

Inspection report for Monks Coppenhall Children's Centre

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| Local authority | Cheshire East |
| Inspection number | 365814 |
| Inspection dates | 17-18 February, 2011 |
| Reporting inspector | Dave Ellwand |

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| Centre governance | Cheshire East Local Authority |
| Centre leader | Margaret Lamb |
| Date of previous inspection | Not previously inspected |
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| Linked school if applicable | Monks Coppenhall Primary School |
| Linked early years and childcare, if applicable | Monks Coppenhall Children's Centre 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 two additional inspectors.

The inspectors held meetings with the centre coordinator, senior leaders, front-line staff and representatives from the local authority. Discussions were also held with members of the advisory board, a wide range of partners, parents and carers, the deputy headteacher and staff from the adjacent primary school, and service users. They observed the centre's work, and looked at a range of relevant documentation, including the centre's operational plans, evaluations, key policies and safeguarding procedures.

Information about the centre

Monks Coppenhall Children's Centre is a phase two children's centre, designated in 2008, and is working to the appropriate core offer. The centre is located on the same site as Monks Coppenhall Primary School, but has separate governance. The area served by the centre includes five super output areas, which are among the 30% most economically and socially disadvantaged, but also includes areas of green belt and more affluent rural communities. The vast majority of families are of White British heritage with a small number of minority ethnic groups. The number of children from other heritages has increased over recent years, with increased numbers of families from Poland and other Eastern European countries. Unemployment in the area is well above the national average.

Most children's development on entry to early years provision is below expected levels for their age. There is a high proportion of children with delayed speech and language development.

The centre's full day-care provision was until recently provided by a private company and was inspected separately. This provider ceased to operate at the end of last year, so at the time of this inspection, Cheshire East Authority maintains an interim provision of term-time education entitlement for three and four year olds. There are

a small number of places for children on the Government’s two-year-old Pilot Scheme.

The centre offers a wide range of universal services, including information and signposting. Outreach is offered through links with primary and secondary schools and through the local childminder network. Funded places for integrated childcare and education are provided, on an individual basis as part of family support packages.

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

Monks Coppenhall Children’s Centre provides a friendly, welcoming and safe environment for all its users. There is a good quality of care and a good understanding of the locality which both run through the centre’s work in improving the lives of families in the area. Users appreciate the services and support that the centre provides and they respect the commitment and hard work of the staff in helping them. A typical view of the centre from one parent was 'I find the centre has been very good for my children, encouraging learning at all times. I find the staff very friendly and they endeavour to do their best'.

Leaders and managers have well-established and effective procedures to monitor and improve the effectiveness of the centre’s work. Very thorough procedures of review and professional supervision ensure that policies are well understood and put into practice at all levels. Strengths and weaknesses are known well and action plans are very effectively used as a basis for review of centres, projects and staff working practice.

The procedures for safeguarding and equality are of good quality and all policies are up to date and followed correctly. Users’ views are heard through frequent contacts with staff, through an effective Parents’ Forum and formal representation on the centre’s advisory board. Observations by inspectors, evaluations by the centre and

case studies all show that most of the outcomes for users and the provision offered are good and improving.

Users are kept safe and contribute to the running of the centre. They enjoy their time spent in the centre, and can identify improvements in their skills, understanding and confidence. Good relationships and behaviour were observed between children, other users and staff, and a high level of mutual respect was evident throughout the inspection. There is good support for breastfeeding, weaning, smoking cessation and healthy lifestyles. The centre works closely with family learning to provide taster sessions and some longer courses to support language, literacy and numeracy, with good guidance to further adult education and training.

The local authority provides good support and challenge for the centre. Local authority officers use regular and systematic reviews to hold the managers to account, and to further improve outcomes for users. Partnerships with the local authority and schools in the centre reach are mostly effective. However, the centre has insufficient information from local primary schools about how well the children who have passed through the centre have progressed in the Early Years Foundation Stage, especially in their speech and language development. Relationships with all partners are generally strong but the health services have not shared data on the area's issues or outcomes information with the centre. Although the issues are well understood, this slows down the development of health provision and the monitoring of outcomes from the centre's initiatives.

The centre's overall performance has improved considerably in the last two years, with more activities provided for priority groups, or targeted towards those in greatest need of the centre's services. Action to address weaknesses and develop positive relationships has been effective. The centre has coped well with significant disruption of the nursery provision, and an extensive review of all the authority's early intervention practice. Staff and partners have confidence in the future direction of the centre and its services. The advisory board identifies the work of the current centre coordinator, who is to retire shortly, as providing significant 'leadership, vision, dedication and thoroughness.'

The reach area of the centre has extended in the last year and very effective outreach work has further developed the scope of activities. The centre's self-evaluation is thorough, accurate and effective and demonstrates that the capacity to improve is good.

What does the centre need to do to improve further?

Recommendations for further improvement

- Strengthen information sharing systems between the Primary Care Trust and the children's centre, to ensure that data is reliable and linked to the areas of activity of the centre and to enable the centre to better evaluate the impact that services are making against the national indicators for health.

- Work closely with the primary schools to ensure more consistent monitoring and evaluation of children's progress through the Early Years Foundation Stage, and particularly to evaluate the outcomes of work to support children's language and speech development.

How good are outcomes for users?

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Outcomes for parents and carers are good and improving. As one parent stated, 'Without the centre and the staff here, I would find life harder to cope with.' The centre supports children and their families well, with a wide range of information to promote their health. This includes good support for healthy eating, and for particular groups, such as teenage parents, families or children with hearing impairments, parents with twins or multiple births, and those with low moods or mental health issues. The centre and its infant feeding coordinator support breast feeding initiatives, including a weekly 'baby café' and developing peer support, including users visiting other venues to promote breast feeding. Two of the centre users have gone on to related paid employment as a result of this involvement. The midwives, health visitors and other health professions have moved 95% of the health sessions from surgeries into the children's centre, and report improved attendance and fuller involvement of families. The centre also provides many less formal opportunities for parents and carers to meet a variety of health and care professionals, so as to develop better relationships, and find advice and encouragement. This is particularly successful with groups of hard-to-reach families who now attend the centre regularly. The centre also supports centre users to give up smoking, and has links with sessions for fathers at another centre.

Users value highly the safety and security they feel in the centre, and identify this as an important and positive aspect in their feedback. They trust the staff and are confident that any concerns or challenges will be appropriately addressed. The early years and family support staff are very thorough in using and checking risk assessments for all activities and venues. Home visits made by centre staff and partners promote safety in the home and offer individual support and guidance to families. The centre helps parents to gain access to national home safety schemes and ensures a good take up of safety equipment, such as smoke alarms. Family support workers at the centre provide support in cases of domestic violence and all have had training in using multi-agency systems to assess risks. Families describe how the centre acts as neutral ground in bringing together different family members and generations who will not communicate with each other and thereby helps resolve conflicts and keeps families together.

Parents can demonstrate that their children enjoy and benefit from learning, and there is satisfactory preparation for transition to primary schools. Recent changes in the nursery provision have started better delivery of the Early Years Foundation Stage within the centre, and better tracking of children's progress to link with transition, but it is still too early to see improvements in practice and outcomes. One school notes that there are very few reluctant learners from the children's centre.

There has been some improvement in language and speech development on transition noted by the nearby primary school, but there is still a widespread problem with over 50% of children in Reception classes recorded as still having slow development. There is good language support for children with hearing difficulties, including some whose families mainly speak Polish in the home. Learning experiences are generally of good quality and staff ensure children's needs and interests are incorporated into their sessions. The courses offered to adults are of good quality and the centre's case studies show that some parents go on to further training and learning. Support for families is good, and there is effective access to advice on debt, learning opportunities, employment and training.

Communication between staff and centre users is good. Children's behaviour at the centre is good, with a high level of respect and cooperation amongst all at the centre. There is positive modelling and encouragement of appropriate behaviour by staff, which is followed by parents and children and supports positive attitudes to diversity and equality. Parents describe how their views are valued and influence the planning and running of the centre and its services, and have a sense of ownership. The parents' forum is well used, and reports to the centre's advisory group, where also parents are active participants. The chair of the advisory group, who is also a parent using the centre, identifies the positive views users have of 'their centre,' where they play an active role in improving the life-chances of their children and families.

These are the grades for the outcomes for users

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| 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 | 3 |
| 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 | 3 |

How good is the provision?

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The centre plans a good range of activities across all the Every Child Matters outcomes and incorporates local priorities and the Early Years Foundation Stage. Assessment of needs and targeting of services are thorough with very good use of the Common Assessment Framework and very good sharing of information between partners, especially health visitors. Improvements in provision include a better focus

on engaging and supporting hard-to-reach and vulnerable families. Physical resources at the centre are of good quality and the recent improvements in layout demonstrate careful consideration of ways to bring centre users into a wider range of activities. The staff team is well qualified, highly motivated and well-trained, and fully evaluate all activities.

Parents say they enjoy and benefit from services and activities at the centre. Parents commented 'We are asked our opinions' and they mentioned recent changes in the nursery and crèche provision. They are able to indicate improvements even in the restricted provision at the time of inspection, and are confident of further improvements after planned reorganisation, for which they were consulted. The range of services is good, and shows careful planning and innovative use of opportunities, such as the Forest School initiative, which provides creative and stimulating outdoor activities at the centre.

The centre promotes purposeful learning satisfactorily. A range of sessions support families, including the development of play activities and modelling good parenting practices. These are well supported with outreach and home visits. As one parent commented, 'I have learned how to make treasure boxes and good learning toys out of packaging and waste materials, which has helped me and my child enjoy each other's company.' Some parents access training and learning through the centre, and one stated 'I was able to move directly to level 3 learning, because of the work at the centre being accepted as level 2.'

The quality of care for users and their children in the centre is good. There is good support and concern for users' well-being, and families report improvements in their lives after working on tailored programmes at the centre. Relationships within the centre and with the community are strong, and there is a high regard for the effective guidance provided to those within the centre's reach. 'They will get you any information you need, even relating to 16 year olds.'

These are the grades for the quality of provision

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| 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 | 3 |
| 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 at all levels have a clear view of the provision and identify areas for improvement. They share this fully with staff and partners and there is very

effective discussion of priorities or good practice, both inside the centre and with other centres in the authority. The self-evaluation reflects clarity of vision and is generally accurate. The centre's development plans address local and national priorities well, and there is good coordination with local and authority wide initiatives, so that centres can signpost users to other provision where more appropriate.

There are gaps in the data relating to local health issues, currently available for planning and monitoring progress towards targets. However, the centre works well with agency partners to find alternative ways to gather health information, for example, by close collaboration with individual health workers. Overall, the centre uses well-conducted and well-documented supervision and performance reviews, as well as consultation with partners, to enable target setting and the monitoring of progress and outcomes. These review procedures provide good evidence of the precision of the centre's planning and of its progress towards targets. There are, however, particular concerns about monitoring the impact of speech and language development initiatives in relation to children's progress in these skills when they move on to primary schools.

Overall improvement planning is good, well recorded and with consistent approaches to quality assurance. The centre staff use visits to other centres, communities, contacts with hospitals and promotions in supermarkets to identify any families who are not aware of services provided. The Common Assessment Framework is very well used, with good tracking of processes and outcomes, very effective reviews and thorough quality assurance processes. The local authority is currently implementing a new data strategy, working on protocols for better sharing of health data and is developing training for centre managers. The Children's Services Commissioner and the Children's Trust are working on providing other data which relates more precisely to the individual super output areas in the centre's reach to encourage better targeting of provision and better monitoring of progress and outcomes.

All staff have regular and well-conducted supervision and performance review, and good networking and planning meetings provide what the head of the service overseeing children's centres describes as 'effective multi-level challenging and stretching.' There are good quality professional development opportunities for staff. Staff meetings and development days are used very effectively to take each priority and policy in turn, and relate them to actual professional practice. Users' views effectively inform strategic developments and evaluations are regular and thorough. Value for money is good and reflected in the many good outcomes achieved by the centre. The centre's environment is welcoming and well-maintained.

Governance procedures are effective and the local authority provides good support and challenge for the centre. Current reviews of the authority's strategies for early intervention in supporting children and their families benefit from consultation with the centre managers and users, and regard children's centres as key to future provision of these services. The centre meets fully all safeguarding requirements, and promotes equality and diversity satisfactorily. Leaders have worked effectively to ensure children with special educational needs and/or disabilities are well served

by the centre. Community cohesion is promoted well.

These are the grades for leadership and management

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| 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 | 3 |
| The extent to which equality is promoted and diversity celebrated, illegal or unlawful discrimination is tackled and the centre fulfils its statutory duties | 3 |
| 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

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 Monks Coppenhall Children's Centre on 17 and 18 February 2011. We judged the centre as good overall.

We heard from some of you how the centre has supported your families and improved lives within the local community. You also told us how much you appreciate the friendly and approachable staff, and how you and your views are respected by the centre. The centre successfully demonstrates the work done in your community and the changes that have been made to provide a better service.

Overall, the centre is working well with a range of partners and providers, such as social care, health services, speech and language therapy and family learning. It provides effective support for children during their early years. Adults' lives are also improved through the services offered and some find opportunities for further learning and training, with some advice and guidance on employment for lone parents. The variety of courses and services provided meet a wide range of the needs of families and children in your area. 'Stay and Play,' information sessions and multiple birth groups are examples of activities which are well used and provide parents and children with good opportunities to play, explore and learn.

Managers and staff at the centre make sure all participants are safe and the care and the welcome they provide are good. The three o'clock' group and similar initiatives have brought many of you into the centre to help you find advice, information and support on many topics. Family support work and parenting courses have successfully improved family life for many with improved safety and better relationships in the home. Attendance at sessions is high and most people stay on the courses throughout their duration. You told us of the changes in the nursery and crèche provision, and of some difficulties which were experienced in the arrangements up to last year. We have been told how you have been consulted about the arrangements that are being made with a new nursery provider, and hope that it will both meet your needs and provide better support for your child in going on to primary school.

Monks Coppenhall Children's Centre is led well by the coordinator and her team. Your views are heard through your evaluations and your regular contact with staff. The informal Parents' Forum is well used, and brings your concerns, ideas and interests into the Advisory Group to influence the planning and development of the centre. You are well represented on the Advisory Group, and contribute in many ways to the smooth running and development of the centre. The local authority oversees the centre's work effectively. They challenge and support the staff well to ensure better outcomes for families in the area.

The inspectors have made the following recommendations to help improve the centre:

- Strengthen information sharing systems between the Primary Care Trust and the children's centre, to ensure that data is reliable and linked to the areas of activity of the centre, so that the centre can better evaluate the impact of its services against the national indicators for health.

- Centre managers to work more closely with the primary schools to ensure more consistent monitoring and evaluation of children's progress through the Early Years Foundation Stage, and particularly to evaluate the outcomes of work to support children's language and speech development.

Thank you for speaking with us and best wishes for the future.

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