

Inspection report for Gorton North Sure Start Children's Centre

Local authority	Manchester
Inspection number	365784
Inspection dates	10–11 February 2011
Reporting inspector	Berni Ryan

Centre governance	Local Authority
Centre leader	Jayne Haigh
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected
Centre address	St James Site, Stelling Street, Gorton, Manchester, M18 8LW
Telephone number	0161 245 7001
Fax number	Not applicable
Email address	j.haigh@manchester.gov.uk

Linked school if applicable	St James Church of England Primary School
Linked early years and childcare, if applicable	The Manchester College Day Nursery

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 inspector and one early years inspector.

The inspectors held meetings with the senior leadership team, representatives from the local authority, members of the advisory board, health visitors, frontline workers, parents and carers.

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

Information about the centre

Gorton North Sure Start Children's Centre was designated in March 2008 as part of the Manchester City Council phase two programme. It has provided the full core offer since 2009 and serves an area among the 30% most disadvantaged in the country. The centre is situated next to St James' Primary School. The centre is the main hub for Gorton North and has satellite sites which are: The Angels, Debdale Park and Gorton Library. Day care is provided at The Manchester College Day Nursery, Openshaw. Gorton North is ranked the fifth most deprived ward in Manchester and 17th in Manchester in terms of income deprivation affecting young children. Three hundred and ten children aged from birth to four are living in households dependent on workless benefits.

Data shows that Gorton North has proportionally more lone parents than Manchester as a whole, with 24.6% of all claimants compared to 5% for Manchester. This means on average there are 300 lone parents in Gorton North. Most families are of White British heritage with a small proportion from minority ethnic groups, for example Indian, Chinese, and Latvian Roma Travellers.

Children enter early years provision with skills below those expected for their age, particularly for some children in their personal and social development and language

skills. The centre works with a wide variety of agencies. Governance is provided by the local authority in conjunction with an advisory group.

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 centre plays an effective role in improving the lives of young children and their parents. The centre is welcoming, warm and calm and families enjoy the stress-free activities. All service users receive good-quality tailored support and have good opportunities to learn and develop. This improves the quality of their lives. An overwhelming majority speaks highly of the centre, including a young mother who said that the centre offered her ‘a new lease of life’.

The centre’s management team and advisory group are effective and ambitious for the centre and its users. Since it opened in 2008, they have developed a range of provision leading to Every Child Matters outcomes that are at least good. Managers have also built strong relationships with external agencies which contribute to the centre's success. Staff have a clear understanding of the centre's strengths, of its targets and of the impact the centre has on the lives of the wider community. Robust plans for action are in place and are monitored regularly. These factors give the centre good capacity for further improvement. The centre uses all available national and local performance data effectively to identify priorities. For example, the centre leader recognises a need to increase the number of mothers breastfeeding and to offer support in smoking cessation to more parents.

Courses at the centre are well-attended and have high success and completion rates. This is improving adults’ confidence and skills for the future well. Service users are also signposted appropriately, via Jobcentre Plus and Manchester Adult Education Service, to specific and generic courses aimed at improving their employment opportunities. However, the success of the referrals to Jobcentre Plus is not recorded, so the centre is unable to evaluate the impact of its support in helping users to move into employment in the longer term. A small percentage of users who participate with Manchester Adult Education Service enters employment. Users' views

are highly regarded and taken into account to shape services; any gaps identified by user surveys are acted upon. Although some parents attend the advisory group by invitation, there are no permanent places for parents. This places some limitations on their opportunity to contribute at a more strategic level. The centre has identified this as an area for action in the next couple of months.

The centre is very inclusive in all its work. It offers helpful therapy and support courses for emotional well-being and children with special educational needs and/or disabilities are supported well. All the sessions offered are used as an opportunity to engage more users. This is done weekly through birth registration days, baby massage sessions and stay and play. These sessions provide opportunities for the early intervention team to make contact with parents and use their influence to engage them in activities. A range of voluntary and private sector providers is commissioned by the local authority, enabling the centre to meet the full core offer well. All staff and external services routinely use the Common Assessment Framework (CAF) processes to ensure a co-ordinated response to the needs of vulnerable families.

Safeguarding is a key priority for the centre and practice is exemplary. All staff, partners and commissioned service workers at the centre rightly view the safety and well-being of users and their families as their prime success. As a result, the extent to which users feel safe is outstanding. All necessary checks are made, audits of health and safety arrangements are completed regularly and robust policies and procedures are in place. The centre has clear policies to promote equality and diversity and all staff are aware of these. Diversity and culture are celebrated well through a good range of activities and experiences for users. Discussions with fathers show that they have been welcomed and supported in the centre with specifically-arranged sessions. The parents' forum gives the centre leader feedback on courses that have been well-received and this information is used when planning the courses for each term. Good examples are evident of the actions taken by the centre to improve the welfare of users and in helping them to overcome multiple barriers and to improve their quality of life.

What does the centre need to do to improve further?

Recommendations for further improvement

- Increase the number of mothers who are breastfeeding in line with the national indicators and boost the number of parents attending the smoking cessation sessions.
- Increase parental representation on the advisory group.
- Monitor the impact of the centre's work with Jobcentre Plus and Manchester Adult Education Service in order to identify whether there is an increase in the number of users entering employment.

How good are outcomes for users?

2

The centre is effective in promoting healthy outcomes through its guidance, activities and strong links with other agencies. Children at the centre are provided with well-balanced healthy meals and snacks. Parents and children are focused well on healthy eating, understanding that it can reduce the incidence of tooth decay and obesity, which are identified as above the national average for the reach area. Children's emotional health is good as they are supported well by dedicated support workers who know them well and provide additional support when needed. However, the number of mothers breastfeeding is low as is that of parents attending the smoking cessation sessions.

Children make good progress educationally and personally. For example, skills, knowledge and understanding of those entering the Early Years Foundation Stage has risen since the centre opened. In addition, children who initially have poor communication skills, especially those with speech and language problems, make good progress as a result of effective specialist help. Children enjoy using the centre's facilities and they are very well-behaved. Parent users also do well. Sixty-seven adults participated in adult learning courses and their success rate was 95%, with some users gaining one or more accredited qualifications. Five of these adults went into employment. The centre recognises the need to further evaluate its work in helping users into employment.

Relationships are trusting and enable very effective early intervention to ensure that children are very safe and that any concerns are addressed rapidly. Case studies show that outreach workers, community nurses, and midwives have made a difference within the community to help prevent domestic violence and to bring about improvements to the lives of children and parents and carers. The CAF is used effectively by all centre workers and helps to co-ordinate support for children and to keep them safe, especially those most at risk.

Users readily communicate their views about the services offered to them by the centre, through evaluations, questionnaires and the parents' forum, and in this way they influence the activities on offer. However, the lack of an official presence by parents on the advisory group places some limits on the opportunities for them to influence improvements and change.

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	1
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 range of services offered by the centre meets the specific needs of users well. The environment is very safe and secure and children's well-being is given the utmost priority. There are increasing opportunities for parents and children to play and learn together and these are having a positive impact on the wider community. For example, sessions available in term time in English for those who are speakers of other languages are having a positive impact on families as they are able to register with a GP, access an NHS dentist and claim benefits.

The centre ensures that appropriate assessment of needs is a high priority. CAF training is given to all frontline workers and is used effectively. CAF procedures are followed carefully and engage a variety of professionals through frequent meetings and reviews. This is helping to ensure that children receive the support they need. The centre-based qualified teacher and the speech and language therapist act as co-ordinators for frontline staff and parents. They observe children at play and complete assessments to inform them of progress and emerging issues. Clear records of children's learning ensure that progress is tracked effectively and that children make good progress from their starting points in developing skills for the future. The transition to school is successful for children attending the centre because of its close links with the schools that children move on to.

The centre is effective at finding ways to support individual children and families, offering rapid response when help is requested or identified. Outreach workers give sustained support to families who are hard to reach, or to those who, for whatever reason, find coming to the centre difficult. Families who are seeking asylum are supported through the process for this by the centre and through its work with the Immigration Forum. The promotion of users' purposeful learning, development and enjoyment is consistent across all the sites. Appropriate guidance and support to promote users' health and well-being are provided through flyers, leaflets and posters located in surgeries, health clinics and community halls. However, the centre's work is not yet having a full impact on users' health and progress into employment.

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

Leaders and managers have developed the centre's services effectively since it opened. The local authority has supported the head of centre well, offering clear and strategic guidance. The centre is popular with its users and there is good use of research, user feedback questionnaires and evaluation to ensure the centre provides good quality services. The advisory group has been pro-active in overseeing the process of collating information from the parents, centre managers and staff and from focus groups and case studies. Based on this information, the advisory group agrees and produces an accurate self-evaluation report. The resultant development plan is then monitored effectively at advisory group meetings.

The centre has clear management and staffing structures and the senior leadership team work well together to communicate their high expectations and to promote the strong ethos, evident throughout the centre. They also give good support and effective guidance to staff and as a result, all staff feel valued. Staff work as an effective team and show a clear commitment to improving services in order to reach more families, including fathers. The senior leadership team uses available resources and data to recognise strengths and identify gaps in services in order to increase the centre's effectiveness. Good partnerships with other services enable the centre to provide relevant and cohesive provision and to ensure support is targeted towards families in the community who are vulnerable or hard to reach. This secures services which are accessible to all.

The centre provides good value for money because outcomes are good. Resources are used effectively and staff are deployed well to ensure that provision is planned well to meet users' needs. Good use is made of the limited centre space and of the satellite centres.

Safety is of the highest priority and procedures and policies are outstanding. Appropriate recruitment and vetting checks are made on centre staff, commissioned services staff, external agency staff and services that are in contact with the centre. Senior staff have undertaken enhanced training in child protection and induction procedures for staff in safeguarding are comprehensive. The 'team around the child' approach ensures that a wide range of professionals work together well to safeguard and protect children and families. Discussions with parents provide evidence that they are well-informed of the centre policy on protecting children and sharing information with other relevant agencies.

The centre brokers effective support for children with special educational needs and/or disabilities. All rooms in the centre are accessible for those with disabilities. The inclusion of all children and families is fundamental to the centre's work and is demonstrated well through its work with a migrant forum. Staff are effective in ensuring that all children and parents and carers, regardless of background, aptitudes or other differences, have the same access to the range of experiences on offer and make it a genuinely inclusive centre.

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	1
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

None

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 Gorton North Sure Start Centre on 10 and 11 February 2011. We judged the centre as overall good.

Those of you we spoke to told us that the centre plays an important role in improving your lives and the children you care for. You told us it has your full confidence because it provides you with good levels of care, guidance and support. We found that the centre's arrangements to keep you and your children safe are outstanding. As a result, you and your children feel very safe.

You told us how much you enjoy the many opportunities to have fun and to play and learn with your children. Activities arranged on Saturdays for fathers are valued. Those of you we spoke to confirmed that the centre has been influential in developing your confidence as well as your social and parenting skills. After attending a course at the centre, one of you wrote 'my son came in very sad and he left a happy child'. As a result of the provision, we believe many of you have gained the skills to make changes to your lifestyles and to those of your children, particularly in eating healthier food.

As part of the inspection, we visited a number of activities, looked at the centre's documentation, and interviewed staff, the Jobcentre Plus adviser, Adult Education manager, health visitors, midwives, dental workers, outreach workers, teachers and tutors. The centre is working well with a range of partners. We found that services work well together as a team to provide help and support to families, for example, where a child has physical or emotional difficulties.

We have discussed with the centre leader, senior staff and the local authority how they can make things even better. We have asked them to continue to support you in your search for employment so that you can improve your quality of life. To do this we have asked them to review how they can receive information from Jobcentre Plus on how successful their referrals are. We have asked the centre to increase the number of mothers who breastfeed and to encourage more parents to stop smoking. We have also asked that more parents have official representation on the advisory group.

Thank you for the help you gave us when we inspected the centre. We wish you all well for the future and thank you for your help and friendliness during our inspection.

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