

Inspection report for Hattersley Children's Centre

Local authority	Tameside
Inspection number	362495
Inspection dates	3-4 November 2010
Reporting inspector	Kathryn Gethin HMI

Centre governance	Local Authority
Centre leader	Jane Wishart
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected
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Linked school if applicable	
Linked early years and childcare, if applicable	501267 Melandra Daycare

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 one Early Years Inspector. The inspectors held meetings with the centre coordinator, senior leaders, members of staff, the advisory board, parents' forum, local authority officers and partner professionals from other agencies. They observed the centre's work, and looked at sessions in operation in nearby locations. They also looked at a range of relevant documentation.

Information about the centre

Hattersley Children's Centre provides the core offer to a community in one of the 30% most deprived wards in the country. Hattersley is in a regeneration area and within the reach of the centre there are significant issues surrounding unemployment and lone parenting. A retail development will be completed in 2012 and a building programme for new homes in 2017. The large majority of families are of White British heritage. A health clinic, community centre, toddler group and sports facilities are all in close proximity to the centre.

Governance of the centre is provided by the local authority with support from the advisory body. The centre provides a range of integrated services from the centre and with associated partners that include, health, family support, social care, adult training, and advice and guidance in relation to benefits, training, jobs and volunteering. There are links to three local primary schools and regular crèche sessions are held at the centre. Full day-care provision is provided through Melandra Daycare which is housed in the same building. Most children enter early education with a much lower range of skills than that expected for their age.

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

Hattersley Children's Centre provides a welcoming and safe environment for all its users, many of whom appreciate the hard work of staff to improve their family lives. Users say that the centre, 'is the heart of the community', and that they feel, 'listened to and valued'. Families use the centre on a regular basis and the numbers of both users registered with the centre and those accessing services continue to increase. The centre has come through a challenging period in regard to recruitment and the impact of this on service delivery. The strong leadership team has worked hard to overcome this and, with good support, has been highly effective in overcoming these difficulties.

The centre is well led and managed by the coordinator and senior leaders who have a clear vision for the centre and have a good understanding of their roles and responsibilities. They are highly motivated, have high expectations and communicate well with staff. Policies and procedures are regularly reviewed and safeguarding and equality procedures are good. Inspectors agree with the centre's evaluation that it now provides good support for users due to the highly effective partnership between agencies. Evaluation based on input from users is used successfully to adapt or change provision, however, plans for improvement are not effectively linked to national and local data to ensure targets are challenging and precise.

The centre knows its users well and, due to strong links with health visitors, makes contact with every family following a birth. The centre has contact with the majority of children from local families, and referrals to a range of services are highly effective. The excellent partnerships with a range of agencies ensure that services meet the needs of vulnerable groups within the community. The participation rates for adult training and education are improving and within the community there are strong aspirations to improve. The day-care facility is integral to the centre and has a high number of children attending from the locality. Both the day care and crèche are invaluable resources, providing childcare places while adults access training. Families feel well supported by the centre with users saying they, 'feel empowered', and, 'couldn't have asked for more'.

Groups within the centre are well organised and are effective in increasing parents' and carers' confidence and self-esteem. This, in turn, has led them to access additional training and make links and friendships in the community. Children behave well and are highly engaged in activities and well supported by staff. Users say that the groups have had a positive impact on their relationships with their children and given them new skills. The transition arrangements for children attending school are good but the achievement of this group is not effectively tracked to compare outcomes. However, the past record of improvement along with strong leadership, demonstrate that the centre has a good capacity for further improvement.

What does the centre need to do to improve further?

Recommendations for further improvement

- Improve action planning and self-evaluation so that they have greater impact by:
 - ensuring targets set are challenging, specific and measurable and focused on improving outcomes
 - regularly and systematically reviewing the impact of work done, using comparative information and data.
- Obtain data to evaluate the achievement of children who have accessed services provided or commissioned by the centre in relation to the Early Years Foundation Stage Profile by:
 - establishing clear links with the local primary schools.

How good are outcomes for users?

2

The promotion of healthy lifestyles is very well supported through cookery sessions where users have realised the importance of portion control and the different food values. The Britain in Bloom project has led to an interest in users growing their own fruit and vegetables and there are current discussions with Hattersley Neighbourhood Partnership to explore the possibility of taking over an allotment. The majority of children are within the expected weight range for their age. There are strong links with the local health centre and breastfeeding support has been a success with the majority of families breastfeeding their babies. The Zest project continues to work with users who have emotional health issues, with many users saying how this has developed their confidence and put them on the first step to employment. Children attending the centre have access to outdoor provision throughout the day regardless of the weather and the centre listened to the needs of local people and had pleasure in donating outdoor play equipment to local play areas. A simple but very effective measure to improve dental hygiene has been the sale of toothbrushes and toothpaste in the reception area, which has made a contribution to falling incidence of tooth decay in the area.

Good procedures ensure that users feel safe within the centre. Good quality staff

training and practice ensure positive outcomes for those children subject to child protection plans or Common Assessment Framework processes. A home safety project is available for families on a low income and the fire service willingly fit safety equipment in the homes. As a result, the number of children who have required hospital treatment following an accident has decreased. Parents have confidence in the centre supporting them in times of crisis. Well-established partnerships with Barnardo's, Homestart and the Women's Refuge have supported families through difficult times and enabled them to move forward with their lives. Users say that the valuable work of the centre should be, 'shouted from the rooftops'.

The sessions within the centre are very popular and users' views are listened to and accommodated where possible. This has included changing times and venues to meet need. The development of children is tracked throughout the year and relevant activities put in place to support learning. There has been a focus on improving communication, language and literacy with sessions well attended on 'Every Child a Talker' and 'talk time'. 'Baby Babble' is a communication project where parents and babies learn the basics of language. It was a delight to see the levels of concentration and enjoyment gained from this activity for both babies and mothers. Parents say that the activities are, 'the best thing that has happened', and have, 'brought us all together'. The centre teacher's established links with local schools and the childminder group are helping to improve the quality of provision and outcomes for children. Transition arrangements to schools are good, particularly so for children with additional needs. The Early Years Foundation Stage Profile outcomes show that there is an upward trend in the achievement of children at the end of Reception. However, this cannot be directly linked to children who have accessed the children's centre as current tracking systems are not sufficiently developed.

The centre staff effectively promote a sense of belonging and respect and they lead by example. Children are well behaved and relate well to each other. Parents contribute to the management of the centre through the parents' forum and are now represented on the advisory panel. The 'Triple P Parenting Programme' and 'You Make the Difference' course have been instrumental in increasing confidence as parents and carers have realised they are not alone in finding parenting a challenge at times. One poignant comment from a parent stated that, 'now I don't need to shout'. Dads also say that they have enjoyed having somewhere to meet and how it has helped them at home with relationships. The children have become more culturally aware through a recent trip to Heaton park which is outside the locality. The children were able to travel on the tram and see and hear people from different cultures to their own.

Hattersley Neighbourhood Partnership and Step Ahead are the driving force behind training and employment. Participation rates on courses continue to rise and the planned opening of a new retail centre has strengthened the aspirations of families hoping to gain employment. Encouraging people to gain experience through volunteer work is a strength of the centre. Volunteers have taken part on courses and then been paid to present further courses. A volunteer involved with the

Women's group was able to share her valuable experiences with others and demonstrate how her, 'confidence had improved'. Several volunteers have now accessed National Vocational Qualification training and say how volunteering has made them, 'feel valued'. Others say, 'they want to give something back'.

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 is meeting its core offer well. Staff use assessment very effectively to shape and deliver services. They know the community well and work closely with key partners and families to ensure needs are met. All families receive a welcome visit or telephone call in relation to their need. There are very strong partnerships with the voluntary sector particularly with Barnardo's who complement the work of the centre staff. The centre teacher has established links with local schools and transition arrangements are very successful. Staff regularly 'drop in' to school playgrounds to meet parents and chat on an informal basis. Training on planning and assessment delivered to childminders has been well received and childminders say it has 'led to an increase in skills and confidence'. The close working with the outreach team and family support workers has ensured that referrals are fast and effective.

Unemployment is at a high level in the locality especially in regard to long-term unemployment. Although Jobcentre plus do not have a direct office in Hattersley, they make regular referrals to Hattersley Neighbourhood Partnership who, along with the advice and guidance from Step Ahead, have been successful in increasing the number of users accessing training courses. Literacy, computing and security badge training continue to be popular courses, with adults having aspirations to gain employment in the locality. A local resident who experienced extreme difficulties and was in crisis says how the training, 'made me believe in myself'. For those adults not yet ready to access work a great emphasis has been put on working as volunteers and the centre has several volunteers working in a range of roles.

Coffee mornings at a local school have encouraged residents to mix and make friendships, and the Britain in Bloom project brought residents together across generations with great success. The centre listens to and takes on board the views of the users, for example, successfully adapting and extending the holiday activity programme. The crèche and day care are well used by families and to support training. Day care is an integral part of the centre and used for crèche provision depending on resources. A high number of children from the locality access the free nursery entitlement. The centre provides a wide range of literature and personalised help and support. Families say that their lives have improved due to the courses offered and that the centre is an 'ideal community setting'. They are really pleased about the, 'resources and kindness of staff'.

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	2

How effective are the leadership and management?

2

Members of the leadership team have a clear vision for the centre and are passionate about their commitment to improve the quality of lives for families. Their strong sense of purpose shows in all aspects of their work and they engage easily with both staff and users. They continually reflect on services offered, taking into account a range of views, and they understand the main strengths and weaknesses of the centre. There are clear governance and accountability arrangements and links between strategic planning and service provision. However, the development plan lacks local data and specific targets are unclear with the majority of the evidence being anecdotal.

Partnership working is excellent and very well integrated. The voluntary sector is represented on the senior leadership team as is the day-care manager and centre teacher. Key partners comment on the superb relationships between them and report on the centre being 'invaluable'. Equality and diversity are promoted successfully by engaging service users from different groups and varying the times and venues of courses to be as inclusive as possible.

There are robust procedures in place to ensure safeguarding arrangements are effective for all. A clear record identifies criminal record bureau checks and

procedures are in place to ensure supervision is in place where required. Staff training is regularly updated and staff development is identified through supervision. The building is secure and staff are vigilant in responding to any perceived danger. The centre is aware of family need and responds quickly in times of crisis, working with the voluntary sector and the women's refuge to safeguard families.

The centre has responded well to users' needs by providing a range of parenting courses. The Women's group, the Triple P Parenting course and You Make the Difference are particular successes in raising self-esteem. Service users are becoming more involved in the management of the centre and a parent representative is now on the advisory board. Users refer to the centre as, 'a supportive and caring place', and are effectively raising their aspirations and improving the outcomes for their children. The centre provides good value for money.

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 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 Ofsted reports for schools in the locality were taken into account in the provision and outcomes judgements. The overall effectiveness of all establishments was at least satisfactory.

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Summary for centre users

We inspected the Hattersley Children's Centre on 3 and 4 November 2010. We judged the centre as good overall. We really enjoyed chatting to you in meetings and in groups around and near to the centre. You expressed your views clearly and they were very helpful to us. We would like to take this opportunity to thank you for your contribution to the inspection.

We are pleased to say that the centre provides good support that helps families to improve their lives. The staff work extremely hard to meet all of you by visiting you at home or by telephoning to get to know you. They work extremely well with the local clinic, schools, Hattersley Neighbourhood Partnership and Barnardo's to ensure the activities are what you need. We were delighted to hear how helpful and supportive you find the staff.

It was an absolute pleasure to sit in the Baby Babble session and to see how you learnt the importance of language. The babies rose to the occasion and were the stars of the show. Everyone we talked to spoke highly about the centre. Many of you said how you now had more confidence and had learnt a lot about parenting skills which you were now putting into practice.

It was encouraging that more of you are using the centre and are beginning to get involved in the management through volunteer work or through the parents' forum and advisory board. These are important roles so keep up the good work.

To help the centre improve we have suggested that the leaders find better ways to measure more accurately the positive differences that the centre activities are making to you and your families.

I would like to thank you once again.

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