

# Inspection report for Langwith Junction Children's Centre

Local authority	Derbyshire
Inspection number	365805
Inspection dates	2–3 February 2011
Reporting inspector	Sue Aldridge AI

Centre governance	The local authority
Centre leader	Caren Rice
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected
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Linked school if applicable	Not applicable
Linked early years and childcare, if applicable	EY 286456 EY 313498

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 two additional inspectors.

The inspectors held meetings with a representative from the local authority, the head of the centre, staff, members of the advisory group, health visitors and a speech and language therapist. They held informal discussions with parents.

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

## Information about the centre

Langwith Junction Children's Centre is part of a cluster of three children's centres, which share the delivery of some services and are jointly led and managed. It has two sites, one at Langwith Junction and a second at Whaley Thorns. It serves an area of high deprivation close to Mansfield. Levels of worklessness and proportions of families on benefits are high. The great majority of the community within its reach are of White British heritage. When children enter the Early Years Foundation Stage, their knowledge and skills are below those expected at their age. The centre makes the full core offer. It is governed by the local authority. There is an advisory board, made up of representatives from the local community.

## 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**

**3**

### Capacity for sustained improvement

**The centre's capacity for sustained improvement, including the quality of its leadership and management**

**3**

## Main findings

Langwith Junction Children's Centre's effectiveness is satisfactory. When all aspects of its provision, leadership and management are considered together, these are satisfactory; this leads to outcomes that are satisfactory overall. The centre is most successful in encouraging users to develop healthy lifestyles and in ensuring that children are safe and well protected. Success in these areas is linked to effective partnership working with health service providers, as well as voluntary and private providers. Its arrangements for keeping all of its users safe are good, as are the care, guidance and support provided. Parents and carers are confident that the centre is a safe environment. They feel welcome and they enjoy coming to the sessions they attend.

The staff at the centre know the needs of those in the reach area well. They have responded effectively to the wishes of users, by providing an appropriate level of outreach support, and families in crisis benefit from this close intervention, which often continues for some time and involves many different agencies. Parents and carers appreciate the personal, supportive approach of staff, and this is demonstrated by comments such as, 'I am treated like a person, not a number,' and 'Someone will always listen.' Although users recognise that the intervention of the centre has helped to improve outcomes for children and families, staff do not consistently identify and celebrate successes.

The services provided at the centre's bases are of good quality, but the range of these is satisfactory rather than good. The development work that has recently been undertaken to encourage more fathers and male carers to become involved has not yet been effective in increasing engagement of this group. Work done to discourage smoking has been limited in its scope, and the centre's development plan acknowledges the need for more to be done to encourage mothers of newborn babies to breastfeed.

The centre's capacity to improve is satisfactory. Governance by the local authority is

good. There is also an advisory board, but parental representation on this is patchy. Staff strive to make sure that all within the reach have access to the services provided, and that minority groups' needs are identified and met. Although the centre celebrates a variety of cultural festivals and ensures that resources reflect cultural diversity, its promotion of an awareness of cultural diversity is no better than satisfactory.

Self-evaluation is accurate and identifies areas of strength as well as most aspects in need of improvement. The latter are built into plans for development and training is provided to make sure that staff have the necessary skills to meet the needs of users. The use of data to identify the impact that the centre's work has on users' lives is developing satisfactorily. Data collection is at too early a stage for the centre to be able to say whether there is an improving trend in all outcome areas. Although staff regularly seek the views of parents and carers, formally and informally, evaluations completed are too general and do not always yield sufficient information about the impact of activities on outcomes. The centre has not established a means of capturing children's views. There is also statistical information available that is not analysed systematically to evaluate the centre's provision.

## **What does the centre need to do to improve further?**

### **Recommendations for further improvement**

- Improve the effectiveness of self-evaluation by:
  - involving staff and parents in identifying the impact of the activities provided
  - establishing ways of obtaining feedback from children
  - making better use of the data that the centre has to analyse outcomes
  - collecting similar sets of data each year to establish whether there is an improving trend.
- Provide further opportunities for encouraging:
  - smoking cessation and the initiation of breastfeeding
  - awareness of cultural diversity
  - the involvement of fathers and male carers
  - the participation of parents and carers as members of the advisory board
  - users' awareness of achievements, by routinely celebrating these.

## **How good are outcomes for users?**

<b>3</b>
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Since the establishment of a dental clinic on one of the centre's sites, the figure for consultations amongst the under-fives has improved greatly. A very high proportion of children have been immunised. The centre successfully contributes to low child obesity in the reach. Children are encouraged to eat a healthy snack and drink milk or water at sessions such as the 'Peers Early Education Programme' (PEEP), and the routine of washing their hands before snack-time is well established. Through outreach work, staff have successfully encouraged some families to make their

homes 'smoke-free', but the centre did not follow up those who attended an event at the centre designed to discourage smoking, and so does not know how successful this was. Where mothers start breastfeeding, a good percentage sustain this for six to eight weeks. However, proportions that start breastfeeding are relatively low, and this is recognised as a development priority. Considerable support is given to families who experience problems, and case studies show some significant successes in dealing with difficulties such as depression. Family 'togetherness' and healthy living are successfully encouraged through activities such as 'forest school', sports day and 'Big Health Day'.

Comprehensive risk assessments ensure that the centre, activities and trips are safe. Children are well supervised by staff and parents and they behave well when at the centre. Outreach services include checks on the safety in the home, such as fire safety and, where there is a need for additional equipment, the centre supports users in acquiring this. Users readily share their concerns with staff, and this increases their sense of well-being. Vulnerable families have their needs identified through the Common Assessment Framework and regular reviews ensure that emerging issues are promptly addressed. The centre is successfully increasing the proportion of assessments which are carried out under the Common Assessment Framework. Staff are well trained in child protection matters and there is a low proportion of children who have child protection plans. Where these are in place, good multi-agency working secures good support for children.

Staff readily refer users to additional external agencies for professional help. In response to the identified needs of children with speech and language difficulties, the centre has employed a speech and language therapist for a day each week. Although staff report a significant impact on children's skills as a result of this, a full evaluation was not available at the time of the inspection. Targeted support for a group of two-year-old children, aimed at improving their readiness for nursery settings, has been beneficial, and the centre is successfully contributing to improving the knowledge and skills of children by the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage. However, in the centre's reach, the proportion that score 78 points by the end of reception is still very low.

Adult users increase their skills, confidence and self-esteem through courses designed to help them manage children's behaviour and support their learning and development. They also gain accreditation and qualifications, and increase their leisure interests. However, there is limited success in gaining employment. Outreach support is effective in equipping adults to deal with housing and financial matters, such as acquiring benefits and resolving debt problems.

The centre has successfully encouraged some users to become volunteers. When attending the centre, children behave well and adults get on well together; several said that they appreciate the opportunities to socialise. There is a satisfactory range of ways in which users views are sought, for instance, they write their comments on 'leaves' and place these on a display of a 'tree'. However, the 'Parents' Forum' has

ceased to operate, and parental representation on the advisory board is occasional. In response, a 'Chill and Chat' session has been established and views expressed here are fed into the advisory board and they take account of these. A development worker has recently looked at ways of engaging fathers and male carers, but strategies have not yet been fully implemented and there is little sustained involvement of this group.

*These are the grades for the outcomes for users*

<b>The extent to which children, including those from vulnerable groups, are physically, mentally and emotionally healthy and families have healthy lifestyles</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which children are safe and protected, their welfare concerns are identified and appropriate steps taken to address them</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which all users enjoy and achieve educationally and in their personal and social development</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The extent to which children engage in positive behaviour and develop positive relationships and users contribute to decision-making and governance of the centre</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The extent to which children are developing skills for the future and parents are developing economic stability and independence including access to training</b>	<b>3</b>

## How good is the provision?

**3**

The centre's staff assess accurately the needs of users within their reach, using data made available by the local authority and information provided by other professionals, such as health visitors. There is rapidly increasing use of the Common Assessment Framework as a means for assessing needs as well as other formal tools such as a 'strengths and difficulties' questionnaire. Training provided by the speech and language therapist has given staff additional skills in identifying those children who have communication difficulties. The planning of activities is good and clearly identifies the outcomes to be promoted. However, evaluation of how well these outcomes have been developed during activities is not always sufficiently clear and staff do not routinely identify successes and celebrate these, through photographic records and displays, for instance.

Provision is also determined by users' preferences, and this results in a good deal of the centre's work taking place in families' homes. Here, support is tailored to the particular needs of each family, and emerging needs are identified and met. There has been some success in encouraging those who have received outreach support to come and join in with group activities at the centre, and participation rates are improving, although there are times when the centre's accommodation is not fully utilised.

Activities provided at the centre are of generally good quality. For example, the 'Peers Early Education Programme' sessions are led and resourced well; parents and carers learn how to help children develop skills in an enjoyable way, such as using songs to help children learn the names of parts of the body. The presence of two adults means that children can enjoy playing in a soft-play area while mothers engage in discussions about children's learning. Children select from the toys and activities available and join in with adult-led activities, such as 'posting' colourful items into differently shaped openings in boxes. Parenting courses increase parents' and carers' self-esteem confidence and enjoyment, as well as giving them new skills.

There is strong ongoing support for families in crisis, and users say that the centre responds quickly to their requests for help. There is plenty of information on display in the centres, such as pamphlets on a wide range of matters from contraception to weaning, and posters providing information on services such as the Citizens' Advice Bureau. Informal advice is also given, such as about suitable snacks for children to eat between meals, and parents and carers readily ask staff for guidance. Advice and support for workless adults has diminished recently with a reduction in the coverage provided by advisers from Jobcentre Plus. As a result, courses such as 'Back to Work' are no longer provided.

*These are the grades for the quality of provision*

<b>The effectiveness of the assessment of the needs of children, parents and other users</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which the centre promotes purposeful learning, development and enjoyment for all users</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The extent to which the range of services, activities and opportunities meet the needs of users and the wider community</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The quality of care, guidance and support offered to users within the centre and the wider community</b>	<b>2</b>

## **How effective are the leadership and management?**

**3**

Good safeguarding arrangements include rigorous checks on staff prior to employment, and the recording of these exceeds requirements. Staff are well trained in all aspects of child protection, with several having had additional training on the particular considerations of children with disabilities. Risks are carefully assessed, and suitable safeguards put in place to minimise danger, although this process does not yet involve users. Arrangements for fire safety are good, and evacuation procedures clearly understood by all.

The centre meets its duties in relation to equality and diversity. The centre's staff are proactive when it comes to engaging minority groups. For instance, the centre links with a group of local agencies that work with the Travellers' Education Team, as well

as with representatives of the travelling community, to increase engagement of this group. Interpreters are used to ensure access for all, for deaf users who use British sign language, for example. Although staff listen and respond to users' comments, arrangements and timings of sessions are not always such that the participation of all groups is maximised. For instance, there is not a Saturday session for working parents and carers.

The local authority holds the head of centre to account through target setting, review, first-hand visits and audits, as well as an annual conversation. The advisory board fulfils its role adequately, providing professional guidance about needs in the reach, and getting involved in planning and evaluation of developments. However, parental representation on this is sporadic. The arrangements for the supervision of staff are well established, and integrated effectively with case reviews.

Targets set by the centre are fairly ambitious, and staff are aware of the centre's priorities. Roles and responsibilities are clear and morale is good, with staff reporting that they feel part of a team and well supported when their work is difficult. The centre is steadily building an effective team, and the accommodation is managed well to provide a safe and welcoming environment for users. At present, the impact of the work done is satisfactory rather than good, and so value for money is satisfactory.

*These are the grades for leadership and management*

<b>The extent to which governance, accountability, professional supervision and day to day management arrangements are clear and understood</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which ambitious targets drive improvement, provision is integrated and there are high expectations for users and the wider community</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The extent to which resources are used and managed efficiently and effectively to meet the needs of users and the wider community</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The extent to which equality is promoted and diversity celebrated, illegal or unlawful discrimination is tackled and the centre fulfils its statutory duties</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The effectiveness of the centre's policy, procedures and work with key agencies in safeguarding children and, where applicable, vulnerable adults</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which evaluation is used to shape and improve services and activities</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The extent to which partnerships with other agencies ensure the integrated delivery of the range of services the centre has been commissioned to provide</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>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</b>	<b>3</b>



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

Not applicable

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## Summary for centre users

We inspected the Langwith Junction Children's Centre on 2-3 February 2011. We judged the centre as satisfactory overall.

Those of you who spoke to us when we visited both sites were positive about your experiences there. Typically, you said that the centre is a welcoming place, staff listen to you, and you are treated as individuals. Thank you for sharing your views with us, we found your comments helpful.

There are certain things that are going well at the centre. The work being done is leading to good improvements in the way that children and adults lead healthy lifestyles. For example, almost all young children in the area are immunised and there is a high uptake of dental checks. Staff work closely in partnership with adults from the health service, as well as other agencies, to make sure that children are healthy and well-protected. The centre is a welcoming and safe environment too. Staff are all checked before they can work at the centre, and they are well trained in how to make sure that children and adults are kept safe while they are there or in their own homes. The arrangements for fire safety are good too. Altogether, we found that children, parents and carers are well cared for, guided and supported.

Quite a lot of the work that staff do goes on in your own homes and this is well suited to the needs of many of you. It means that you receive a package of support that is very closely matched to what you need. We heard how many have had support like this for some length of time, and have been helped by many different agencies. Several who started with help at home now come to the sessions that are put on at the centres, and enjoy the chance to socialise at these events.

The centre is fairly successful in encouraging you to contribute yourselves; some have become volunteers, for instance. We found that parents, carers and children all enjoy the activities a great deal. Children are being prepared for starting at nursery, and adults are given the support they need to improve their qualifications and leisure skills. We heard also that parents who have attended courses to help them develop better skills have become more confident about parenting.

The activities that are provided at the centres are well planned and of good quality. The range of things provided is adequate. The staff know you well as individuals and they find out well what your needs are. This is particularly strong where the detailed assessments called CAFs (CAF is short for Common Assessment Framework) are used. At the end of some sessions or courses there is a celebration of what each child or adult has achieved.

The local authority does a good job of checking on the work of the centre. The arrangements for finding out how well staff are doing their jobs are clear and everyone understands how they can help make improvements. Staff are well trained, and they work well as a team. They enjoy their work and support one another.

We have identified several ways in which the centre could improve. When staff are finding out how well a session or course has gone, they will ask you to say how it has made a difference to you. Children should also have a chance to say or show what they like and what they do not. The staff have quite a lot of information that needs to be looked at more closely to find out what is going well and what needs to improve. They are going to look at similar things each year so that they can see whether these are improving each year.

The centre is going to do more to encourage parents and carers to stop smoking, new mothers to take up breastfeeding, and fathers and male carers to take part in centre activities. Staff are going to make sure that there are good opportunities for you to learn about all the different cultures and customs in the United Kingdom. They will make sure that you all know what you achieve and this will be celebrated. Staff will encourage more of you to become part of the advisory board so that you make suggestions and have an influence on what it provides in future.

The full report is available from your centre or on our website [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk).