

Inspection report for Arbourthorne Children's Centre

Local authority	Sheffield
Inspection number	362429
Inspection dates	13–14 October 2010
Reporting inspector	Tara Street

Centre governance	Local authority
Centre leader	Kate Hamill
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected
Centre address	Tiddlywinks Centre, 7 Eastern Drive, Sheffield, S2 3WP
Telephone number	0114 2531377
Fax number	
Email address	Catherine.hamill@sheffield.gov.uk

Linked school if applicable	Arbourthorne Community Primary School
Linked early years and childcare, if applicable	Tiddlywinks 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.

An inspection of the registered early years provision was carried out at the same time as the inspection of the centre under Section 3 of the Childcare Act 2006. The report of this inspection is available on our website www.ofsted.gov.uk.

This inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors.

The inspectors held meetings with senior managers, centre staff, parents, members of the advisory board and a number of partners including Early Years Foundation Stage and childcare partners; health, education and children's social care professionals. They observed the centre's work, and looked at a range of documentation including the centre's operational plans, evaluations, key policies and safeguarding procedures.

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

INFORMATION ABOUT THE CENTRE

Arbourthorne Children's Centre is located in two sites on a large housing estate in Sheffield. Although Arbourthorne Community Primary School is the designated children's centre, most of the core-offer services take place within Tiddlywinks, the childcare centre across the road, which provides the linked childcare for the children's centre. Due to the make-up of the area and the limited amount of space available at the centre, it is necessary for many services to be delivered at outreach sites across the area. This includes a range of health, social care, family support and education services. The centre has been working towards providing the full core offer for children's centres in areas with the highest levels of deprivation since 2005. Within the reach of the centre there are significant issues of unemployment, youth crime and substance misuse, and low levels of literacy and numeracy. The predominant ethnic group is White British. There is an increasing number of families from minority ethnic backgrounds. Levels of unemployment are high and many of the existing jobs are low paid. Housing is mostly social or privately rented. Most

children enter early education with knowledge and skills that are slightly below expectations for their age. There are links to local primary schools.

Governance of the centre is provided by the local authority in conjunction with an advisory board that includes providers, delivery partners, members of the local community and users that attend the children's centre.

Childcare is provided through the linked site of Tiddlywinks Centre, which is a voluntary organisation, and was visited as part of this inspection. The Ofsted report for the Tiddlywinks centre from October 2010 judged the childcare provision as good and was taken into account for this inspection. This report can be viewed at www.ofsted.gov.uk.

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

Arbourthorne Children's Centre provides a warm, welcoming and safe environment for all its users. They appreciate the work it does and recognise the positive impact it has on their lives. A typical view expressed by a user is, 'The staff are very friendly and make me feel safe and supported.'

A key strength of the centre is the good leadership provided by the centre manager and her management team in strong partnership with the local authority. Leaders lead by example and set high standards for others to follow. Staff are enthusiastic, committed and hard working in the pursuit of these shared goals. They have a high level of expertise supported by good quality professional development. Multi-agency working partnerships are strong and particularly responsive to meeting the needs of families. The centre provides a good range of services that are effectively raising the knowledge of parents and carers about healthy lifestyles and keeping their children safe.

All legally required policies and procedures are in place, up to date and regularly reviewed. Staff have a very good understanding of child protection procedures, are well trained and share their concerns well so that the safety of users is good. The centre is an inclusive setting and, by providing for a wide range of users, promotes

equality well. Particularly strong actions are taken to support vulnerable families and children, and those who need support in times of acute need or crisis, through close multi-agency working and the effective family and outreach support teams. Parents and carers particularly value the wide range of provision that the centre offers in conjunction with its partner agencies. They speak highly of the quick response to requests for additional activities. Staff are particularly effective in listening to what parents and carers say, whether informally or formally through the 'What parents want' group and written feedback from participants. This information is used well to plan future activities and services. The positive action taken as a result of feedback has promoted trust with users of the services and with multi-agency partners. However, at the time of inspection there were no parent representatives on the advisory board to ensure that users are involved in decision making and ongoing developments of the centre.

The centre manager, advisory board and service delivery task group have a good understanding of the needs of the wider community, the centre's strengths and areas for development. Self-evaluation is accurate, self-critical and takes full account of contributions from all staff and partner agencies. However, their ability to evaluate fully the impact of the centre's work is limited. This is because the centre does not yet have systematic and accurate management information that records the full impact and ongoing effectiveness of its work, or enables them to set consistently challenging targets for improvement. Actions are in place to remedy this. The centre does evaluate the impact of each activity and individual service provided. This information, combined with a range of evaluations from parents, affords the board an effective understanding of the progress the centre is making towards achieving its priorities. The local authority is increasingly providing a robust quality assurance role. This provides the centre with good capacity to build on these successes in the future and further improve outcomes for families and children.

What does the centre need to do to improve further?

Recommendations for further improvement

- With the local authority and partners develop further secure strategies to demonstrate impact and collect quantitative data to monitor the ongoing effectiveness of the centre.
- Review the structure of the advisory board to ensure that it involves more parents from the reach area so that they can effectively contribute to the ongoing developments of the centre.

How good are outcomes for users?

2

Outcomes for centre users are good with improving outcomes in families' health and children's educational achievement. This is the case for different groups within the community including those who speak English as an additional language, young parents, carers and fathers, and those who have children with special educational needs and/or disabilities. All are subject to the Common Assessment Framework

processes. All groups that attend the services offered by the centre work harmoniously together and report that their confidence and self-esteem have improved since accessing the services.

Improving health outcomes are the result of good partnerships with child and family health services that ensure that the majority of local families are benefiting from the wide range of activities offered. This includes breastfeeding support, baby massage, weaning advice, anti-natal and post-natal drop in clinics, preparation for labour classes and smoking cessation advice. This, combined with well-attended activities such as home safety advice, healthy eating and dental health workshops, ensures that families are developing a good understanding of how to keep themselves and their children healthy. A good range of literature and personalised help and support from centre staff is always available and families are effectively signposted to appropriate services to improve their lives.

Good procedures ensure that children are safe and secure at all times. Good quality relationships with families and their children allow staff to identify any safety concerns within families and intervene appropriately. Very good multi-agency support for families referred to the centre in time of acute crisis is helping to reduce the numbers of children subject to a child protection plan and in supporting those children who are looked after. Parents and carers say that they feel safe in the centre and that they trust staff to help them in times of crisis or personal difficulties. Early intervention is effective in preventing difficulties escalating. Partnership working with health visitors, family and outreach support workers and Sheffield Information Link is helping to successfully raise children's and families' awareness of safety in the home and their communities. Family support workers, health visitors and breastfeeding support workers provide advice on home safety and hygiene awareness during home visits and within the community clinics. Sheffield Information Link also provides fact sheets for parents on staying safe, bullying and anger management. Case study evidence and discussions with parents provide clear evidence that access to good quality support, guidance and tailored workshops improved relationships, behaviour and home safety for users and their children.

Children are well prepared for nursery and mainstream school due to the effective delivery of the Early Years Foundation Stage at the on-site Tiddlywinks nursery. Children are provided with good quality learning experiences which have a positive impact on their learning and development. The very close liaison between the nursery, Early Years Foundation Stage consultant and local primary school has resulted in a number of initiatives being implemented to improve children's speaking and listening skills which effectively identify and support those who require additional speech and language support. For example, they are making effective use of learning through play activities such as 'talking toddlers' and 'play and say' speech initiatives with parents. Professionals spoken to during the inspection reported a positive impact that close working with the centre has had in breaking down barriers, raising aspirations and improving outcomes for young children.

Behaviour across the centre is good. Children in Tiddlywinks nursery are well behaved and relate well to one another. A number of parents and carers spoken to during the inspection, including young mothers and lone parents, commented on how their confidence as parents and carers had improved as a result of their participation in a number of activities and adult courses offered by the centre and its partner agencies. This was particularly evident among parents and carers who had attended the 'Parents are experts' training where there is a very strong focus on partnership, developing a shared language with early years workers and empowering parents and carers to be active participants in their child's learning and enjoyment. There is some good evidence of how the centre has helped parents into learning, training and employment. Several parents and carers expressed the view that their economic stability and independence had improved as a result of the opportunities the centre has provided. Users benefit from the centre's partnership with the Citizens Advice Bureau, offering advice on how to access benefits and tax credits, and with Jobcentre Plus. They are effectively signposted to relevant information and guidance that is tailored to their needs and circumstances. As a result, many users develop good and relevant skills and qualifications to equip them for the world of work and improve their life chances.

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 provides good quality services, care, guidance and support through its centre-based activities, family and outreach support and home visits. Constructive relationships with parents and carers help them to feel confident to seek advice and support. All staff who work for and with the centre are passionate about their roles and have a good level of expertise and professional knowledge to successfully help families improve their health, well-being and achievement. Good multi-agency partnerships across partner agencies are increasingly making sure that the individual needs of children and their parents and carers who are referred to the centre, are

assessed quickly so that interventions and support can be targeted appropriately. Assessment of individual cases is robust and the Common Assessment Framework is successfully ensuring that teams can be gathered quickly to support children and families identified as in need. Where a child protection plan is in place, the centre works effectively with social services and the child protection team. Parents and carers report that the timeliness and quality of individual support is good and available for as long as needed. Careful strategies are in place to ensure parents can build confidence, parenting skills, and be supported to independence, at a pace that is appropriate to them.

Staff know the community well; they are aware of the needs and demands for services and activities. The centre is proactive in taking services out to groups who are hard to reach and who they know to be vulnerable. These services are supported by very good partnership working and the centre's persistence in establishing links with hard-to-reach groups through schools and other partner agencies. The courses provided for adults are valued and provide good quality learning and development in basic skills and childcare. For example, the centre and its partner agencies offer courses on confidence building, return to work skills, improve your English, everyday mathematics, money management, child development, first aid, working with children with special educational needs and/or disabilities, healthy cooking on a budget and a positive parenting programme. Many parents and carers have progressed from entry level courses offered at the centre and its partner agencies, to a range of courses at local colleges and work-based learning providers. Users can see the relevance of training and attendance at sessions to improving outcomes in their lives. However, attendance to the recently formed 'Get involved Men's Group' and childminding group can fluctuate and the centre recognises staff have work to do to attract more users.

Assessment is used effectively to record children's progress and inform teaching and learning in the Early Years Foundation Stage. The nursery receives good and valued support from the Early Years Foundation Stage consultant and Arbourthorne Community Primary School. For example, the nursery was invited to take part in a 'Roots to Grow' learning language through visual art activity group, organised and funded by the school. Discussion and photographic evidence show children enjoyed exploring the movement of different fabrics and made wind chimes and windmills, which effectively developed their language and communication skills. As a result of these partnerships, the centre effectively promotes the learning and personal development of children, although staff recognise that partnerships with some other early years providers are not yet of similar strength.

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,	2

development and enjoyment for all users	
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

Leadership and management are consistently good at all levels. The centre manager and her senior leadership team provide clear leadership with high expectations for the community firmly at the heart of the centre's work. The advisory board and staff share their aspirations and are highly motivated in providing a wide range of good quality and effective services to the community, particularly those that are hard to reach and vulnerable. The recently restructured advisory board and newly implemented service delivery task group have good representation from partner agencies, such as Homestart, Inclusion and Learning Services, Tiddlywinks nursery, extended services, Arbourthorne Community Primary School, Early Intervention Lead, Sheffield Information Link, NHS Sheffield and the multi-agency support team. As a result, the centre has a good understanding of its strengths and areas for development and sets ambitious targets based on good self-evaluation. This leads to good quality action planning which is supported by good partnerships. However, currently, there is no parental representation on the advisory board to ensure their views are included in any decision making about the centre and its services. Their views are heard through the 'What parents want' group. Evaluation of the impact of the work with individual families takes place within team and multi-agency meetings, case studies and through regular supervision of staff. However, this information is not yet collated into manageable data to measure impact at a more strategic level. It lacks quantifiable measures against which the centre can evaluate the impact of its actions on the outcomes for users, or gauge improvement over time. Consequently, it is difficult to evaluate the impact of the improvement plan for the centre. Despite this, the manager has a very good understanding of the priorities and needs of the centre and the community it serves, and a particularly good knowledge of the impact of services. Resources are used well to provide a welcoming environment, particularly as the limited amount of space available at the centre means it is necessary for many services to be delivered at outreach sites across the area. Robust financial management systems are in place to monitor day-to-day expenditure and delegation of responsibility for resources is at an appropriate level to ensure timely and effective packages of support to families. This ensures good value for money.

Good safeguarding arrangements are supported by the clear lines of communication and collaboration between agencies to ensure children are safeguarded. All checks, vetting and recruitment processes meet current guidelines and staff have up-to-date training in safeguarding, child protection and first aid. The centre places a strong focus on developing the skills of all staff, through high-quality training, to deliver inclusive provision to be sensitive to the needs and views of users. For example, the

provision of one-to-one support in families' homes, when requested.

Equality and diversity are promoted successfully. This is because all services are designed to engage users from the range of backgrounds in the local area, including the promotion of inclusive practice for children with special education needs and/or disabilities. The manager, advisory board and partner agencies have a reflective approach to working and continually look for new ways to reach into the local community and include groups of users effectively. For example, men are being encouraged to attend the centre through a newly established men's group which is based on enjoyable activities that they can share with their children and families. The centre manager and service delivery task group are working hard to ensure a wide variety of users and community groups make good use of the available facilities in the area.

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	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

Information from the most recent Ofsted inspections of Arbourthorne Community Primary School and Tiddlywinks Centre were taken into account when writing about early years provision and outcomes for children.

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 Arbourthorne Children's Centre on 13 and 14 of October 2010. We judged the centre as good overall.

During our visit we visited a number of activities, looked at the centre's plans and documents and talked with a number of you and the professionals who work with you. Many of you told us how much you enjoy the activities provided through the centre. You told us that staff listen to you and make sure that you get the right advice and support. We found that the centre is good at helping people at times in their lives when they most need it; action is taken quickly and different people and organisations work very well as a team to support both children and families. We found the centre to be warm and welcoming to all families and busy with activity and children's laughter. The staff have a high level of expertise and offer good practical and emotional support to families who need it.

The centre is working well with a range of partners and providers such as social care, health services and education. We found that services work well together as a team to provide help and support to families where a child has special educational needs and/or disabilities. It provides good support for children to make sure they get a good start in life. Adults are guided well so they can realise their potential. Some adults now work as volunteers in the centre and its partner agencies and attendance at courses has resulted in many receiving formal qualifications and work. The 'What parents want' and newly started 'Get involved men's group' and childminder group provide good opportunities for social interaction and further education. The whole family is at the heart of what everyone is doing and this is seen in the wide variety of activities on offer. Sessions related to keeping fit, child development, 'what is health?', 'babies love books' and practical activities are examples of effective support. The centre also does well in offering guidance about how you can play with your children at home by, for example, making salt dough, creating hand and foot collages and engaging with them during pasta play.

You told us that you feel safe at the centre. This reflects the good work it does to promote safety, welfare and good safeguarding arrangements. Children are well behaved and confidently explore the learning environment. You play an important role too. We were impressed by the positive and supportive relationships you have with one another and with your children.

The people in charge of running the centre are doing a very good job. The manager has worked hard to make sure that everything the children's centre does for you will make a difference to the area in which you live. She makes sure that everyone who works with the Arbourthorne Children's Centre share this commitment and we heard lots of examples from you about how they are making a real difference to your lives. The manager is well supported by the local authority and the advisory board. However, the ability of the centre to understand properly how well it is doing in improving the lives of you and your families could be improved. This is because the centre does not yet have systems in place to monitor the impact that all activities it provides have on your lives. The local authority, advisory board and manager are aware of this and an action plan is already in place. At the moment there are no parent or carer representatives on the advisory board to ensure that you can contribute effectively to decisions about developments in your centre. We know the centre staff are good at asking you to tell them how you have found all the activities and services which you go to, through questionnaires, evaluations and the 'What parents want' group. We hope that this is something you will continue to play a part in, making sure the services offered meet your individual needs and requirements.

Thank you very much for your welcome and openness with inspectors. We are very grateful and wish you every success in the future.

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