

Inspection report for Scope - Walton Children's Centre

Local authority	Liverpool
Inspection number	362613
Inspection dates	10 – 11 November 2010
Reporting inspector	Gill Jones HMI

Centre governance	Scope
Centre leader	Lynda Maxwell
Date of previous inspection	NA
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Linked school if applicable	NA
Linked early years and childcare, if applicable	322365 Scope Early Years and the Gap at Walton Children's Centre

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 early years inspector. The inspectors held meetings with the Advisory Board, headteachers of primary schools within the reach, other partner organisations, users and staff.

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

Information about the centre

Scope - Walton Children's Centre serves an area of high social and economic disadvantage. Most families in the reach are of White British heritage. The proportion of adults in the local area receiving income support is above the national average and increasing. The proportion of unemployment is slightly below the average for the city of Liverpool, where approximately one in three families is without work. Children start the Early Years Foundation Stage with levels of development well below those expected for their age nationally.

The centre became a Surestart Children's Centre in 2004. Before, it was an early years day-care centre providing services for children with severe learning difficulties and profound and multiple learning disabilities and for local authority 'children in need'. The local authority commissions Scope to run the centre. The centre shares a site with the Salvation Army. Services are provided in both buildings.

There is a registered day-care nursery and after-school care onsite. A separate report for this provision is available on the Ofsted website.

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

Scope children’s centre is meeting the needs of the children and families in its reach well. Outstanding partnership work with Scope and very strong partnerships with health, social care, the Salvation Army and the local schools are resulting in improving outcomes for local children and families. However, partnerships with organisations to support adults gaining accreditation and routes into employment are a relatively weak aspect of the centre’s work. The centre leader, supported well by a skilled staff team, is very ambitious for the future of the centre. She has worked hard to transform the centre from a day-care nursery, where children in need arrived in buses from across the city, to a centre which is reaching out to all families in the local community, particularly to those who are most vulnerable. The centre analyses the needs of registered families well. The number of users is increasing. However, it does not have sufficient access to externally held data to know why a very small minority of families within the reach are not engaging with the centre. The centre is inclusive. It promotes equality and diversity well. Users say they feel valued and relationships are warm and respectful.

The outcomes for children and users of the centre are good. Activities which promote healthy eating, such as ‘Funky foods’ are contributing to children and adults’ good understanding of a healthy diet. Obesity levels in the reach are reducing and the number of mothers breastfeeding is increasing. Outcomes for five-year-olds in the reach are improving. The centre is making effective use of government initiatives, such as Every Child a Talker, to develop children’s early language and communication skills. The centre provides crèche places for children and signposts users to adult learning courses. However, the centre does not evaluate this aspect of its work closely enough to know the impact this has on the number of parents and carers in the reach achieving qualifications or gaining employment. The centre has difficulty engaging the services of Jobcentre Plus. This also contributes to the relatively slower progress in supporting users into employment. Users’ contribution to the work of the centre is satisfactory. They share their views about the quality of activities, but few engage in determining the direction of the centre.

The centre targets its work to the most vulnerable well. Protocols for making referrals and sharing information between relevant partner organisations are clear and understood. This results in the effective safeguarding of the health and well-being of children and families most in need. Scope provides excellent support at the centre for families and children with special educational needs and/or disabilities.

Highly skilled staff work well with identified groups of users to increase their confidence and feeling of self-worth. A parent of a severely disabled child attending the 'Me time' group explained vividly to inspectors how the centre had transformed her life and enabled her to 'lift her spirits' to continue in the face of extreme hardship.

The centre is well led and managed. The centre leader is passionate about improving outcomes for children and families in the reach area. She takes every opportunity to engage partners in the work of the centre, supported well by the advisory board and senior leadership team. For example, the centre hosts an active birth class and children who visit Walton prison benefit from crèche facilities supported by the children's centre and their fathers take part in the 'Share a Story with Dad' project. The centre is accurate in its self-evaluation. Governance and supervision are good. The centre meets and exceeds local authority targets and leaders and managers at all levels are demonstrating a good capacity to sustain improvements.

What does the centre need to do to improve further?

Recommendations for further improvement

- Improve access to external data in order to evaluate the needs of the very small minority of families in the reach not engaging with the centre.
- Improve user outcomes for contributing to the community and economic well-being by:
 - increasing the number of users involved in determining the work of the centre and leading activities
 - tracking and celebrating user success in gaining accreditations and routes into employment.

How good are outcomes for users?

2

A comment made to inspectors which typifies the appreciation expressed by users of the centre was 'without them, I would have gone under'. Mothers who have suffered from post-natal depression, poverty, alcoholism, drug abuse or were victims of domestic violence were confident to share their experiences with inspectors and explain how the centre is helping them to transform their lives. Users, who may well have 'gone under' without targeted support from the centre, are now on the path to living a safe and healthy lifestyle. This demonstrates the impact the centre is having in safeguarding users by building self-esteem and confidence among some of the more vulnerable members of its reach. The good uptake of first-aid and ROSPA training is supporting safer homes. Admissions to hospital for accidents, such as burns are decreasing. Support from the centre in providing high quality day-care for children in need is promoting a positive start in life for the youngest in the community. Case studies and discussions with users illustrate the positive impact of the centre's work.

Children and users are learning about healthy lifestyles. The 'Junior Chef' project, which the centre funds and promotes in early years settings and local schools, is enabling children to make healthy choices. The centre offers a good range of fitness activities aimed at children, pregnant mothers, dads and families. Users attend regularly. Courses to help users stop smoking are popular and data show a decrease in the number of mothers who smoke during and immediately after pregnancy. Users attending the 'Under 1s' group, baby massage and the ante- and post-natal clinics talk about the impact these activities are having in improving their emotional health and well-being.

The educational outcomes of children in the reach are improving. Development levels reached by five-year-olds are increasing gradually but they are still below national levels in communication, language and literacy. The outcomes of the most vulnerable children in the reach are also improving more rapidly in the reach than in other areas of the city. Children at the centre appear happy and confident learners. They build good relationships with adults and their peers. Users who spoke to inspectors provided good information demonstrating their enjoyment of the activities provided and their success in gaining qualifications in first aid, English for speakers of other languages (ESOL) and in literacy and numeracy qualifications. However, the centre does not track or celebrate this success.

The parents and carers of children with special educational needs and/or disabilities explained how their confidence had grown to the extent that some were now counsellors for other parents of disabled children. They reported how the group had 'strengthened them emotionally'. They feel able to express themselves because at the centre they 'do not feel judged'. However, the contribution of users to planning and leading centre activities or taking an active part in determining the direction of the centre is still at an early stage of development. The centre is aware of the need to signpost adults in routes to employment. However, there is little information for this available in the centre. The advisory board and local authority explained the recurring difficulties in trying to engage the services of Jobcentre Plus. This is resulting in the relatively weaker outcome for the extent to which parents and carers are developing economic stability.

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	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
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How good is the provision?

2

The centre analyses the needs of its registered users well. It is responsive and flexible in delivering programmes to suit user requirements. Well-judged targeted individual support enables users to gain confidence and to access group and universal provision suitable for their needs. The centre provides children who need it a place in the good quality day-care provision which enables these children to make good progress. Parents and carers say the centre 'puts the needs of the child first' and they appreciate the 'safe haven' it provides for supervised access to their children.

The centre works closely with another local children's centre to target its provision for young mothers. Link workers and health professionals work together effectively to guide and support young mums to access activities which will benefit them and their children. Users appreciate this, to quote one young mum, 'without the centre, I wouldn't have survived.' Many users make use of the 'Freedom Project', which supports families suffering from domestic violence effectively. Other targeted support includes the Chrysalis group for lone parents, which provides debt counselling and emotional support. Provision for dads is strong. Activities in the evenings and on Saturdays appeal to lone dads in particular and attendance is good. The outreach work in local schools by the link dad's worker enables the centre to promote its services in the wider community. Children encourage their parents to join activities such as 'Active Kids and LBD (little black dress) workout', which improve family health and well-being. It makes good use of the Salvation Army facilities to provide many of its activities and works well in partnership to provide integrated provision. The centre responds well to requests for new activities and more families are participating in the activities on offer at the centre. However, it does not know the reasons for the lack of engagement from some members of the local community.

The range of activities the centre provides is good and clearly linked to the every child matters agenda. The Early Years Foundation Stage link teacher demonstrates a good knowledge of the Early Years Foundation Stage curriculum, which she uses effectively to promote high quality learning activities for children in the reach. Ofsted has judged both the Scope day-care nursery and after-school care in The Gap as good at their last inspections. Core workers evaluate the impact of their work with users well, but their written evaluations are at a relatively early stage of development. Although users are effectively signposted to further education courses, the centre does not collate this information, so it does not know the impact of its advice. However, users were keen to tell inspectors of their successes, which they said were the result of information received from centre staff. Guidance for routes into employment is underdeveloped because the centre has not managed to engage partner organisations to support this aspect of its work. However, very effective use

of the local Volunteers into Placement Programme (VIP) scheme is resulting in a limited number of users finding a route into employment.

An exceptional strength of the provision is the quality of care, guidance and support provided for children and families with special educational needs and/or disabilities. Outstanding partnership work with Scope enables the centre to develop bespoke programmes to support children’s development, such as ‘Celebrate every step’ and ‘Peg Ted’. Parents and carers appreciate the high quality of advice they receive. Some take three buses to attend a support group at the centre because it helps them to ‘cope with the week’. Users appreciate the efforts made by the centre to integrate care as a ‘one stop shop’. Centre staff work diligently to ensure all children and their families feel included and valued.

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 leader constantly strives for ways to improve the quality and range of services the centre provides for its community. She has high expectations of herself and staff, which are evident throughout the centre’s work. She demonstrates her words ‘no challenge is too great’ through forging partnerships with Walton Prison and the continuous reviewing and improvement of joint provision between the centre, health professionals and social care. However, links with organisations to support adults into the workplace are proving difficult and this has an impact on guiding users towards securing economic well-being. The centre provides good value for money. It distributes resources effectively, making good use of any additional grants received. For example, commissioning the Eldonian Group to provide a dad’s worker and community outreach worker, in addition to the workers provided through the VIP scheme, and the Face2Face coordinator funded by Scope, are having a positive impact on outcomes for users.

Arrangements to safeguard the health, safety and well-being of users are good. All statutory requirements are met and policies are reviewed and updated regularly. Staff receive relevant training in child protection and in recognising the needs of vulnerable adults together with the referral pathways. Protocols and practice for

sharing information between agencies are effective and as a result, intervention is swift, integrated and appropriate. Staff promote equality and diversity well. Equality is at the heart of Scope's core values and staff at the centre embody this in all their work.

The advisory board has a good representation of centre staff, partner organisations and users. It holds the leadership of the centre to account well for the outcomes of users. As a result, the centre is securing continuous improvement in most aspects of its work. The board makes good use of the national indicators to plan provision and has a well-honed knowledge of the strengths and weaknesses of the centre. However, because the centre's access to some data held by other agencies is limited, it does not always have sufficient information to know how effectively it is meeting the needs of all potential users in the reach. The advisory board and local authority has supported the centre leader well over difficulties in staffing and staff supervision arrangements are appropriate. Leaders and managers at all levels are beginning to measure the success of their work against the outcomes. Where this is developing well, it is evident in the good outcomes achieved by users.

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

None

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 Scope - Walton Children's Centre on 10-11 November 2010. We judged the centre as good overall.

Scope - Walton evaluated itself as a good children's centre and inspectors agree. The centre leader and her staff provide a warm welcome for all children and families. She is determined to improve opportunities and outcomes for children and families in the locality. A strong team of link workers support her effectively to make sure that all the agencies who provide care, guidance and support for local children and their families work well together. This means that children and families in the reach area receive support that matches their needs well and consequently, outcomes are improving.

The centre provides a good range of activities available to everyone in the locality to help children and families to keep fit, safe and healthy. It works well with the Salvation Army and Scope to provide for groups in spaces that are clean, attractive and welcoming. The day-care nursery and after-school club provide good quality care. Groups such as the 'Under 1's' support mums well to get their babies off to a good start in life. Mums say this helps them to make friends and learn about their baby's development. Other activities, such as baby massage and 'Funky foods' are popular. More mothers locally are now choosing to breastfeed and good support is available at the centre for this, as well as pre- and ante-natal care and information on baby weaning.

Courses provided to help parents stop smoking are effective as is the Freedom Project, which helps deal with domestic violence. First aid and ROSPA training is helping you to make your homes safer for your children. The number of people admitted to hospital for burns and accidents in the home is reducing. Children are happy at the centre. They are confident learners in all the areas in the building available to them and you told us that you feel safe and welcome at the centre. You say that centre staff make you feel valued and some of you who feel 'judged badly' outside the centre travel a long way to support groups, because it 'lifts your spirits'.

Scope provides an excellent level of support for parents and carers who have children with special educational needs and/or disabilities. Some of you who attend the 'Me time' group told the inspectors about the outstanding support you receive from the coordinator. Many of you shared examples of how the centre provides good quality guidance and has helped you to access the services you need for your child. Some of you said that 'without the centre, you would have gone under'. It was evident from the examples inspectors read in case studies that many of you have received good quality care and support which has helped you to change your lives.

The centre targets its support well to families and children in need. Because relationships between health visitors, midwives, social care and link workers are good, the centre provides swift care, guidance and support. Professionals share information about vulnerable families so that the help given is appropriate. Many of you told us how this helped you to 'get back on your feet' after some very difficult times.

The centre is well led and managed. The advisory board has a good mix of professionals from the partner agencies, parents and carers and staff. It ensures that the finances of the centre, the supervision of staff and plans for the future are robust. The centre works well in partnership with health, social services, the local authority, the local prison and social enterprise groups, such as the Eldonian Group. Its partnership work with Scope is outstanding. However, it has been less successful in securing the support of Jobcentre Plus and other organisations to help you to find routes into training and employment. The centre recognises that this is an area for improvement. It agrees that it should record and celebrate the number of users who are successful in gaining qualifications and employment. At the moment, there are few opportunities for parents and carers to influence the centre's work or to lead activities. The centre acknowledges that it would benefit from a greater user voice. It recognises that access to more data from external sources would be helpful as this limits its ability to ensure that it is meeting all local needs.

Thank you to those of you who took the time to meet with us. We appreciate your openness in explaining about the work of the centre and how it has touched your lives. We wish you all the very best for the future.

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