

Inspection report for Winterton Children's Centre

Local authority	North Lincolnshire Council
Inspection number	366438
Inspection dates	10–11 February 2011
Reporting inspector	Joan Cawdron

Centre governance	North Lincolnshire Council
Centre leader	Mr Steve Williams
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected
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Linked school if applicable	Winterton Infants School URN 23629A
Linked early years and childcare, if applicable	Not applicable

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

Introduction

The inspection addresses the centre's contribution to:

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

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

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

The inspectors held meetings with a range of users, staff, partners, local headteachers and representatives from the advisory board and the local authority.

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

Information about the centre

Winterton Children's Centre is a phase two children's centre established in 2007 in a converted classroom and a small extension in Winterton Church of England Primary School. It is located in the centre of Winterton close to the library and a pre-school facility. The centre serves the geographical area of Winterton village and the surrounding villages of Burton upon Stather, Flixborough, Alkborough and Winteringham. It is a large rural area with Winterton and Burton upon Stather accounting for more than two thirds of the ward's population.

The centre is based in an area of concentrated need, identified as being in the national top 30% most deprived areas. It has one of the highest concentrations of social-rented households in North Lincolnshire, as well as high concentrations of lone-parent households and households with dependent children (2001 Census). This area has a high concentration of people claiming workless benefits. Families in this group tend to have low incomes and live in an area of low-rise social rented housing, characterised by high levels of crime and anti-social behaviour, low levels of education attainment, and poor health. There is a small ethnic minority community.

It provides the offer for phase two centres. The centre delivers integrated services from one main location and supports dispersed provision from several venues in the area. The centre has been adapted to meet the needs of families and those with disabilities. Within the reach area, there are high levels of obesity in children and a high incidence of smoking during pregnancy.

The local authority provides governance for the centre. There is also a neighbourhood advisory group made up of parents and representatives of local organisations. This group is responsible for providing advice and assistance for the purpose of supporting the effective operation of the centre to meet the needs of the community. The centre is managed by a centre manager who also manages two other children’s centres and co-ordinates provision across the reach area.

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

Winterton Children’s Centre provides good services for young children and their families. It builds effective partnerships with a wide range of agencies to meet needs, especially of the more vulnerable families. It also promotes the learning, development and enjoyment of all it’s users well.

Adult users are enthusiastic about developing healthier lifestyles for their families. The focus on healthy eating is starting to influence the children as they are provided with more opportunities to choose healthy snacks. Users feel safe in the centre, and most feel safe at home as a result of the centre’s work.

Centre staff know the families well and liaise closely across their professional roles to work in the best interests of the families and children. The centre provides good support through access to specific courses for adults, strongly focused on building confidence. Progression on to programmes such as literacy and numeracy is good. Adults develop well through these learning programmes because courses are well-taught and very closely matched to their needs.

Adults and children show enjoyment of everything the centre offers, especially through the good range of opportunities to play, learn and have fun together. Interventions organised by the children’s centre teacher, who is shared between the infant school nursery and the children’s centre, have helped children to settle well in

the Early Years Foundation Stage in the linked schools, through improved levels of confidence and readiness to share and learn.

The headteacher of the infant school and the neighbourhood advisory board provide strong support and are working effectively with the centre manager to instigate change. Under the committed leadership of the local authority's integrated services manager, the management team in the centre and all the staff work very well and flexibly together as a team

The centre provides good value for money. Its highly-effective leadership and knowledge of the needs of the area through dialogue with users in the community give it good capacity to improve further. Safeguarding meets requirements well. Staff are fully trained and are vigilant in recognising signs of abuse, and all relevant checks on staff, other agencies and volunteers are recorded.

The centre has evaluated its activities both formally through questionnaires and through face-to-face discussions with all stakeholders. Planned actions are not always sufficiently specific or measurable and this limits the extent to which the impact of provision can be evaluated.

The centre promotes equality and diversity well and staff take steps quickly if any discrimination is identified. Diversity is celebrated through different faith festivals. Good progress has been made in preparing children through the transition stages into nursery and foundation year at school.

What does the centre need to do to improve further?

Recommendations for further improvement

- Ensure planned actions for improvement are specific and measurable, enabling centre leaders to evaluate the impact of provision more robustly.

How good are outcomes for users?

2

Good support is provided for families in healthy eating through training programmes discussions, posters and family tea time sessions to model positive approaches to eating together. Families develop good table manners and discuss healthy options. Children are involved in the preparation of the food supporting knowledge development of the range of healthy options and the fun aspect to preparing food. Parents clearly appreciate this support, a typical comment being 'I am so pleased to have these sessions running in our village'. Health issues are discussed ensuring fast and coherent support provided for families. Health visitors and midwives know and understand the needs of their families and communicate well with other services when needed. Parents commented on the 'nice and relaxed environment'. Fathers

who brought their babies to clinic were also very relaxed. Some sessions are specifically aimed at keeping children healthy and supporting parents' understanding of how to keep themselves and their children healthy for example, 'wiggle and giggle', and physical and outdoor play sessions. Vulnerable families are fully integrated into all the provision provided by the centre. Users have a wide range of programmes that can support this development and take up rates are increasing. Breastfeeding is supported by centre staff, but drop-off rates are high and developments for better peer support are being considered. Weaning programmes support better diet, and help targeted at fussy eaters assist in this development. Health promotion information is good and a range of leaflets on dental hygiene, healthy eating, birth control and sexual health is prominently displayed.

The centre is very sensitive to the needs of vulnerable families and provides a good safe and welcoming environment. Safe working practices are adopted. Robust Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) checks are in place and there is good modelling of communication skills by staff along with tailored support for families. A good range of safety advice is provided to families and the centre enables access to safety equipment at reduced prices for families in need. Risk assessments and safe practices are adopted when working in other locations. Children accessing provision are well-supported through safeguarding procedures and safe working practices. Parents are developing their knowledge to help them ensure the safety of their children and those children from other families with whom they come into contact. Communication across the professional teams is highly effective in supporting families with complex needs. Staff have good knowledge of the centre's policies and procedures and demonstrate effective use of the Common Assessment Framework system.

Good links are well-established with local schools, where activities take place for families, school-age children and children aged five and under. Positive behaviours are observed through activities supported by centre staff. Staff encourage parents to observe their children and to support their communication skills. Good developments for children who have engaged with the children's centre are commented on by school staff in terms of personal and social skills, confidence building, language and communication. Centre staff engage well with families in developing strategies to manage behaviour while enjoying themselves. Creative fun activities are used to stimulate children. A gardening project in one school engaged whole families and the community in working together to create a beautiful garden in school. Sensory elements were included in the garden through smells, touch and sounds. Children developed further learning through calculations, measurement and reading instructions. They provide feedback on their engagement through conversation and art. Confidence and communication skills are developing to a good level. Children are confident around adults and enjoy exploring and using books, all of which provide skills for the future. Staff interventions pick up on spontaneous learning opportunities. Some adults take up training opportunities to develop their confidence leading to better outcomes for their children. Programmes are delivered to improve speech and language using well-known TV characters and parents are given story books to use with their children. One parent commented that without this help

problems would not have been identified until their child started school.

Good progress is being made in engaging hard-to-reach families. Parents describe the support provided as being a 'life saver'; they commented that this contact has given them confidence to come out and meet other people.

Positive behaviours are demonstrated through the wide range of activities. Relationships are good through these activities and engagement of parents in working with centre staff and their children. Views are sought to influence further development, both formally through parent forum meetings and one-to-one dialogue with users. This communication provides a focus for future activities, taking views into consideration in delivering more of the activities that parents particularly value and changing others where needed. The centre is a focal point within the community providing a range of professional services such as health visitor checks on children's development and midwifery services engaging parents prior to birth.

Welfare advice is provided where needed, with access to specialist knowledge and information to meet families' individual needs. This can be accessed through home visits, where support and encouragement for getting back into work is also provided. Information is located in the centre and local library to signpost families in need who may not self-disclose. Training to increase employability skills is available and there is some evidence of uptake across the area. One parent commented that she had declined help in the first instance as she had a lot of health professional appointments and support, but the centre just kept in touch in the background and were there for her when she felt more able to receive their help.

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

Staff understand users' needs well because of sensitive personal contact and local information. Contact with midwives, health visitors and family support workers gives good support for users who lack confidence. Staff know their families well and are able to provide targeted support where needed. Provision is organised across the area with families transported to other venues to access different services. Support workers play a key role in helping families with children with special educational needs, those whose safety may be at risk as a result of domestic violence and those who for a variety of reasons feel isolated. Assessment of needs and support are tailored for new parents who themselves have special educational needs, in preparing for birth and to ensure contact information is prominent in case of need.

All interventions are child-centred. Staff have a strong focus on supporting families in the best interests of the children. Learning and development are supported through a range of activities, such as baby massage, 'wriggle and giggle', and stay and play. These activities offer many opportunities for support to be provided to help parents understand the importance of their child's development. Families enjoy all the activities and would like more. Feedback from local schools includes comments on the higher levels of confidence and abilities of children who have accessed learning and development activities through the centre. School staff and families would welcome additional activities to ensure momentum is maintained in these improvements. Planning for delivery of activities and services is effective and focuses on how to support the wide ranging needs of this dispersed rural community. Activities are delivered in a range of environments. Centre staff meet families in both statutory and voluntary provision. Effective partnership working ensures provision in most villages. Childminder groups meet regularly, supported both by staff from central local authority services providing co-ordination and guidance, as well as by the centre manager and staff team. Professional updating sessions, particularly directed towards safeguarding as well as guidance on activities that support learning and development, are provided to those working in children's services across the area.

Information on a wide range of topics is available through individual support and leaflets. These include information about dental health, safety in the home, signposting to local health professionals for smoking cessation support and information on work opportunities that are available locally. Information relating to drug and alcohol misuse is less prominent.

Staff take good care of children and adults who attend the centre's activities. Additional support was provided through the bad weather this winter, with staff making contact with the most vulnerable families to ensure they were safe and to provide staple foods where needed. Visits on foot were made to support families who were isolated.

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

Governance and accountability arrangements are clear and understood. There are good and explicit links between strategic planning and service provision. Service delivery is effectively managed to ensure best support is targeted towards those in need. Partnership working is highly effective with all partners contributing to provision through a clear understanding of how each provider will support meeting the needs of the users.

The centre is led and managed effectively. Senior leaders set the tone, communicate high expectations and are determined to ensure that the centre is effective in improving the lives of all users. Strong multi-agency working is a feature and staff are supported through regular one-to-one supervisions and daily contact with the centre manager. The centre manager has responsibility for two other children's centres as well as for the co-ordination of outreach provision and is well-respected across the patch. The centre manager is a positive leader who manages the multi-disciplinary staff team well, leading by example, and establishes good working relationships with all those who can provide a service.

Leadership from the local authority promotes high aspirational targets for the provision to meet the needs of the whole community. Partnership working ensures integrated service delivery, avoiding too much duplication of support for families. Staff are passionate about the centre and its community. This effective cross-functional team working is highly energetic and enthusiastic, empowering staff to ensure that all children, parents and carers, regardless of differences, achieve and have the same access to a range of experiences.

Resources are used very effectively in supporting families; for example, play equipment is transported to local schools where 'stay and play' activities meet the needs of the dispersed community. Transport is available to take families to where activities might be taking place in other venues across the area. Following the success of the project on developing a garden in a local school, parents' confidence

has increased and they are now taking on the role of continuing management of the garden. Discussions are taking place to plan the gardening calendar for this year. The environments are all risk-assessed and are welcoming and safe wherever they are located.

Inclusivity is a strong feature of the work of the centre. Aspects of equality and diversity are built in to planning for learning. Posters provide information of different ethnic groups and countries are shown on maps. Dolls and other toys are available to display a range of ethnic origins. Any discrimination for whatever reason is tackled effectively and staff promote high standards of communication with all families.

The centre has good arrangements for safeguarding all users. Safeguarding has a high priority and all staff are CRB checked. All staff are aware of the comprehensive range of policies and procedures to support their work in the centre and are vigilant in identifying and responding to any potential dangers that users may encounter. Staff are effective in ensuring the on-going safety, emotional health and well-being of children and their families. All staff understand their duty to safeguard every child. The centre has a strong focus on early interventions to avoid crisis situations. Childcare providers and workers have continual access to training and many are undertaking further training to develop their skills and knowledge for the benefit of the centre. Recruitment policies and guidance are provided by the local authority. Inductions are well-structured, providing opportunities for new staff to be guided through the policies.

Evaluation is an on going process based on case studies, users' response to provision and input from staff, parents, advisory group and local headteachers. Many different approaches have been used to gain experience and to identify those activities that consistently meet the needs of users. The centre's development plan sets out the main priorities for action, reflecting leaders' clear understanding of aspects which require improvement. However, the targets for improvement are too vague. They do not specify precisely what the centre is seeking to achieve, which prevents them from making accurate evaluations of the impact of work. Nevertheless, staff have a good understanding of the strengths in provision and where further improvements can be made.

Partnership working is highly effective. The Winterton Centre is small and therefore activities with children aged two plus are limited through the size of the accommodation. Services are well-integrated, delivering cohesive provision across the area. The centre's partnership working with local schools is highly-valued by the families and the school staff. Discussions take place on what is needed and how best to meet these needs. Work with local health professionals ensures support is well co-ordinated to meet individual needs. Families are encouraged to take part in sessions to develop their parenting skills and to create better bonds with their newborn babies.

Users are provided with opportunities to contribute to the development of services to meet their needs, through both formal and informal feedback. The centre is at the

heart of working towards meeting the needs of those hard-to reach-families. They are effectively supported in this challenging task through the provision of health care services in the centre and good relationships with all centre staff.

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

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 Winterton Children's centre on 10 and 11 February, 2011. We judged the centre as good overall.

During our visit, we talked with a number of you and met the professionals who work within the centre. Thank you to those of you who contributed to the inspection. We visited some of the sessions and looked at the centre's documents. We found that the centre's partnerships with other settings and services are very positive.

Those of you who spoke to us said that you feel the centre is 'very supportive and helpful and staff give you good advice'. Most importantly, you said it helps improve your lives, particularly those of you who are facing difficult challenges. You told us how much you have gained from some of the centre's activities and how effective these are in developing your confidence and improving your relationships with your children. We also found that the centre and its professional partners are working very well to bring together advice about health, education, jobs and money.

Particularly effective are the strong links between the centre, its linked schools and other early years providers. The centre staff know you very well and work closely with other services to meet your needs. You say this is very helpful. You also told us how keen you are to develop healthier lifestyles for your families. Headteachers of the three local schools said that children who have participated in activities provided by the centre are confident and are developing well in the early days at school. You also said that you feel very safe in the centre and appreciate the help of staff to stay safe at home.

We saw how much you and your children enjoy everything the centre offers, especially the excellent opportunities to play, learn and have fun together. As one of you said, 'my child likes coming to play and see her friends'. We found that the work of the children's centre teachers is making a great difference to your children's communication and language skills, especially their knowledge of letters and sounds. To develop further the work of the centre we have asked them to improve the planning of actions to be more specific and measurable so that the centre staff and you can better measure the impact of the provision.

We would like to thank everyone who came to speak with us. It was a privilege to be able to talk with you. Your honest and open discussions with us helped us immensely during the inspection. We thoroughly enjoyed spending time at your centre and we wish you and your families all the best for the future.

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