

Inspection report for Greenfield Children's Centre

Local authority	Hertfordshire
Inspection number	362434
Inspection dates	7–8 December 2010
Reporting inspector	Jackie Cousins AI

Centre governance	The Governing Body of Greenfield Nursery School
Centre leader	Pat Bishop
Date of previous inspection	n/a
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Linked school if applicable	Greenfield Nursery 117067
Linked early years and childcare, if applicable	The Greenfield Children's Centre EY244219

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.

An inspection of the maintained nursery was carried out at the same time as the inspection of the centre under Section 5 of the Education Act 2005. The report of this inspection is available on our website www.ofsted.gov.uk.

This inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors.

The inspectors held meetings with the head of the children's centre, the business manager, the family service development manager who is also the health visitor, the family support worker, the manager of community health visitors, a couple of school nurses, a qualified teacher, a speech and language therapist, a group of parents and carers, the extended schools coordinator, two governors and a representative of the local authority. They observed the centre's work, and looked at a range of relevant documentation.

Information about the centre

Greenfield Children's Centre is situated in one of the most deprived areas in the country with high levels of unemployment, families receiving benefits and workless households. Much of the area immediately around the children's centre is characterised by terraced housing, low-rise flats and maisonettes. The large majority and increasing numbers of families who live in the area surrounding the children's centre are Black African or from Eastern European and Asian groups. A significant proportion do not speak English as their first language. A small minority are from White British backgrounds. Most children enter day care and early education with skills that are significantly lower than those expected for their age. The nursery school building was adapted to house the children's centre. In 2004 it was designated a children's centre. Since then it has operated as an integrated centre and provides the full core offer including early education and day care. The centre operates in one main building and other activities take place at various community venues within the reach area. It is led by the head of centre, the business manager and the family service development manager. The governing body comprise representatives from the local authority, local councillors, the Primary Care Trust,

health providers and the centre’s staff, a number of neighbourhood partners and parent governors, and the nursery headteacher.

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

Greenfield Children’s Centre offers good support for children and families. The head of centre and all staff make sure that all users, whatever their background, are made welcome at the centre. Two parents summed up their feelings about centre staff by saying, ‘they’re brilliant and very approachable’ and ‘nothing is too much trouble for them.’ The centre is a safe and secure environment for users to visit because safeguarding is given a great deal of importance. Users and their children rigorously adopt safe practices and healthy lifestyles. They take part effectively in sessions where they learn to grow fruits and vegetables or try new foods. One parent said after attending a few of these meetings that she was pleased to see her child keen to eat raw sweet peppers. Children and parents really enjoy undertaking nature trail walks where they exercise, learn about the world around them, and develop their observation and listening skills.

Partnerships between agencies and centre staff are excellent. This ensures that users receive an outstanding level of care, guidance and support. Parents and carers very much appreciate the way that their personal needs are met due to the tremendous commitment of all staff. For example, one parent typically commented, ‘I would not have survived if it had not been for the centre and the special sessions for children who have additional needs.’ Another parent said, ‘The centre will care for your child whenever you need it.’ In a recent survey, 100% of users were satisfied with the centre and all it offered. Evidence from case studies indicates that families have received very considerably coordinated support in times of crisis because of astute referrals made by staff. High-quality guidance means that many parents and carers learn about the best ways to communicate with their children. For example, sessions led by a speech therapist allow parents to successfully learn how to teach their children to talk and use sign language.

Children from the surrounding area who attend the Early Years Foundation Stage

provision make good gains in their personal, social and emotional development. They behave well at the centre. The Hertfordshire Quality Standard Award was gained this year and means that early years practice at the centre has been successfully improved. Learning journeys which hold evidence of children's progress and attainment show that they achieve well during their time at the centre. However, the recording of children's attainment in key areas of learning when they start coming to the centre is not always outlined in detail and so it is not easy to track the full amount of progress they make while attending the centre.

Senior leaders and governors have a clear view of the strengths and areas for development across the centre. This is reflected in a secure improvement plan, and self-evaluation is accurate. The centre recognises that systems to collect data and measure the longer-term impact of the centre are not fully developed. Middle leaders are not always effectively involved in monitoring and evaluating the progress that children make every three months. This means that they do not always fully determine ways to improve children's rates of achievement. Many significant developments have occurred. For instance, well organised baby massage sessions have been run for the last year and a half and this has resulted in regular attendance by users. The work of a qualified teacher means that centre staff, childminders and local early years childcare settings have benefited from consistent and knowledgeable support. The centre meets its statutory responsibilities for the promotion of equality and diversity well. It has been particularly effective in supporting users who speak English as an additional language. For example, a significant number of users have successfully gained beginners and intermediate level qualifications in English because of good use of local resources and excellent partnerships. Good provision and outcomes, coupled with considerable improvements demonstrate the centre's good capacity for continued improvement.

What does the centre need to do to improve further?

Recommendations for further improvement

- Ensure the centre collects more data to enable it to evaluate thoroughly its longer-term impact on children, parents and carers.
- Uses initial assessments more effectively to track children's progress every few months.
- Make sure that middle leaders develop their role effectively so that they are fully involved in evaluating children's achievements every three months and can establish further ways to enhance this.

How good are outcomes for users?

2

Healthy lifestyles are developed effectively at the centre. Users learn successfully about the importance of eating fruit or vegetables every day because snack time is used well. For example, one parent said, 'My child will try new healthy foods at the centre because he sees others doing it.' Users are given confidence to exercise

regularly due to 'Buggy Buddy' cards which give them a good variety of ideas about ways to learn and exercise as they walk to the centre with their children in buggies. The children who attend the centre or go to the day, breakfast, after-school and holiday club learn effectively to keep fit because of well-equipped outside areas and staff expectations.

Senior leaders and all staff give a high priority to the safety of all users, including those who are most vulnerable. As a result, users' welfare inside and outside the centre is promoted effectively. Parents say they and their children always feel safe at the centre. Courses are used astutely to develop users' safety awareness. For example, 32 childminders, parents and carers, have successfully taken an accredited first-aid qualification for early-years children. One parent reported that they handled a medical emergency with their children calmly because of the knowledge she had gained from the course. External agencies report that the centre uses the Common Assessment Framework rigorously and children on child protection plans are carefully supported. Evidence from case studies indicates that vulnerable or looked-after children and their families are supported extremely well as a result of the centre's work. The centre knows the needs of families it works with really well. As a result, early identification and prevention play a key role in the centre's work to reduce harm to children.

Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage are enthusiastic about coming to the centre. As a result, children achieve well. They create strong relationships with staff. This is because they follow up on children's interests effectively. Observations of sessions demonstrate that children have positive attitudes to learning because staff plan interesting activities for them. For instance, they explore mouldable materials and successfully make Christmas decorations out of dough. Children learn to sing and move to music successfully because of the good use of staff expertise. They learn to count accurately because resources are used successfully. Occasionally, planning for sessions does not consistently outline ways and questions to extend children's learning and so, once in while, more-able children are not fully challenged. Children are encouraged to be independent because of effective staff guidance. Transfer arrangements to local schools are well established and children are prepared effectively, especially in their social skills.

Adult users contribute their views thoughtfully about the effectiveness of the centre. This is because the head of centre regularly makes herself freely available and listens carefully to users' comments and ideas. In addition, parents and carers are regularly encouraged to evaluate with their children the sessions that they have attended. The centre regularly takes positive action, based on this information, to improve its services. For example, an anger-management class was established because parents and carers requested it. The centre is well established and has a good reputation in the local community. It is promoting community cohesion effectively. It is successful at integrating parents from different age groups, backgrounds, faiths and cultures.

Parents and carers are provided with a good range of information and guidance regarding childcare options at the centre and in the local area so that they can gain

paid employment. Financial advice is given to parents and so some have effectively accessed extra benefits to which they are entitled. Users have undertaken assertiveness courses which allowed them to feel more confident in challenging situations.

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	2
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 knows its users' needs well because astute assessment is carried out. Services based at the centre are successfully established. As a result, support for the most vulnerable families is very effective and all have access to good-quality day care and nursery education. The senior leadership team, with representatives from a range of agencies, meets regularly to ensure services are meeting users' needs. Children's language development is given a great deal of importance because assessment has been used carefully to identify a need for a few children in this aspect of their learning. As a result, a speech therapist supports sessions regularly at the centre. This means that parents and children receive extra guidance on how to develop language skills. One parent said, 'My child's speech problem has gone and he can speak without a stammer now.'

Users' achievement and learning are celebrated through constructive displays as well as written and photographic evidence. For example, a photographic display shows children learning to cross the road carefully because practical activities and expert knowledge are used well. Parents and carers are encouraged effectively to develop children's literacy skills because of a book and toy library based in the centre. A considerable number of parents and carers have improved their key skills. They have successfully gained Level 1 and 2 in literacy and/or numeracy because of strong links with an adult-learning centre.

The centre provides a wide range of services and activities which meet the needs of

the surrounding area effectively. It is successful in engaging with hard-to-reach groups. Saturday morning activity sessions are popular and enable the centre to make successful contact with fathers. Special events, such as a carnival day, are planned well in advance to ensure working parents can attend. Messy-play sessions allow children to experience handling a rich variety of materials in a suitably equipped area. For example, children and parents really valued a recent session where together they made Christmas cards. The centre keeps satisfactory records of local participation rates and engagement in different activities offered.

All parents who spoke to the inspectors were exceptionally positive about the centre and the effect that the different services are having on their families. They were extremely grateful for the care and support they are offered by all staff. For example, one parent explained, 'Staff know what mums need and get to know each child well. The centre means our children and families are effectively looked after.' An above-average proportion of mothers who come to centre sessions continue to breastfeed their children for at least six weeks due to the well-informed and positive encouragement offered by centre staff and healthcare experts. Outreach provision ensures targeted groups of users are supported very considerably.

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 arrangements are good, and lines of accountability are appropriately in place. Members of the governing body are dedicated to improving outcomes for children and their families in the local area. The head of centre ensures that the members of the governing body are well informed about the services offered. Improvement planning is secure but the five key targets for development are not always recorded in a way that would assist leaders to evaluate their success totally rigorously. The centre has already identified that it does not always gather evidence fully to show what impact it has on users. Systems are not effectively in place to record the starting points of children who attend the centre and so it is not always able to evaluate their achievement fully every three months in key areas of learning. This means that middle leaders are not totally successfully involved in monitoring and evaluating whether children have made inadequate, satisfactory or better progress. All relevant partners are thoroughly involved in the drive for improvement because of the high expectations and commitment of the head of centre. As a result

of effective management and outcomes for users, value for money is good.

Good leadership is provided by the head of the centre and she is ably supported by senior leaders. As a result, staff retention is good. Staff are keen to improve the centre. On a day-to-day basis the centre runs smoothly. Users' views are regularly sought and significantly influence services provided by the centre. The head of centre has developed careful systems and procedures to ensure that provision is successfully integrated.

Resources are managed well and rigorously targeted towards users with the greatest needs. The accommodation for the Early Years Foundation Stage is generous in size and includes good-quality outdoor areas. The centre is well maintained and health and safety issues are quickly dealt with. It keeps detailed records about staff which contain valuable information on, for example, their qualifications and references from previous employers. Records indicate that all staff working at the centre have been subject to an enhanced Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) check.

Partnership working is an outstanding strength of the centre's work. Centre staff are proactive in sharing information. Inter-agency working is really flourishing and it carefully identifies those families and children who are at significant risk. Protocols and practices for referrals are used extremely astutely by staff. The centre's child protection policy and guidelines are robust. However, one user was not clear about who the designated person was if the head of the centre was away. This is because notice boards are not always used effectively to share basic safeguarding information with everyone. All staff have been fully trained at the appropriate level in child protection procedures. Risk assessments are created effectively for inside and outside activities.

The centre meets all the requirements with regard to promoting equality and diversity and tackling discrimination. Staff are dedicated to promoting the inclusion of all families from the surrounding areas. The centre gathers valuable information about the different user groups and evaluates their engagement. For example, the centre effectively develops children's and parents' awareness of our multi-cultural society. Photographic evidence shows that users learn about different cultures by studying their festivals such as Diwali where they explored stories and made chapattis. Children and adult users with disabilities are well provided for both in the physical accessibility of the building and by access to appropriate professional support.

These are the grades for leadership and management

<p>The extent to which governance, accountability, professional supervision and day to day management arrangements are clear and understood</p>	<p>2</p>
<p>The extent to which ambitious targets drive improvement, provision is integrated and there are high expectations for users and the wider community</p>	<p>2</p>

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	1
The extent to which the centre supports and encourages the wider community to engage with services and uses their views to develop the range of provision	2

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

The Inspection report for Greenfield Nursery 117067 which judged provision and outcome for children as good.

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 Greenfield Children's Centre on 7–8 December 2010. We judged the centre as good overall.

Thank you for helping us to find out about your children's centre. We enjoyed having the opportunity of talking to some of you.

Your children make good progress in their learning and behave well at the centre. It helps to prepare your children successfully for the next stage of education. You and your children are encouraged effectively to keep yourselves and your families safe whether you are at home or out and about.

You and your children really enjoy and value the centre and the support it provides. We heard you like trying different fruits and vegetables at snack time. You appreciate sessions where your children can explore a wide variety of materials, such as making elaborate Christmas cards using a good range of resources.

Through the work that the staff do, you and your children are guided extremely well. This means that you learn about successful ways to support your families. Several of you told us how very well staff care for you, and you really value the thoughtful way they listen to you. The staff work closely with other agencies to make sure that you are put in touch with others who can give you the right help and support.

The centre welcomes people from all backgrounds and treats everyone equally fairly. Your head of centre and senior staff have good ideas about ways to improve the centre. It conducts regular surveys to find out what you are happy with and less pleased. The centre responds well to your requests and has given you access to extra sessions at times which suit you best.

We have asked the head of centre and senior staff to look at how they can make things even better. The most important things are to:

- develop a system to check how well the centre is doing over longer periods of time
- ensure staff record your children's progress in key areas of learning even more carefully
- make sure staff are more involved in deciding whether your children have made enough progress every three months and what they could do to further improve this.

It was a real pleasure to meet you and your children. I hope you continue to flourish and enjoy your time at the Greenfield Children's Centre.

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