

Inspection report for Beaumont Leys and Stocking Farm Sure Start Children's Centre

Local authority	Leicester City
Inspection number	366549
Inspection dates	1–2 February 2011
Reporting inspector	Georgina Beasley AI

Centre governance	The local authority
Centre leader	Julia Pilsbury
Date of previous inspection	N/A
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Linked school if applicable	None
Linked early years and childcare, if applicable	Heatherbrook pre-school

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.

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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 two additional inspectors.

The inspectors held meetings with centre and day-care staff, parents and carers, health professionals, and members of the management advisory board, parent and carer forum, Jobcentre Plus, Multi Access Centre and local authority.

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

Information about the centre

Beaumont Leys and Stocking Farm, situated on the outskirts of Leicester city, is a Phase 1 Sure Start Children's Centre that provides full care provision for its urban community. At the time of the inspection, 1297 children aged 0-4 lived in the reach area. Just over half of families are White British. The remainder are from a number of minority ethnic backgrounds including Asian, Black and mixed heritage. Families live in one of the 30% most deprived areas in the country. Around 50% of children live in workless families and receive benefits. Around 80% live in lone parent families. Each year, about 20% of families move in and out of the area. There is a hostel in the area for pregnant teenagers and young mothers to be.

The centre provides a base for a wide range of health, educational and social services that take place on site, in the home and in local community venues. The centre manages six pre-school settings that provide part-time sessional day care during school term time. There is also one pre-school setting (Smart Start) that provides full-time day care for 50 weeks of the year. There are a total of 204 registered places for babies to four-year-old children. Babington Bears, Smart Start, Stocking Farm, Home Farm and Tudor Centre pre-schools were inspected as part of the children's centre inspection. Heatherbrook pre-school was inspected in December 2009. About 33 childminders provide additional pre-school care across the reach area. The children start pre-school with skills that are well below the levels expected for their age. The local authority manages the provision and works closely with a local advisory board made up of representatives of all partner organisations, the local

council, community groups and parents and carers. The senior management team includes the integrated services neighbourhood manager, a family support manager, two childcare and early learning managers, three children's centre teachers, leaders from two local children's centres and the business manager.

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

The children's centre is good and serves its reach area well. The integrated services neighbourhood manager's clear vision for improvement is shared by an effective team of professionals and an advisory board that strive to improve the life chances of children and their families. Everyone has a role to play in driving up outcomes and in delivering a varied range of services and activities that meet users' needs well. Key indicators are improving as a result, despite the constant movement of needy families into the area. The local authority collects and shares a considerable amount of data for each national indicator. This gives the centre a clear and accurate picture of what is going well and the areas most in need of attention. Outcomes are checked against the data each year to evaluate the success of services and activities and to target resources effectively. Outcomes for children and users are good. They are particularly good for the most vulnerable families due to the targeted care, guidance and support they receive from multi-agency staff. Good support for children with special educational needs and/or disabilities ensures they have equal access to all activities. Users' positive relationships with the centre and each other result in a celebration of its diverse communities. The centre has good capacity to improve.

Provision in the pre-school settings is good. Children settle quickly because they feel safe. They enjoy learning especially when they are engaged in activities that they have chosen themselves. Children make good progress because provision is largely tailored to each individual's needs. Staff make regular note of children's learning and use the information to plan activities that meet their interests. Most settings complete and use assessments well. A few do not which makes it difficult for those settings to track the progress of individual and targeted groups over time and identify gaps in curricular provision.

The centre is constantly looking at how it can improve and has regular systems for monitoring the quality of provision closely. Procedures for ensuring users' safety and well being are particularly good and well monitored. Staff do not always check the quality of services against users' outcomes and so are not always able to identify why some activities are less well attended, and whether every child is reaching their potential. Targets in the neighbourhood development plan do not detail the measures against which the centre can check their effectiveness.

What does the centre need to do to improve further?

Recommendations for further improvement

- Ensure all pre-school staff follow assessment procedures consistently to:
 - track the progress of individuals and targeted groups of children
 - identify gaps in curriculum provision and plan next learning steps.
- Strengthen evaluation procedures so that:
 - all staff are clear how to monitor the quality of provision against outcomes
 - information is used to set targets and benchmarks against which to measure improvement in users' outcomes and engagement.

How good are outcomes for users?

2

Healthy eating is promoted well. Children in the pre-school know why they should eat fruit and why they should not have too much sugar in their diets, for example, remembering that eating birthday cake is a treat. As a result of good focus on improving families' healthy eating, levels of obesity in the Reception year are reducing. Children know they need to 'wash the germs away' after going to the toilet, taking part in messy play or sneezing into their hands, and certainly before eating lunch or snack due to the regular reinforcement of routines. Children have daily opportunities to be active although not all settings have immediate access to an outdoor area. An above average number of mothers breastfeed due to the positive encouragement given by the midwifery team. While an above average number of mothers give up smoking during pregnancy, there is limited data to show how many continue not to smoke and how many children live in smoke-free environments.

Children in pre-school ask adults for help confidently because adults always respond positively. Children who speak limited English when they start pre-school settle equally as quickly as others because adults learn how to speak some words in their home language to make them feel welcome. In addition, staff who are bilingual speak to children in their home language and in English to help them follow routines and join in with activities. There is a high number of children on child protection plans in the reach area partly because families who move into the area have considerable needs and partly because the centre is diligent in identifying and referring children quickly if there is a concern. Support is put into place quickly for these families to ensure children's safety. The Common Assessment Framework

(CAF) process works well in targeting the needs of children and their families. Assessments indicate that two-year-olds given free pre-school places make good progress, especially in their personal development and communication and language skills.

Children make good progress in pre-school and are well prepared for the Reception year. The number of children reaching 78 points, including 6 points in personal, social and emotional development and communication language and literacy, is increasing and is average. The gap between the lowest 20% and the rest is closing faster than the national rate. Children are developing good levels of independence through making choices about what and where to learn. This is especially so in settings that have immediate access to an outdoor space. Nearly all children share resources and toys amicably, wait patiently for their turn and play cooperatively. For example, two children in one setting worked together well to fill a bucket with sand, one holding and one filling it, before turning it out to make a sandcastle. In another setting, children painted pictures to create a large colourful display of 'The Gruffalo'.

Users make a strong contribution to the centre's work. Children behave well and develop positive relationships with adults and each other. Tidy-up time in the pre-schools is industrious with every child helping to tidy away toys and resources quickly before moving onto the next activity. Parents make suggestions for improvement on the 'graffiti wall', and the parent and carers' forum organises events and activities and ensures a parent representative always attends advisory board meetings.

The centre is successful in engaging the high number of pregnant teenagers and young mothers who live in the reach area. They say that 'we are always made to feel welcome'. An above average number are in education or engaged in training. Weekly meetings at the centre enable them to build positive relationships with the centre and each other, get advice about their children's welfare, develop parenting skills and to plan ongoing education and training with Connexions staff. While a significant number of children live in workless families, this number grows nearly every time a new family moves into the area. Jobcentre Plus and staff from the Multi Access Centre (MAC) are successful in getting those people who use their services either back into work, albeit too often into only temporary jobs, or into training to gain work-related or work-readiness skills. Many gain accreditation to work in the construction industry or learn important computer skills for administration jobs.

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	2

positive relationships and users contribute to decision-making and governance of the centre	
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

Staff in all settings observe the children closely when they are playing, and record good detailed notes about what they say and do. Most comments focus on what children can and cannot do. The best refer to the age-expected bands and the date this was achieved. A few record the activity in which the children take part with little reference to learning. There is some variability in how the progress trackers are completed to measure the children's progress and plan next learning steps. Some adults do not always follow the guidance correctly. Those who record each child's achievement in the age-related band and also in the ones above and below, can see clearly gaps in individual's learning and development, and in the setting's curricular provision. As a result, learning in those settings is more closely matched to children's individual needs, including those with the potential of reaching higher levels.

Wider assessments of users' needs through surveys and comments boxes have resulted in additional activities being organised or revisions made. Fathers meet every two weeks to support each other and to learn to bond with their children. Some users enjoy leading activities such as showing other parents and carers at the family-fun sessions how to cook low-cost nutritious meals such as stir fry. There are good opportunities for young people and adults to improve their education and skills through outreach services and strong partnerships with Connexions, Jobcentre Plus and MAC. Courses for parents learning to speak English and those who want to gain accreditation for work-related skills are well attended. The centre is looking at ways of offering a recent parenting skills course to other parents and carers as a result of successes with its initial targeted group. Feedback from attendees reflects parents' and carers' improved confidence in playing with their children and managing their behaviour. Comments include, 'I give more cuddles and spend more time with them,' and 'I get less separation anxiety when leaving them at pre-school.'

Good care, guidance and support for children with special educational needs and/or disabilities and for children who speak English as an additional language enable them to make good progress. Excellent support for the most vulnerable families from family services enables parents and carers to deal with challenges more confidently. Parents and carers who spoke to the inspectors valued not only the support given to their families but also to them personally in moments of crises. Good support to expectant mothers gives many babies a healthy start to life. Crèche facilities enable users to attend groups knowing that their children are being well cared for. Parents and carers value the toy library as a means to supplement their children's toys.

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

The good leadership and management of the centre leader has refocused staff, agency partners and members of the advisory board on measuring the overall success and quality of the centre's work. This has enabled it to target resources more efficiently and to sustain improvements. Monitoring is systematic but not sufficiently rigorous. For example, some staff do not evaluate the quality of services and provision against outcomes and so some weaknesses are missed. Measures against which to evaluate improvements are not precise enough. Targets include percentage improvements for each national indicator but not by how much. The centre seeks users' views regularly but this is not always systematic enough to find out whether services are meeting everyone's specific needs.

Advisory board members have organised themselves into suitable committees to lead on improving key aspects of the centre's work in response to outcomes detailed in the National Indicator Set data. Members are representative of all agencies involved in the centre's work, the local community and parents and carers and so have a deep knowledge and understanding of the reach area's needs. The board has been fully involved in evaluating services and in identifying improvement priorities and targets. It ensures resources are targeted to need to provide good value for money.

Partnerships are strong and ensure services meet users' needs, especially the most vulnerable. Good support for childminders ensures they provide well for children's learning and development. The centre values its diverse community. Positive relationships between different ethnic groups ensure everyone gets along together. The needs of families and their children with special educational needs and/or disabilities are met well through multi-agency support and services in the home, at the centre and at pre-schools. The centre helps users who need extra support to overcome immediate difficulties and so enable them to access services and groups

Safeguarding arrangements are good. The centre follows local authority guidance for recruiting staff to ensure all required checks are made. Induction ensures staff are fully briefed about important policies and procedures, including child protection. Comprehensive risk assessments ensure users' safety and well-being at all sites. Centre managers and teachers, setting leaders and staff make regular safety checks.

Visitors and users are checked in and out of the buildings, sometimes twice if the setting accommodation is within another building. Regular multi-agency meetings monitor closely the physical and emotional well-being of children, especially those subject to the CAF or who have a child protection plan. The family support and children-in-need workers enter into regular discussions with staff to identify needs early and put support into place before a need becomes critical.

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	3
The extent to which partnerships with other agencies ensure the integrated delivery of the range of services the centre has been commissioned to provide	2
The extent to which the centre supports and encourages the wider community to engage with services and uses their views to develop the range of provision	2

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

Heatherbrook Pre-School was judged good in its inspection in December 2009 and contributed to the children's centre report and judgements.

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 Beaumont Leys and Stocking Farm Sure Start Children's Centre on 1 and 2 February 2011. Thank you for talking to us about your and your children's experiences at the centre. We judged the centre as good overall.

The centre leadership and its health, training and community partners, staff and members of the advisory board know the reach area well. Along with your feedback, they use this knowledge to plan and deliver a wide range of services and activities that meet your and your children's needs well.

The centre and its pre-school settings and community venues offer visitors and users a warm welcome the moment they step inside. This is helping your children to settle at pre-school and giving many of you the confidence to get involved with the wide range of activities and services offered. Teenage mothers value the support they receive from Connexions. Jobcentre Plus and Multi Access Centre (MAC) staff make it easier for you to attend appointments and talk about your education, training and return to work plans in one place at one time. A good number of you achieve accreditation for numerous courses you subsequently attend.

All of the pre-school settings managed by the centre provide good opportunities for your children's learning and development. As a result, your children make good progress and are given a good start for learning in the Reception year. Focused support gives children with special educational needs and/or disabilities the boost they need to catch up. Children know the importance of eating healthy food and keeping fit. Children who get daily and free access to an outdoor space have good opportunities to be active and develop their physical fitness. Your children behave well and the centre provides a calm and safe place for them to learn.

Health services provide good care and support. As a result, many of you breastfeed your babies for at least the first six weeks of their lives and a good number give up smoking during pregnancy. Care is taken to ensure you and your children's safety and well-being through regular checks and discussions with you about your children's progress and welfare needs. Those of you who need extra support from time to time value the excellent care from family services to help you overcome challenging circumstances in your families' lives. The parent and carer group provides a valuable way for you to make your voices heard through the work it does in the centre.

We have asked the centre to make sure that all staff in the pre-schools follow the assessment procedures so that they track children's progress and plan consistently what they are to learn next. We have also asked them to check the quality of the provision more closely against you and your children's outcomes and use the information gathered to set more precisely measured improvement targets.

Thank you again for welcoming us to your centre and telling us how you, your children and your families have benefited from its work.

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