

Inspection report for Dingle Lane Children's Centre

Local authority	Liverpool
Inspection number	362467
Inspection dates	4–5 November 2010
Reporting inspector	Priscilla McGuire

Centre governance	Matthew Arnold Primary School Governing Body
Centre leader	Mr Steve Hindley
Date of previous inspection	Not applicable
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Linked school if applicable	Matthew Arnold Primary School
Linked early years and childcare, if applicable	MAPS Neighbourhood Nursery

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

Introduction

The inspection addresses the centre's contribution to:

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

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

This inspection was carried out by one additional inspector and an early years inspector

The inspectors held meetings with the centre manager, the head of the centre, the management board, the Chair of Matthew Arnold Primary School Governing Body, staff, a wide range of partners and representatives from the local authority linked to the children's centre.

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

Information about the centre

Dingle Lane Children's Centre is located on the same site as the Matthew Arnold Primary School and a private nursery and operates as part of a multi-purpose site. The school is now part of a trust with Shorefields Technology College. Separate reports for both the school and the nursery can be viewed at www.ofsted.gov.uk. The centre is a phase one centre which was set up in 2005 and developed from SureStart. The centre offers the full range of integrated services for children and their families and also offers targeted services. The centre is governed by a sub-committee of the Matthew Arnold Primary School governing body, which acts as a management board. Children's centre staff are directly employed by the school.

Dingle Lane Children's Centre is situated on the border of Aigburth and Dingle and covers the Riverside and St. Michael's wards in Liverpool. Dingle is in the top 1% of localities for deprivation and 19.5% of households are lone parent households. The most recent figures show that unemployment in the Riverside area is slightly above the figure for the rest of Liverpool. Statistics also show that 50% of children living in the Riverside ward are below the poverty line. Crime within the Riverside ward is also at a higher rate than the rest of Liverpool. The Riverside area is being regenerated with an increase in house building and investment in retail provision. The population

is predominantly White British with a small minority Black and minority ethnic population in both wards.

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

Dingle Lane Children's Centre is an effective centre with a clear mission and effective leadership and management. The centre offers good integrated provision from an attractive multi-purpose site. Centre staff are well qualified for their roles and offer very good support to users. They are highly committed and enjoy their work. 'We feel privileged to work with the under 5s' was a comment made by staff.

A full timetable of weekly activities, sessions and health clinics are offered to users. However, adult learning provision and training to help adults progress to employment or to develop work related skills is limited. The centre is particularly effective at reaching out to hard to reach groups. It provides an exceptionally wide range of services to help promote healthy living and to improve the health of the local community. Statistics show that in particular areas significant improvements can be demonstrated in relation to health outcomes. For example, the number of children who are obese in the Reception Year is decreasing.

The assessment of users’ needs is highly effective. Staff use their professional knowledge, the centre’s resources and partner resources to assess how best users’ needs can be met. Services are well matched to priority needs. For example, there is a high rate of lung cancer in the area but sessions, such as smoking cessation and work with parents and carers to help them create smoke free zones in their homes, has been instrumental in helping to change ‘mindsets’ and helping families adopt healthier lifestyles.

Partnership arrangements are exemplary and used very effectively to deliver services and support to users and the wider community. The centre works with an extensive range of partner organisations from the statutory, voluntary and private sector. Through these links, the centre is able to offer activities, sessions and support that

help users develop good relationships with their children and achieve positive outcomes.

Governance and accountability arrangements are clear and managers have a clear understanding of their roles and responsibilities. The management board reports directly to the school's governing body and holds the centre accountable for its performance. The board actively monitors safeguarding practice. Parents are well represented on the board, but overall the range of representation on the management board is narrow and partner organisations are not well represented.

Centre staff make a sensitive response to users' needs and actively promote inclusion and inclusive practices. For example, staff at the centre completed basic sign language training so that they could communicate effectively with hearing impaired users..

Self-evaluation is systematic and identifies the strengths of the centre and areas for improvement. Overall performance of the centre in relation to local priorities and Every Child Matter outcomes is rigorously monitored. However, qualitative evaluation of provision delivered by partners is under-developed and does not link very clearly to the delivery plan.

Given the positive outcomes, the good knowledge the centre has of its strengths and weaknesses and the effective leadership and management, the centre has good capacity to build on its strengths and further improve outcomes.

What does the centre need to do to improve further?

Recommendations for further improvement

- Strengthen the self-evaluation process to ensure that qualitative data about partner provision is systematically collected and directly informs planning.
- Review the representation on the management board and extend the representation of partners.
- Extend the scope of adult learning and training provision to help adults progress to employment or to develop work-related skills.

How good are outcomes for users?

2

Outcomes for centre users are good overall with outstanding outcomes in relation to health. Activities, such as dental health 'free toothbrush' sessions, health clinics and ante and postnatal support have had a positive impact on users who comment on the changes they have made to their lives, as a result of their participation in centre

activities. Healthy eating is also actively promoted and parents and carers comment on specific changes to their dietary habits since attending the centre. For example, one parent said 'We used to put salt in everything but now we've learnt to use less salt for our daughter'.

Users also learn to improve their physical health through activities, such as swimming and 'funzone', which is a series of sport sessions organised for children aged between 18 months and four years old. Breastfeeding is effectively promoted and a weekly 'breastfeeding cafe' offers advice and support to parents or parents to be. Designated areas are also available in the centre for breastfeeding. One mother said: 'I always wanted to breastfeed my baby but without the centre I wouldn't have done it for long...The centre has been a very big help – just being able to talk about breastfeeding has been good. My mum never breastfed so she couldn't help'.

Parents and carers report that they feel the centre is safe. There are rigorous checking procedures for visitors to the centre and controlled access to rooms. Risk assessment is rigorous and safety is actively promoted to users and the wider community. Staff work effectively with other partners to support children on child protection plans. A well-attended Paediatric First Aid course has been successful in helping users learn how to respond to emergencies involving their children. The Common Assessment Framework is used for assessment of need as appropriate. The 'Dingle Lane' newsletter also promotes safety and advice to the community and users, and reassures them that children centre staff always carry appropriate identity when making home visits.

Sessions at the centre are well-attended and in some cases, waiting lists have been introduced to cope with demand. Users and their children enjoy their time at the centre and enjoy spending time with each other. They also engage well with centre staff. One young father has now progressed to becoming an advocate for other young fathers and is training to become qualified to work with families and young fathers. He said of his involvement with centre 'It's one of the best things I've ever done.' Other parents have also experienced positive benefits in relation to their personal and social development. For example, teenage parents have gained knowledge and support to become more confident and effective parents. Children are making good progress in developing their communication, language and other skills and parents are able to identify this progress. One mother said about her daughter, 'She talks to more people now since she started coming to the centre.'

Children behave well in sessions and are enthusiastic about their work in class. The views of parents and carers are valued and in addition to being well represented on the management board, their views are also canvassed through regular 'snack and chat' sessions, which are held at the centre. Improvements, such as changes in the timetabling of sessions have been implemented in response to views expressed by parents and carers.

Children make a good transition from the centre and eventually through to school, whether that is the school on site or elsewhere. The effective integration of age

groups for pre-school and children who attend the nursery helps to promote their social development well.

Jobcentre plus staff offer regular sessions at the centre and a lone parent adviser provides support and guidance to many users who would not normally access Jobcentre plus services. However, the impact of the work of Jobcentre Plus in terms of users progressing to employment or training has not yet been fully assessed. Some users have gained useful work related skills and progressed to employment after participating in the city-wide volunteers in placement (VIP) scheme.

Adult learning provision is currently limited to positive parenting courses. There are no regular courses offered to specifically develop skills or knowledge in areas known to impede employment, such as literacy and numeracy. Family learning is centrally commissioned by the local authority for all children’s centres and this limits the range of provision that can be offered.

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, 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	3

How good is the provision?

2

The centre staff know their local community very well. Local authority staff regularly provide data, survey information and other relevant information about local priorities. Staff are well qualified for their jobs and make very good assessments and professional judgements about the individual needs of users and their families. They make appropriate responses, such as interventions, targeted support or refer users to other agencies for help.

The centre manager uses e-start data to identify non-users by postcode. Dedicated outreach workers then target these households and endeavour to engage these families in centre activities. Outreach work is highly effective in engaging families who were previously non-users. Taster sessions have been offered in community

venues, such as churches, to promote centre services. Partners from other organisations work effectively with staff on targeted activities, such as home visits, but also offer good quality activities and sessions at the centre.

The centre offers an outstanding range of activities to promote the achievement of Every Child Matter and Early Years Foundation Stage profile outcomes. Support for children who attend the centre is good and they are helped by qualified staff to develop their communication and language skills. The regular timetable includes physiotherapy sessions, health clinics, baby massage, multi-sensory and swimming sessions. Other sessions such as 'Boogie Babes' and 'Little Treasures' are very well attended and encourage parents and children to play, learn and have fun together.

Parents report that the learning they gain from the centre is having a positive impact on their lives. For example, some comment on how they have learned about the importance of play in their children's development after attending sessions, such as 'Soft Play'. One mother said, 'I've learnt a lot about touch and how babies learn from touching.' Parents who attended the Positive Parenting course have also benefited from improved relationships with their children and also with their partners.

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	1
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

Safeguarding procedures are robust and the centre's policy on safeguarding is actively promoted and embedded in practice. Staff and members of the governing body are appropriately trained in safeguarding and safer recruitment. There are regular and appropriate risk assessments of activities and trips. Staff also report that they feel safe and that their safety is a priority for managers. For example, there are rigorous procedures in place to ensure that staff are safe when carrying out home visits and that they telephone the centre at agreed times when out on visits.

Strategies are also in place to reach out to vulnerable groups in the community, such as homeless families. Multi-agency work and effective internal partnership work between staff in different roles is at the heart of the early intervention and early support that is offered to vulnerable families.

Equality and diversity are actively promoted and diversity celebrated. Statutory

requirements are met and inclusive practice is well embedded in the delivery of services. The centre is very successful in attracting fathers to the centre. Monthly 'Dingle Dads' sessions offer fathers a range of activities, including health-related activities, as well as the opportunity to enjoy creative play with their children. The inclusion of disabled children and children with special educational needs is strongly promoted and a dedicated worker offers support to parents and carers of children with special educational needs and/or disabilities. Working in partnership with a local hospital, centre staff facilitate a regular support group for children with Down's Syndrome.

Governance, management and accountability arrangements are clear and well understood. However, staff from partner organisations are not well represented on the management board and they are not, therefore, systematically involved in the planning and review of overall provision at a governance level. Performance targets are set and monitored by the local authority and some of those targets have been exceeded by the centre. However, self-evaluation of qualitative data about partner provision needs to be further developed to ensure that strengths and weaknesses in the delivery and quality of services directly inform plans for improvement. Both the centre manager and the headteacher are very well respected by staff and foster a culture in which staff and users feel valued. Staff have a good understanding of how their respective roles and responsibilities contribute to the wider safeguarding agenda, as well as to the strategic direction of the centre. The personal and professional development of staff and users is strongly encouraged and staff regularly access training sessions.

The Dingle Lane site offers a 'one stop shop' range of integrated services. This integrated approach serves users well as it encourages the progression of users from targeted support to accessing universal services. Staff are trained in different aspects of each other's work to ensure continuity and full coverage of services and to avoid dependency on any one member of staff. Accommodation at the centre is good and the centre offers a clean and attractive environment.

Staff at Dingle Lane are highly committed to providing good quality services for users. They work well as a cohesive team to offer users high level support and guidance. They have a detailed knowledge of the resources within the centre and know how and when to refer users to other agencies. Staff genuinely care about users and provide a welcoming and warm environment.

These are the grades for leadership and management

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

effectively to meet the needs of users and the wider community	
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

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 Dingle Lane centre on the 4-5 November 2010. We judged the centre as good overall.

During our visit we looked at the centre's plans and other documents. We also met some of you during our visit. Those of you we spoke to told us how much you enjoyed attending the centre with your children. You also told us how staff take the time to speak to you and know you all by name.

Your centre seems to be very much at the heart of your community and offers a wide range of activities, sessions and even trips to help you and your children. The

staff know the community well and have worked hard to ensure as many people as possible get to know what the centre has to offer.

We found the centre to be very well managed and we liked the idea of the school, the nursery and the children's centre being located on one site. We feel this is a benefit to you and your children. Your centre is doing particularly well at getting to know you and to know what activities can be of particular benefit to you and your children. For example, the range of clinics, healthy eating sessions and professional guidance from health professionals is helping many of you learn how you and your children can become healthier. Some of you told us how you have made changes to the way you cook and prepare food after attending the healthy eating sessions.

Your centre offers a very packed timetable of activities and we know that many of you and your children enjoy sessions such as 'Boogie Babes' and 'Soft Play'. You also told us how attending the centre has helped you learn how to use play to help your children develop their skills. We know that some of you feel you have become better parents as a result of attending parenting courses, but we feel there is more work to be done by the centre in providing a wider range of adult learning courses. We also feel that the way the centre checks that you receive good quality sessions could be improved.

We liked the way that the staff do their best to make sure everyone feels valued and that children who may have special educational needs and/or disabilities are not excluded, but encouraged to take advantage of what the centre has to offer. Unfortunately we couldn't attend the 'Dingle's Dads' session, but we know that many fathers very much enjoy your Saturday sessions and being able to spend time with your children.

Some of you attend the regular 'snack and chat' sessions and contribute ideas and express your views during those sessions. A few parents also get involved in the way the centre operates by being members of the management board. However, this is an area we feel the centre could develop even further by looking at how external agencies, companies or organisations that work with the centre are represented on the board.

Thank you very much for taking the time to speak to us during our visit. We really appreciated hearing your views. We wish you all the best for the future.

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