximising the benefit of those services to parents, prospective parents and young children
- improving the well-being of young children.

The report is made to the local authority and a copy is sent to the children's centre. The local authority may send the report to such persons it considers appropriate and must arrange for an action plan to be produced in relation to the findings in this report.

This inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and an additional inspector.

The inspectors held meetings with senior managers, health and education professionals, representatives of the local authority and adult learning services, support and outreach workers, parents and carers.

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

Information about the centre

Market Drayton Area Children's Centre serves the district to the north east of the county. The centre's main administrative base is in Shrewsbury. The head of centre reports to the local authority and has responsibility for seven centres. In addition to the facilities at Market Drayton, the centre provides services in a number of other venues nearby, in particular at Longlands Primary School and Market Drayton Infant School. The centre provides the full core offer.

Statistical data for the Market Drayton area indicate that the area is not one of high social and economic disadvantage, although the percentage of workless households and those dependent on workless benefits is higher than average. Children start nursery with attainment below the expected levels. The population is largely White British with a small population from minority ethnic backgrounds especially families from Eastern Europe. The centre also serves established Traveller communities.

Two day-care nurseries operate within the schools. One of these is operated by a private provider and one is a voluntary community group. Longlands Pre-school was last inspected in June 2010 and Longslow Ladybirds Playgroup was inspected in July 2008. The inspection reports can be found on the Ofsted website www.ofsted.gov.uk In addition to the facilities co-located at Longlands Primary School, the centre provides services from two community venues in the villages of Hinstock and Cheswardine.

Inspection judgements

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

Overall effectiveness

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

1

Capacity for sustained improvement

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

1

Main findings

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

The centre's advisory board does not currently include representation from parents and carers, who are extremely keen to be involved. The parents' panel together with the steering group provide opportunities for parents to be involved in making suggestions of what shape the children's centre's services should take. The advisory board is a recent exciting development which builds on and complements the work of the steering group.

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

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

The attention to children's and their family's health, safety and safeguarding arrangements are all outstanding. The exemplary use of assessment to clearly identify the personalised needs of the child and family contributes significantly to the

success of the work of the centre.

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

Exciting adult learning programmes are in place and are regularly reviewed. However, the number of workless households and those dependent on workless benefits remains high. Links with Jobcentre Plus are established, but the service is not sufficiently embedded within the centre to promote employment opportunities.

What does the centre need to do to improve further?

Recommendations for further improvement

- Improve the extent to which parents and carers contribute to decision making and governance of the centre
- Build on the partnership with Jobcentre Plus so that:
 - The number of workless households is reduced
 - There are improved opportunities for those dependent on unemployment benefits to explore employment prospects

How good are outcomes for users?

2

Mothers and their babies receive sensitive high-quality emotional and social support. Healthy eating and healthy lifestyles are actively promoted through the 'Healthy Eating and Nutrition for the Really Young' (HENRY) project and 'Food 4 Thought' workshops. Creative and resourceful incentives encourage parents and carers to attend support groups; for example, a free manicure was provided to everyone attending the smoking cessation group. Immunisation rates in the area are excellent.

The centre is at the forefront of developing and implementing the local authority's anti-bullying strategies. Excellent use of the Common Assessment Framework informs the targeted support for children and families. The admirable work of the staff in promoting and delivering of the 'Freedom Programme' contributes to the fine work of the centre to support survivors of domestic violence. Consequently, data show a downward trend in repeat domestic violence offences in the area. Tremendous support is also provided for families with children on child protection plans producing significantly improved outcomes for families. Children were seen to

behave exceptionally well during sessions.

There is a consistently improving picture of children's progress at the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage. Effective use of the 'Every Child A Talker' initiative, the forest school, targeted support, and tracking and monitoring arrangements is leading to improved learning and progress. Most children are making good progress and some children are making outstanding progress.

Parents and carers report extremely high levels of satisfaction with the work of the centre. One parent refers to the centre as 'a lifesaver', and parents talk with very high regard of the friendly and approachable staff. Children, parents and carers and staff treat each other with respect. Several parents are trained breastfeeding peer supporters and work with staff to support parents in the 'Bumps to Babies' sessions and other groups, which is actively supporting the take up of breastfeeding. The 'Positive Parenting Programme' was identified by parents as an extremely constructive course helping parents to manage their children's behaviour effectively.

Parents have limited opportunities to be involved in higher-level decision making at the centre with no parent or carer representative currently serving as a member of the advisory board. However, a significant number of parents are members of the 'virtual' parent panel and contribute regularly to consultations and put forward ideas and suggestions, many of which have resulted in improvements to services offered. There are parent/carers representatives on the steering group which plays a highly influential role in critically evaluating the work of the centre, driving improvements and developments and holding the centre to account. Membership of the steering group includes all partnership agencies.

The centre works in partnership with Jobcentre Plus and jobs are advertised within the setting, although no regular surgeries are taking place. The number of workless households and those dependent on workless benefits is largely unchanged in the area. However, training opportunities provided for parents and carers within the centre are excellent and can lead to nationally accredited qualifications. Data collated by the local authority provides evidence of significant numbers of parents and carers achieving learning success through recognised courses.

These are the grades for the outcomes for users

The extent to which children, including those from vulnerable groups, are physically, mentally and emotionally healthy and families have healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which children are safe and protected, and their welfare concerns are identified and appropriate steps taken to address them	1
The extent to which all users enjoy and achieve educationally and in their personal and social development	2
The extent to which children engage in positive behaviour and develop positive relationships and users contribute to decision-making and governance of the centre	2

The extent to which children are developing skills for the future and parents are developing economic stability and independence including access to training and employment.

2

How good is the provision?

1

The work of the highly effective and committed multi-agency partnerships is enhanced by the excellent use of safeguarding knowledge and processes. All staff are extensively trained in the use of the Common Assessment Framework and information sharing and recording before they undertake this critical aspect of their work.

Adult learning activities are well considered and training programmes are made to measure in response to identified need. Parents are provided with excellent opportunities to develop skills to boost their employability. Workshops provided for parents and children have been developed as a direct response to parents requesting support to help their children start school. This work and the 'Parents In Partnership' initiative have helped children's transitions into formal education and have resulted in parents' significant involvement in their children's learning and participation in school.

There are some excellent opportunities for parents and carers to achieve nationally recognised qualifications in a range of subjects including literacy and numeracy. The 'Early Start' training programme for parents includes first aid, child protection and healthy eating and lifestyles. It is proving an excellent introduction to further learning and is well received by those who attend.

Highly skilled and targeted support is provided for teenage parents, Traveller families, families from minority ethnic groups, domestic abuse survivors, children on child protection plans, and children with special educational needs and/or disabilities. The wide range of services is designed to meet the specific needs of the community. The 'Playbus' provides mobile play and learning facilities across the area ensuring the most vulnerable groups are able to access services. In addition, crèche provision is prioritised to enable parents to access services and training opportunities.

High-quality information, advice and guidance are provided on a range of health, welfare, housing and training courses. Posters, information leaflets, one-to-one support, briefings and workshops are all used to provide invaluable information to parents and carers. The centre ensures that the quality of childcare services commissioned is at least good and is outstanding in some regards.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The effectiveness of the assessment of the needs of children, parents and other users

1

The extent to which the centre promotes purposeful learning, development and enjoyment for all users

2

The extent to which the range of services, activities and opportunities meet the needs of users and the wider community	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?

1

There are strong and established lines of accountability. The governance of the centre ensures that high expectations are communicated at all levels of management. Clear expectations are shared by all staff resulting in high-quality, integrated provision. Quality assurance, performance management and monitoring systems are all highly effective. Service level agreements are rigorous, carefully applied and monitored. Professional management systems are rigorous and firmly embedded. The leaders ensure that the quality of the work of the staff exceeds expected levels of performance in almost all aspects. Monitoring arrangements are used well to ensure children are effectively safeguarded and provide a focus on personal and professional development. Teamwork amongst staff is excellent and morale is high. Good-quality data collation, monitoring and analysis help to identify local need and gaps in service, and are used to provide evidence of improved uptake of services and outcomes for children. The centre's development plan clearly sets out priorities and contributes to the local authority's wider plans.

Partner agencies share priorities and high expectations. Highly cohesive packages of integrated support are provided which improve outcomes for children and families and these are supported by specific case studies. Excellent value for money is provided and duplication of work is largely eliminated. Resources are managed effectively between the partner agencies to ensure services are flexible and are provided based on local need. This results in a cohesive and seamless service. The centre's membership has increased year on year, with a significant increase last year.

Strong relationships have been established with the Traveller community over many years. There is good evidence of the Traveller community's integration into the wider community. Traveller children attend the local school and there are blossoming relationships between Traveller and non-Traveller children with visits to each other's homes. Traveller culture is celebrated in a series of books produced by the 'Playbus' in collaboration with the Traveller community. These books have been widely distributed to schools and childcare settings in the area and are used to promote cultural understanding and diversity. The centre is welcoming and accessible to all and helps families new to the area to develop a feeling of belonging.

The centre staff are acutely aware of the community and surrounding area, its specific challenges, isolation and issues affecting families. Effective systems are in place to monitor outcomes for the most vulnerable groups. Attention is given to users views on the types of activities available with their timing, and days adjusted to best suit the needs of users.

Safeguarding is given the utmost priority. Safeguarding procedures,

recommendations from the Local Safeguarding Children Board and best practice are kept under constant review. The Common Assessment Framework, Team Around the Child and Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conference processes are highly effective at identifying and ensuring targeted support for vulnerable children and their families. Robust staff recruitment and induction are firmly grounded in safeguarding principles. A single central record of criminal records bureau checks is very well maintained. Effective partnerships with parents ensure that they are provided with high-quality support, advice and information regarding safeguarding. All staff receive module-based training in child protection and safeguarding up to advanced level.

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	1
The extent to which ambitious targets drive improvement, provision is integrated and there are high expectations for users and the wider community	1
The extent to which resources are used and managed efficiently and effectively to meet the needs of users and the wider community	1
The extent to which equality is promoted and diversity celebrated, illegal or unlawful discrimination is tackled and the centre fulfils its statutory duties	1
The effectiveness of the centre's policy, procedures and work with key agencies in safeguarding children and, where applicable, vulnerable adults	1
The extent to which evaluation is used to shape and improve services and activities	1
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

Longlands Pre-school was inspected on 21 June 2010. Ofsted judged that the overall the quality of the provision is good. To further improve the early years provision the setting was asked to: achieve a better balance of adult-led, freely chosen and child-initiated activities to further extend children's learning; and develop further the role play area to extend more fully the learning opportunities available for children.

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 Market Drayton Area Children's Centre on 13–14 January 2011. We judged the centre as outstanding overall.

Your children's centre provides a hub of services for children, families and carers who live in its area. The agencies supporting children and families work extremely well together and are very committed to making sure that your children get the best possible start in life, by providing you with terrific support and showing that they care what happens to you and your children. You told us how the centre is making a positive difference to your lives and those of your children. We found that the centre is outstanding in helping your children to keep safe from harm and to be healthy.

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

The staff at the centre are extremely well qualified and experienced professionals. You explained how well staff support you, both in raising your self-esteem and confidence, but also in providing practical help and advice. Those of you who are teenage parents, and your children, benefit greatly from the excellent support provided through the 'Teenage Parents' group. The centre provides an excellent range of activities which are helping to improve your parenting skills.

The headteachers, pre-school managers and the centre leader are passionate about improving the outcomes for children and families in the locality and are constantly looking for ways to improve the service the centre provides. For example, establishing effective relationships with families has significantly improved parents' involvement in the life of the school.

Those of you who access courses are able to use the crèche facilities, knowing your children will be very well cared for and will have fun! The leaders and managers know what needs to improve to make the centre better for you, and they have the skills to carry out their plans effectively. The advisory board has recently been established although does not currently include parent or carer representatives. It nevertheless has the capacity to support and challenge the leaders well. The centre supports groups who are potentially vulnerable very well, such as very young parents, the Traveller community, parents of children with additional needs and families who have recently come to this country. It is highly successful in reaching those who are most in need.

We have asked the centre to do two things to improve it even further for you. The first is to improve the extent to which parents and users can contribute to decision making and governance of the centre. We have also asked senior leaders to provide more opportunities for parents and carers to access the support of Jobcentre Plus to improve individuals' prospects of employment.

Thank you to those of you who met with us to tell us your views. Thank you for contributing to the inspection. Your comments proved invaluable to inspectors. It was great to see that fathers are contributing to their children's care and activities in the centre. Inspectors think that, with the centre's encouragement, many of you now make a positive contribution to the centre's services and the life of the community.

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

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