

Inspection report for Stibbard Children's Centre

Local authority	Norfolk
Inspection number	366407
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Linked school if applicable	All Saints Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School
Linked early years and childcare, if applicable	Stibbard Children's Centre EY330737

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

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Introduction

The inspection addresses the centre's contribution to:

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

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

This inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and an early years inspector.

The inspectors held meetings with the centre manager, members of the management committee, staff, representatives from the local authority, the health service and other partner agencies. They had informal discussions with parents and children, and visited the linked early years provision.

They observed the centre's work, and looked at a range of relevant documentation including key policies, the centre's self-evaluation documents, its development plans, evaluations of services and data about people who use the centre.

Inspection judgements

Grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory and 4 is inadequate

Information about the centre

Stibbard Children's Centre was designated in March 2006. It is a small, rural, phase one children's centre providing the full core offer. It shares a site with All Saints Primary School. Most services are run on this site, but there is also some outreach provision at other venues in the reach area. The centre includes childcare provision and this was inspected in May 2010. A management committee formed by local parents manages the centre on behalf of the local authority. The great majority of the population within its area is of White British heritage. There are relatively low levels of disadvantage in the centre's reach area. Levels of worklessness and proportions on benefits are comparatively low. Levels of attainment of children on entry to early years provision are broadly in line with that expected nationally.

Overall effectiveness

The effectiveness of the children's centre in meeting the needs of and improving outcomes for users and the wider community

2

Capacity for sustained improvement

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

2

Main findings

The children's centre provides high-quality childcare facility for children aged two to five years and breakfast and an out-of-school club which include older children. Parents are highly appreciative of this provision, and its impact on outcomes for children has been recognised as outstanding. However, although the outcomes for children who attend the childcare are excellent, this does not yet extend to the wider community as the development of children's centre services across the wider reach area is inconsistent. While the users of the centre value the range and quality of groups available to support them and their children, this good provision does not always extend far enough or draw in sufficient users from the wider community.

The centre's team successfully builds trusting relationships with its users, partners and other local providers who are all positive about what is provided. Friendly,

approachable staff have built high levels of trust among families who feel nurtured and well supported, including when they are experiencing particular difficulties or hardship. Parents are provided with good levels of care and guidance so are confident that issues they seek help with are taken seriously and dealt with sensitively.

Outcomes for children are good. Children have good understanding of how to live healthy lifestyles. Their behaviour in the centre is outstanding because they enjoy all the activities presented to them and are fully engaged in learning. They feel completely safe when attending the childcare provision and work very well with each other and with all staff. The excellent support they receive for their development and in learning basic skills means they are extremely well prepared for the next stage in their education. This is confirmed by the headteacher of the main feeder primary school and carefully documented by the staff who provide the childcare and who have good tracking systems, which record each child's learning journey very carefully. There are excellent outcomes for children with special needs and/or disabilities due to the skilful early intervention by staff. Adult users of children's centre services are very pleased with the good quality of provision they receive.

On the whole, partnerships are sound and users benefit from a sufficient range of activities that take place within the centre and within other venues around its reach area. The centre works effectively with the health visitor services through operating a baby clinic to promote improved outcomes for families. However, the lack of involvement by the midwifery services greatly limits the centre's ability to engage pregnant mothers. Similarly, partnerships with some agencies are not yet operating sufficiently well to have an impact on the lives of users of the centre.

Some parents have returned to work as a result of the good advice and support they have received at the centre which has boosted their confidence and self-esteem. There is some case-study evidence that the services the children's centre provides has a positive outcome for most users who engage with services. However, the centre does not have detailed or systematic records of outcomes over time.

All safeguarding procedures at the centre are robust and meet requirements. Staff have a good understanding of how to deal with any concerns they have and know who to go to with a concern.

The centre is inclusive, and satisfactory steps are taken to ensure equality of opportunity for users with identified specific needs, including those who speak English as an additional language, to enable them to access the full range of services.

Leadership of the centre is good. Clear line management arrangements and effective supervision mean that most staff are well supported. However, the centre has yet to establish effective professional supervision for the case work carried out by the family support worker. The management committee provides good governance of the centre on behalf of the local authority. It monitors the centre effectively and

provides some challenge to the centre coordinator. It is aware that providing more challenge is an area to develop to ensure that the centre continues to operate successfully as is the need to extend the amount of outreach work the centre currently offers.

Staff at all levels work together diligently to ensure provision and outcomes are good. They have an accurate understanding of the centre's strengths and weaknesses because they constantly seek feedback from users. They are systematic and thorough in analysing and evaluating this information and data relating to children's progress. However, they have not yet obtained sufficient data on their reach area to identify specific needs of groups in the area that the centre serves. As a result, their evaluations lack rigour, and targets for improvement are not sufficiently ambitious. Consequently, there are some hard-to-reach families who are not yet fully benefiting from the good-quality resources, guidance and support available.

The centre's recent progress and the energy with which weaknesses are currently being tackled are indicative of its good capacity to sustain improvements.

What does the centre need to do to improve further?

Recommendations for further improvement

- Increase outreach work and ensure that the range of services provided is based on a sound analysis of needs, particularly in the wider reach area.
- Work with the local authority and the primary care trust to develop stronger links with the midwifery service and social care.
- Ensure that suitable professional supervision arrangements are in place for the family support worker.
- Strengthen governance arrangements by ensuring more challenge is made to the centre coordinator with regard to setting and monitoring ambitious targets.

How good are outcomes for users?

2

Outcomes for users are good, but the centre has limited statistical evidence to demonstrate high levels of impact with adults. A broad range of programmes is offered to families to help improve their physical and emotional health. Activities such as 'Baby Yoga' encourage bonding between mothers and their babies, resulting in emotional well-being. Staff use such activities to promote safety issues in a very calm but effective way.

Breastfeeding mothers are receiving increasingly effective support and advice when they need it most. For example, within three hours of a referral being made from the

health visitors, staff undertook a home visit. This quick response resulted in the mother being able to breastfeed for longer. Equipment to support and sustain breastfeeding, such as electric breast pumps, are available at the centre in response to a request from the health visitor due to increasing demand from mothers for this type of equipment. Good use is made of the outside play area at the centre to promote physical activities. Initiatives, such as the centre supplying free vegetable seeds to users, help families to develop a pride in growing and eating their own fresh vegetables. This is reflected in comments made by parents on the impact on their children, such as, 'She has enjoyed watching seeds develop and being able to eat produce that she has grown.' This encourages the whole family to adopt healthier lifestyles.

Children's safety is given good priority. An increasing number of children are being kept safer within their homes because of the loan of safety equipment through the toy library. Parents and carers feel their children are safe while attending the centre. Accommodation is of a good standard and is well maintained. The family support worker is well trained and demonstrates a high level of confidence in using the Common Assessment Framework. There is evidence that the Common Assessment Framework is improving outcomes for children and that the most appropriate services are identified and provided. The centre is currently not working with any children who have a child protection plan or looked-after children. It does not receive any information on the number of children who are on a child protection plan in the reach area.

Children and parents join together to enjoy playing and learning in a welcoming environment, for example, in the 'Toddler Group' sessions. The toy library is well used by families throughout the reach area. It offers a good range of toys for parents to use to extend their children's learning in their own home. Children are happy and confident in their interactions with adults in the childcare provision. An increasing number are achieving 78 or more points on the Early Years Foundation Stage profile and six or more points in communication, language and literacy and personal, social and emotional development. The children's centre teachers work very well with the early years provider and primary schools in the reach area which is improving children's transitions into school and helping to improve children's learning and development throughout the reach area.

Provision for children with special educational needs and/or disabilities within the childcare provision is very good. The centre uses the skills of the childcare provision's special educational needs coordinator to good effect. However, the centre does not have data on the number of children and adults within the reach area who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. Subsequently, the centre may not be providing services to families that are in of need support.

Users are encouraged to become volunteers at the group or through partner organisations such as Homestart. Representatives from Jobcentre Plus attend the centre once a month and some case study evidence indicates that users find this very helpful in enabling them to find out more about how they might get back to

work and also about the benefits available to them to improve their families' economic well-being. The centre advertises local job vacancies but the impact of this is not monitored. In addition, there is no robust data to show the impact of the beneficial outcomes of back-to-work advice on improving families' economic well-being over time or for the whole of the reach area.

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, and 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 and employment	2

How good is the provision?

2

The centre provides a good range of purposeful activities and resources. Activities are well planned and children are provided with a range of opportunities throughout the centre. Courses and workshops encourage parents and carers to develop their skills in playing with their children. Resources such as the story sack library are available so that they share and continue with their children's learning at home. The centre has good systems in place for assessing the needs of children and families. Signposting and referral to services and courses are becoming increasingly swift and effective.

The centre had its reach area increased in 2009 and the centre has struggled to reach families in the extended area. The appointment of the family support worker has increased the capacity of the centre's outreach work, but the centre accepts that more needs to be done to establish a better understanding of the needs of the community and to provide services for the most vulnerable.

Some case studies demonstrate the positive impact that the family support worker is already having on improving outcomes for families. There has been some success in engaging areas of the community who do not access the centre. For example, the centre has made positive links with a small number of Lithuanian families in the area and provides appropriate support.

The centre supports volunteers. Some volunteers are successful in obtaining future training and paid employment, especially at the children's centre. Achievements are

acknowledged but are not always widely celebrated. The space is well used and resources are of a high quality. The outside area is well used.

Parents are treated with sensitivity and respect and, because the centre has a good reputation for being a welcoming environment, users increasingly refer themselves to the centre. A range of information leaflets are available to parents and cover a variety of topics such as healthy eating and child development. These help parents and carers meet the physical, emotional and nutritional needs of their children. However, limited information is available on where to get support for users who may be victims of domestic violence.

There are good opportunities for centre users to regularly contribute their views about the effectiveness of the centre, and parents are currently represented on the advisory board. The centre is governed by a parents' management committee which enables parents to have a significant voice in the decision-making process.

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	3
The quality of care, guidance and support offered to users within the centre and the wider community	2

How effective are the leadership and management?

2

The centre is led and managed effectively. There are clear lines of accountability and day-to-day management is good. Centre staff work well together and show a strong commitment to making a difference to the families with which they work. Staff feel valued and are confident that their voice will be heard. They have access to a good range of training courses, ensuring they are well qualified and up to date.

The children's centre coordinator is not complacent and staff are highly motivated to seek improvement based on their knowledge of the locality and needs of users. Self-evaluation by the management team is strong, reflective and supported by some impact data. The centre knows its strengths and has identified where it needs to make further improvements. Staff are aware that they are not yet reaching all users and are working hard to achieve this.

Equality and diversity are promoted satisfactorily. Staff try hard to remove barriers for all users to the activities and services on offer, for example, by providing crèche facilities, funding childcare places and providing transport so users can access the services provided. Activities such as one-to-one support and targeted group sessions are

increasingly building confidence and removing barriers to progress for some harder- to-reach groups.

The local authority is providing effective support to the centre and the range of data it provides to the centre is improving. The management committee provides good governance to the centre and manage aspects such as the budget well. This and the good provision and outcomes mean the children’s centre gives good value for money.

The local advisory group meets regularly. It has a good representation from a range of stakeholders including parents who share information and resources and ensure links are made across agencies. It does not yet provide sufficient challenge to the management committee.

The centre has put some effort into making links and trying to establish good working relationships with key agencies. Despite this, relationships with social care and the midwifery service remain limited. As a result, some services are not as integrated and cohesive as the centre would like.

While users report strong levels of satisfaction regarding the services they receive, a lack of good-quality, up-to-date data means that the centre cannot be fully assured of its success.

Outreach services are developing and are starting to be effective in engaging those who are most vulnerable and hard to reach. Users already speak very highly of the support they have been given through the outreach provision.

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	3
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	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	3
The extent to which partnerships with other agencies ensure the	3

integrated delivery of the range of services the centre has been commissioned to provide	
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

The inspection of Stibbard Children’s Centre in May 2010 was judged to be outstanding. All Saints Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School inspected May 2010 was judged to be satisfactory.

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Summary for centre users

We inspected the Stibbard Children’s Centre on 8-9 March 2011. We judged the centre as good overall.

It was good to have the opportunity to see the excellent childcare provision for children. It is clear that they make excellent progress because of the outstanding care and teaching they receive. It was good to hear how well children with special needs and/or disabilities are supported.

All staff at the centre place the utmost importance on you and your families and always provide a listening ear for you. They are passionate about creating a welcoming environment where you feel at home and are able to talk freely about things that matter to you or are causing you concern. As a result, you value the centre, which means you have no hesitation in using the services regularly. You are actively encouraged to contribute your views, and your feedback is used constantly to develop the services provided to ensure they reflect any changes in your needs.

The centre offers a satisfactory range of services and activities for all families in the area, which are led by skilled and dedicated professionals. All centre staff are good at guiding you and referring you and your children to other activities and services they think you would also benefit from and enjoy. However, there are some people in the community that are not yet being reached and so we have asked the children’s centre to ensure that they reach everyone.

You told us that you think that the centre is a safe place for parents and their children. Inspectors agree with this view and think that staff work very well to ensure the health and safety of all who use the centre. They are helping you to keep yourselves and your children healthy by promoting healthy eating. They also help

you to support your children's learning and development at home by providing services which help you bond with your children, such as baby yoga. They encourage you to engage in play with your children from a very early age at the toddler sessions.

Several of you have become volunteers at the centre and others have been successfully supported back into employment as a result of guidance from the Jobcentre Plus representative.

We have also asked the centre to work with the local authority and the primary care trust to develop stronger links with the midwifery service and social care. This will enable the centre to make earlier links with mothers-to-be and a more-integrated service with social care. In addition, we asked the centre to ensure that suitable professional supervision arrangements are in place for the family support worker so that she can provide even better support to users and to strengthen governance arrangements by ensuring more challenge is made to the centre coordinator with regard to setting and monitoring ambitious targets. This will ensure that the centre continues to improve the support and services that they offer to you.

We would like to thank everyone who came to speak with us. It was a privilege to be able to talk with you. Your honesty and openness helped us immensely during the inspection. We are very grateful for your help and we wish each of you every success for the future.

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