

Inspection report for Lambert Children's Centre

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| Local authority | Kingston upon Hull |
| Inspection number | 362513 |
| Inspection dates | 14-15 December 2010 |
| Reporting inspector | Jean-Marie Blakeley |

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| Centre governance | Lambert Nursery School Governing Body |
| Centre leader | Miss Claire Atkin |
| Date of previous inspection | Not previously inspected |
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| Linked school if applicable | Lambert Nursery School |
| Linked early years and childcare, if applicable | Not applicable |

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 one additional inspector and one early years inspector. The inspectors held meetings with staff and senior managers from the centre, the supporting head from another centre, parents and carers, members of the governing body and local authority representatives. Inspectors also met with a number of partners, including health, adult education and Jobcentre Plus. They observed the centre's work, and looked at a range of relevant documentation.

Information about the centre

Lambert Children's Centre opened in 2006, within the established Lambert Nursery School, under the guidance of the school governors. The centre is a phase one children's centre, providing the full core offer of services. The centre is situated in the Newland Avenue residential area of Hull. The majority of people living in the area are of White British heritage but an increasing number of East European families are moving into the area.

From November 2009, the centre has been under the leadership of an acting head of centre. Following guidance from the local authority, the head of Clifton Children's Centre has supported the acting head since the spring term, 2010. The two centres will become a federation from January 2011.

The reach area is very varied with some high pockets of deprivation and some that are very low. The area is changing with increasing numbers of families now living in rented accommodation. Overall, the proportion of children in the area who are living in households in receipt of benefits and where no one is working is slightly above the national average. The skills and knowledge of half the children who enter the nursery are below those expected for their age.

The nursery provides full and part-time education and care Monday to Friday for children from birth to five years and is open 10 hours a day, 50 weeks per year. The children’s centre is open at the same times as the nursery. The provision complies with registration requirements for the numbers of children in its care.

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 offers satisfactory support for families. Outcomes for users, quality of provision and leadership and management are satisfactory overall. During the last year, governors, the local authority and the acting head have been successful in addressing the impact of long term absences in centre leadership and teaching staff in the Early Years Foundation stage provision. As a result, although outcomes for parents are mostly satisfactory, children enjoy attending the centre and their progress is good.

The number of users registered with the centre has considerably increased in the last year. However, a significant number of the families registered and using services such as the nursery, live outside the reach area and few are in receipt of workless benefits. Not many vulnerable teenage parents are actively using the centre.

Safeguarding is good. Staff have a good understanding of child protection procedures: they are well trained and ensure that any concerns are promptly shared with relevant agencies. As a result outcomes for staying safe are good. Parents increase their understanding of how to keep their children safe and children learn how to stay safe when they are playing. Parents that met with inspectors said that their children are, ‘happy and safe and look forward to coming to the centre’.

A particular strength of the centre is its response to meeting the needs of migrant Polish families and the support it gives them. As a result these families grow in confidence and barriers to using services are reducing.

Health and family support professionals work closely together to provide care and guidance for personal, health and social needs. This leads to early identification and effective use of the Common Assessment Framework to identify, plan and coordinate support for families. Children behave well during sessions and make good progress in developing skills from their individual starting points. Evidence from case studies and discussions with users demonstrates that aspects of the provision are having a good impact on children and on some adults and families. Users enjoy the joint adult and children sessions, such as 'Tuneful Tots'. However, there are few learning opportunities for adults and insufficient accredited achievement on family learning and adult education courses.

The centre seeks the views of users through surveys, questionnaires and discussions and there is parent representation on the governing body and advisory board. However, user evaluations are not sufficiently analysed in order to target and further develop the provision. There is no parents' and carers' group in place to increase the number of users contributing to the centre's decision-making process and the development of services.

The local authority monitors the centre's self-evaluation regularly and provides some data to aid planning and development in line with strategic priorities. However, there is insufficient collation or use of data to set specific and measurable targets for improvement.

Development and delivery plans and local authority monitoring reports prioritise key areas for development but there is insufficient use of performance indicators to measure success and impact. The advisory board, led by a parent governor, meets regularly and receive reports on the work of the centre. However, lack of performance data, changes in governors, staff absences, concerns about the performance of the nursery and planning for the federation has reduced the rigour and effectiveness of monitoring some wider aspects of the centre's work.

The leadership team appropriately prioritises improvements to weaker aspects of its provision that cause concern. Since it opened in 2006, some parts of the service have developed slowly. However, there is evidence of greater improvement and effective action during the last year to create joined-up services. The improving outcomes, together with a reasonable understanding of strengths and areas for development, demonstrate a satisfactory capacity for sustained improvement.

What does the centre need to do to improve further?

Recommendations for further improvement

- The local authority should increase the collation and availability of data to support the development of the centre.
- Ensure rigorous evaluation and monitoring of outcomes.
- Increase user involvement in evaluation and decision-making by establishing a centre user group.
- Develop effective strategies to engage with the most deprived families not yet

using the centre and its services.

- Increase the opportunities for adult learners to improve their skills, knowledge and employability so they can improve the economic well-being of their families.

How good are outcomes for users?

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Outcomes are satisfactory and improving overall. In the day care, young children are happy and make good gains in their learning and development with effective transition into school. Their personal, social and communication skills develop well from their starting points. Some parents and carers using the centre increase their confidence and self-esteem. However, too few adults engage in or benefit from family learning or adult education and very few obtain qualifications to help them gain employment and improve their economic well-being. The centre has not fully developed systems to evidence the impact of its work in improving outcomes across all areas, particularly for adults. Parental evaluations of parenting sessions, such as 'Family Links', show that they make a satisfactory contribution towards developing users' parenting skills. Some users contribute to decision making but others are proving more difficult to engage.

Families and children are developing a secure understanding of how to keep healthy through the promotion of healthy meals, snacks, dental hygiene and physical activity. Close liaison between health and family support workers enables some early intervention and support. However, some mothers do not engage with family support-worker visits following the birth of their babies. The percentage of mothers that continue breastfeeding until their babies are six to eight weeks is high and above the local authority average. There are too few referrals of pregnant women who require support to help them stop smoking during pregnancy and very few give up smoking. The centre does not have data to monitor the impact of its work on immunisation or obesity rates.

The centre is a safe and secure environment and parents and carers interviewed by inspectors believe their children are safe. Children's behaviour is good and they develop a good understanding of dangers. Case studies indicate that some users, such as those who have been subject to domestic violence, receive good support that has a positive impact. One parent said that, 'The centre has helped turn my life around. I now get out of the house more and have bonded better with my children.'

These are the grades for the outcomes for users

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| The extent to which children, including those from vulnerable groups, are physically, mentally and emotionally healthy and families have healthy lifestyles | 3 |
| 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 | 3 |

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| The extent to which children engage in positive behaviour and develop positive relationships and users contribute to decision-making and governance of the centre | 3 |
| The extent to which children are developing skills for the future and parents are developing economic stability and independence including access to training | 3 |

How good is the provision?

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The centre has a clear system for assessing the needs of all children, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, and for tracking their progress. Observation and assessment of children are used well to inform planning and the curriculum. Children enjoy their learning and staff support child-initiated activities well through the key-worker system. Although the centre has a satisfactory understanding of its users, there is insufficient identification of the learning and development needs of adults to individualise their learning.

Adults make satisfactory gains in parenting skills and confidence through their enjoyment of courses. Evaluations indicate that they gain satisfactory knowledge and understanding of how to manage their children's behaviour. One parent told inspectors that, 'Home is a happier place now I have some strategies to help manage my child's behaviour'.

The range of services provided by the centre is flexible and adequately meets users' needs. Those attending the centre enjoy activities such as 'Toddler Group'. However, activities and courses do not provide a clear pathway of learning for parents and carers. There is insufficient evidence of activities and courses developing in response to users' changing needs. The good partnerships and outreach work extends opportunities for users. Managers recognise that they need to continue to increase the numbers of users from the most deprived families. The Jobcentre Plus advisor attends the centre regularly and gives information and financial calculations to help get people into work. However, the centre needs to find ways of progressing parents and carers from initial engagement activities to more structured learning, training, and volunteer and employment opportunities.

Case studies show that the centre is having a positive impact through the tailored support it provides to some vulnerable families. Children benefit from personalised support in the day care. Users appreciate the support, care and guidance they receive from health and family support professionals for their personal and social needs as well as the friendships they make with other users.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

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| The effectiveness of the assessment of the needs of children, parents and other users | 3 |
| The extent to which the centre promotes purposeful learning, development and enjoyment for all users | 3 |
| The extent to which the range of services, activities and opportunities meet the needs of users and the wider community | 3 |
| 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?

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The centre is welcoming and runs efficiently on a daily basis. Centre management and staff are motivated and committed to improving the work of the centre and its services. The impact of leaders and managers on improving outcomes for users is increasing. Their ability to monitor and evaluate the centre's work and to demonstrate its impact is satisfactory. Evaluation is partly supported by evidence of the impact on outcomes for users. This has resulted in some changes to its services, in particular the recent action and improvements in the Early Years Foundation Stage provision.

Leaders, managers, governors and staff clearly understand their roles and responsibilities. Governance, staff supervision and development are effective. Although the quality of provision and outcomes are monitored at all levels, the rigour with which the centre is held to account for its identified priorities for development is not sufficiently robust. As a result some aspects of the centre's work have developed slowly. The contribution that, parents, community representatives and partners make to the strategic work of the centre through the advisory board is satisfactory, although there is no user forum in place to involve more users in decision making.

Safeguarding is good. Policies are appropriate and regularly updated. Procedures to ensure the protection of users as they enter and move around the site are effective. Staff have a good understanding about their roles in identifying and reporting concerns. The centre has good systems in place for recording information related to the vetting and recruitment of staff. Activities are thoroughly risk assessed. Partnerships with other services, particularly between health professionals and the family support team contribute well to the improving outcomes for users.

The centre is committed to promoting the inclusion of all children and their families. It knows its target groups and evaluates their engagement with the provision, as demonstrated by the success in working with Polish families. However, they have yet to identify how some services and priorities can be developed to further improve outcomes and to engage with some of the families with the greatest needs.

The centre's approach to sustainable development through locality working and partnerships with other centres is good. Joint staff-work across centres enables targeting and sharing of resources. As a result the centre is increasing its activities and user participation. With satisfactory and improving outcomes, the centre provides satisfactory value for money.

These are the grades for leadership and management

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| The extent to which governance, accountability, professional supervision and day to day management arrangements are clear and understood | 3 |
| The extent to which ambitious targets drive improvement, provision is integrated and there are high expectations for users and the wider community | 3 |
| The extent to which resources are used and managed efficiently and effectively to meet the needs of users and the wider community | 3 |
| 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 | 3 |
| 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 | 3 |

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

The day care was inspected as part of the Lambert Nursery School inspection in December 2010 and findings from this report were used to inform judgements. The inspection report can be found on the Ofsted website www.Ofsted.gov.uk.

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaining about inspections', which is available from our website: www.ofsted.gov.uk. If you would like us to send you a copy of the guidance, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

Summary for centre users

We inspected the Lambert Children's Centre on 14 and 15 December 2010.

We judged the centre as satisfactory overall.

Thank you for talking with us and contributing to the inspection of your children's centre. Those of you we spoke to told us that you enjoy coming to the centre. You said that your children are happy and well cared for and that they are safe.

The centre offers satisfactory support to all of you that use it. You said that staff are 'friendly' and make you feel welcome. You told us that you enjoy activities at the centre so much that you did not want courses to end and you did not know what else you could do when they finish. We found that the centre needs to plan its programme so you know which courses are available for you to go on to next. You particularly like the Nursery, the 'Toddlers' and 'Family Links' groups. You like the sessions with your children such as 'Tuneful Tots'. However, not many adults have the chance to take courses to gain qualifications and skills to help improve their opportunities and give them and their families better lives.

We found that staff have a very good understanding of child protection procedures and that they are well trained. Some of you told us how the support you have received has helped you manage your children's behaviour and make your homes happier places. The health and family support staff work closely together to make sure you receive good, consistent advice and support.

Your children behave well and you all learn more about staying fit and healthy. A good number of mums that breastfeed their babies continue until the babies are at least six to eight weeks old. However, not many pregnant mums have taken up the offer of help to stop smoking.

The centre asks you what you think of the services and activities it offers and some of you are governors and advise on the work of the children's centre. We inspectors would like to see more of you involved in making decisions about your centre and making sure you have the right services, perhaps through a parents' forum or user action group.

Hull Council helps the centre make sure it knows who lives in the area and helps them monitor who uses the centre. The numbers registered with the centre are increasing but a high number of these families do not live in the area and some local families are not using it. The centre team needs to find ways of making sure all the people in the area know what it can offer them, so that the families who need it most can get support to improve their lives. The council needs to help the centre improve further by collecting and sharing information on the success of what it does. Governors, managers and the local authority should all check that centre services are what you want and are helping you to improve your families' lives as much as they can.

The centre has done well in helping Polish families that move into the area to settle and use available services. Those of you who come to the centre get on well together, make new friends and support each other.

The staff are all keen to improve the centre and have been making a number of changes this year, particularly in the nursery, which you appreciate. Some of you like the way you can go to other centres to join in their activities too. As the centre already knows the main things it needs to do and has steadily been improving, we are confident that it will continue to improve.

Thank you very much for sharing your views with us.

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