

Inspection report for Caverstede Early Years Centre

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Linked school if applicable	Caverstede Early Years Centre Nursery School
Linked early years and childcare, if applicable	Caverstede Early Years Centre registered childcare

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 head of centre and other staff; parents, carers and other users; health care professionals; the Jobcentre Plus adviser; and representatives from the advisory board and governing body. They observed the centre's work and looked at a range of relevant documentation, data and records of children's achievement.

Information about the centre

Caverstede Early Years Centre comprises a phase one children's centre, registered childcare provision and a maintained nursery school that share the same site. The childcare provision and nursery were inspected separately in November 2010. All are managed by the same governing body. An advisory board provides advice and assistance to ensure the effective operation of the children's centre. It is made up of representatives from centre staff, providers of services, parents, carers and other users, Peterborough local authority and the governing body. With the exception of health care professionals and the Jobcentre Plus adviser, all staff working at the centre are employed by the governing body. The centre shares a number of awards with the nursery, including Investors in People bronze status, Healthy Schools status, Eco Schools Silver, Peterborough Inclusion Charter Mark, International Schools Intermediate and the Inclusive Practice Nursery World award.

The area it serves is within the 32% most disadvantaged areas in Peterborough. The centre's reach area covers four super output areas with varying levels of disadvantage; there are pockets of high deprivation and unemployment within its reach area. Child poverty scores are lower than is typical across the city and take-up for pre-school provision is generally high. The area is predominantly White British with a steadily increasing proportion of families from a range of minority ethnic heritages, including some new arrivals from countries in Eastern Europe. Most of the

children enter childcare and the nursery with skills that are well below expected levels for their ages.

The centre provides all the required elements of the universal offer including education, care and family services for children and families from birth to five years. It is recognised as a centre for specialist provision, especially for children with special educational needs and/or disabilities, and as a result, families beyond the designated reach area choose to access some of its services. Outreach is delivered at a local primary school, a church hall and a voluntary centre. The centre is part of the Voyager cluster that includes two other children's centres and local schools.

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

1

Capacity for sustained improvement

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

1

Main findings

This children's centre is a striking example of excellence through the high quality of education, care and coordinated family services it provides for its community. As a result, young children accessing its provision thrive developmentally. Parents' and carers' self-esteem, parenting skills and knowledge and understanding of children's development flourish alongside their children. Inspectors spoke to a very wide range of adults accessing the centre. Without exception, they were effusive about the huge difference the centre's outstanding care, guidance and support have made to their lives. Comments such as, 'It has kept me sane and it's definitely had an impact on my child's learning', 'Children come first here', 'I can't sing their praises enough' and 'The staff can turn a rubbish day into one that's all right. It takes exceptional people to do that', flooded in. Two thirds of families within the centre's reach area access services at the centre, with 82% of the most deprived families benefiting from its provision.

The centre provides an inviting, clean and well-organised environment for its users. Everyone receives a warm welcome and an immediate professional, yet sensitive, response to any crisis that may occur. Relationships at all levels are exceptionally well developed. Many parents and carers commented that their children have developed a genuine, meaningful bond with centre staff. Users and their children abide by the rules and treat each other and staff respectfully. Their religious and/or cultural needs are met fully.

The centre is particularly skilful in responding to the needs of children with significant learning difficulties and/or disabilities ensuring that they are completely integrated and have full access to activities and education. This is possible as a result of exemplary inter-agency working with a team of highly skilled professionals who act swiftly to design provision creatively around individual children's needs. This approach lies at the heart of the centre's outstanding track record in removing any barriers to success and its very effective promotion of inclusion of all children and their families. The centre exemplifies high-quality practices in safeguarding which has the highest priority and is monitored and evaluated rigorously by users, staff and the governing body. Staff are extremely observant and alert to potential safeguarding issues.

Leadership is outstanding and underpinned by a deep understanding of early childhood development and the ways in which babies and young children learn best. There is a very strong team ethos and a notable learning culture that strongly promote continuous acquisition of knowledge and skills. The complex nature of the organisation is managed extremely well. The management structure and reporting arrangements are understood by all staff. Everyone knows the important part they play in contributing towards children's and users' achievement and they feel valued. The expert head of centre, supported by an extremely skilled senior team and excellent governors, is totally committed to continuous improvement to achieve the best possible provision and outcomes. Self-evaluation is good and rigorous, although in some aspects of its work the centre judges its effectiveness too harshly.

Information gleaned from analysis of data, the centre's own research and feedback from users is evaluated and used effectively to set future priorities for improvement. However, some of the targets that the centre sets itself are too general so it is difficult for the centre to measure its success towards achieving them.

Joint leadership and management of both the centre and its attached nursery are an asset and support children's seamless transition through the provision from their starting points. Their development is monitored closely and assessed with precision. Exemplary record keeping, contributed to by all agencies involved, parents and carers, ensures that children's progress is tracked diligently. Provision is then adapted accordingly so that they make outstanding progress and achieve excellently.

The centre is raising the aspirations and confidence of its adult users well by helping them to develop their skills for the future. There are good examples of volunteers who have returned to education, gained qualifications and moved on to employment at the centre or in other early years settings. A lone parent, for example is now 'looking forward to a bright future as a teaching assistant'. There are fewer examples of the centre guiding other users to access services, adult learning opportunities and benefits that can help them to achieve economic stability and independence.

The journey that the centre has taken since its establishment five years ago is remarkable. The range and excellent quality of services on offer and the rapidly rising numbers of users from different groups accessing them, within and beyond the centre's reach, are impressive. Outcomes for adults and children are outstanding. Leaders and managers are absolutely resolute in their drive and ambition to extend the centre's high-quality, sustainable provision; engage with increasing numbers of families within the centre and through outreach work; and improve the lives of the youngest children in the community. Thus, the centre has outstanding capacity for sustained improvement.

What does the centre need to do to improve further?

Recommendations for further improvement

- Ensure that targets for future improvement reflect the centre's uniqueness, are precise and measurable so that the centre can more accurately measure its success towards achieving them.
- Increase numbers of adults achieving greater economic stability and independence through access to advice and guidance on accessing support, benefits and seeking work.

How good are outcomes for users?

1

Children make outstanding progress from their starting points and are prepared for school very well. Inspectors observed many activities where babies, children and their parents and carers were enjoying the sessions, having great fun and learning together through play. Singing and music making have a notable presence in centre

activities. Parents, grandparents, carers and children participate without inhibition and eagerly repeat familiar rhymes and songs as well as learning new ones. Children make exceptionally good progress in their acquisition of language, communication and early literacy skills and in their personal development. This is because the centre has identified through its research that these are children's weakest areas. So there is now an emphasis on activities such as 'Rhyme Time' and 'Come and share a story' that target the development of these key skills. The gap between the outcomes for the most vulnerable groups and others is narrowing. There is a rise in attainment by children attending the centre which continues as they transfer into school. Children are encouraged and expected to do as much as possible for themselves. Parents and carers receive helpful guidance and advice on how to replicate activities that promote talk and independence at home. This contributes to their children's accelerated progress. It is particularly pertinent for families whose children have special educational needs and/or disabilities. These families are supported expertly by portage workers and centre staff so that consistent approaches are used both at the centre and at home.

The children are developing an excellent understanding of how to live healthy lifestyles through adventurous and energetic play outdoors, the high take-up at breakfast and lunch clubs, cooking activities with their parents and carers, and eating healthy snacks. The well-attended 'Dad's Club' provides opportunities for children to play outside in the potting shed and learn how to grow vegetables. Many parents and carers commented that their children now 'eat things they wouldn't touch before'. Health professionals and centre staff promote and support breastfeeding, with the large majority of new mothers breastfeeding from birth and more than half of these continuing after six weeks. Take-up for immunisation by centre users is good.

Users and their children feel completely safe at the centre because they know that staff are extremely vigilant. The centre communicates consistent messages that prevention and swift intervention are central to keeping children safe from harm to help parents and carers to develop their awareness of possible risks. A parent craft course supported with crèche facilities is offered to the most vulnerable families. All participants consider that their children's behaviour has improved, that they are calmer, more confident and more effective as parents. Parents and carers are shown strategies to help them to ensure that children develop good road safety awareness. Staff confidently use, if appropriate, the Common Assessment Framework to improve the safeguarding of children.

The centre's close partnership with another children's centre extends the range of opportunities for users to engage in adult learning and reduces duplication. Users are also directed towards Peterborough College to access some courses. However, take-up for adult learning is not as high as the centre would like. The Jobcentre Plus adviser is very knowledgeable about the centre's work and provision and is proactive in directing customers towards services and support. The majority of customers visit to complete mandatory interviews. The centre does not have sufficient data to measure its success in helping other users to achieve greater economic stability and

independence.

Parents', carers', children's and other users' views are sought routinely, both informally and formally. They are confident in expressing their views. All suggestions are valued and given careful consideration in making future decisions. There is very good representation of parents and carers on the advisory board and the governing body where they make valuable contributions to the centre's self-evaluation and development planning.

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	1
The extent to which children are safe and protected, and 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	1
The extent to which children engage in positive behaviour and develop positive relationships and users contribute to decision-making and governance of the centre	1
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?

1

The centre knows its community and its families extremely well and this informs high-quality provision that reaches all groups that it is commissioned to provide for. Children, parents, carers and other users have access to excellent resources and facilities at the centre. Group sessions are run with an expectation of parents' and carers' participation. This ensures that the personal development and well-being of both are catered for in tandem. The very wide range of activities are led by staff that demonstrate exceptionally good specialist skills, knowledge and understanding of the Early Years Foundation Stage. All staff demonstrate outstanding personal skills for others to emulate.

Provision for young parents is the centre's most recent achievement and a new group is underway. One young mother is full of praise for the centre's help and support that has helped her to feel valued and appreciated and to develop her skills as a parent. She is optimistic about the group's future to help her and others overcome their deep sense of isolation. Childminders freely access activities and have developed very strong relationships with centre staff. They use the facilities for networking and sharing good practice regularly. Grandparents, many of whom provide day care for their grandchildren, access the activities.

Families who have children with additional needs benefit greatly from the respite

care that is offered through holiday schemes. These provide opportunities for brothers and sisters to attend so that the whole family benefits. There are groups who frequent the centre for self-support such as the autism group that meets in the evening, and 'Stay and Chat' where parents and carers whose children have additional needs meet just to talk. Many parents and carers attend these groups from beyond the centre's reach area. Some have moved away from the area and go to great lengths to find ways for their children's continued attendance at the centre, childcare and the nursery.

Some of the rooms are small for group activities which a very small minority of parents and carers find inhibiting. The centre overcomes this by signposting them towards other group activities in the local area. For example, 'Little Lambs' run by two volunteers, who developed their skills through the centre, is supported by a family worker. Helpful guidance and support ensure that provision is of high quality and that robust procedures are in place for health, safety and financial management. Take-up is very high. Babies and young children are involved in exciting, purposeful play. It is an excellent example of how the centre influences practice through its extensive outreach work in the locality.

The centre works in close partnership with a wide range of professionals such as midwives, health visitors, portage workers, speech and language therapists and psychologists. They share information freely and pool their specialist skills to design bespoke packages of support for users. The openness of communication between the different agencies is impressive and ensures that the provision is built securely around each child's needs. As a result, satisfaction rates are extremely high.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The effectiveness of the assessment of the needs of children, parents and other users	1
The extent to which the centre promotes purposeful learning, development and enjoyment for all users	1
The extent to which the range of services, activities and opportunities meet the needs of users and the wider community	1
The quality of care, guidance and support offered to users within the centre and the wider community	1

How effective are the leadership and management?

1

At all levels, leadership and management are exceptionally effective. Senior leaders use all available data effectively to identify where provision is having the most impact and this informs future decisions. They use results from the Early Years Foundation Stage profiles and subsequent detailed analysis provided by the local authority, to generate useful information about how different groups of children are performing and to identify trends of improvement. Conversely, leaders are constrained by the lack of data provided by the local authority that breaks down other national indicators to city and centre levels. As result, the centre is not able to compare its

performance in all aspects of its work with other children’s centres. Self-evaluation is accurate and is used proficiently to inform future planning and to set future targets. Actions taken are fit for purpose and it is clear where responsibilities lie for leading initiatives and monitoring their success. The centre sets its own targets which are currently too broad and general. This makes it difficult for the centre to know when they are achieved.

Leaders and managers are adept at inspiring and enabling staff to develop high-quality skills through targeted professional development and training. They encourage staff to lead initiatives so that they grow in confidence and develop expertise. Responsibility is dispersed equitably among leaders. This ensures sustainability when staff move on or take extended leave. Teamwork is excellent and contributes to the very high quality of service that the centre provides. The centre’s work to promote equality and tackle discrimination against vulnerable groups is extremely effective. Families whose circumstances make them the most vulnerable are identified quickly. Referrals are timely and because communication and cooperation between all agencies is so effective, appropriate support and intervention follow swiftly to eliminate risks. Staff consistently give safeguarding the highest priority. They have a comprehensive awareness of safeguarding issues and receive regular training to ensure that they are fully up to date with the latest guidance and regulations. For example, the centre widely publicises e-safety issues among staff and users.

The governing body is excellent. It has a wide skills-base and an enlightened understanding of a children’s centre remit. Safer recruitment is high on the governing body’s agenda. The centre’s work is monitored diligently through reports from the head of centre, and visits and all partners take an active role in promoting high-quality, integrated provision that is responsive to local needs. The introduction of the advisory board has enhanced the quality of governance. The relationship and responsibilities of the governing body and the advisory board are clearly understood, integrated or divided as appropriate. For example, excellent financial management ensures that budgets for the nursery, childcare and the children’s centre are separated to ensure that money is spent where it is intended; very good account is taken of the need to ensure services are sustainable. The centre provides excellent value for money because its use of high-quality resources has a profound impact on improving the lives of the most vulnerable groups in the community.

This centre knows where it is going and what needs to be done to maintain and improve excellent provision and outcomes. The high calibre of its leaders and managers is the driving force behind its exceptional performance.

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	1
The extent to which ambitious targets drive improvement, provision is	1

integrated and there are high expectations for users and the wider community	
The extent to which resources are used and managed efficiently and effectively to meet the needs of users and the wider community	1
The extent to which equality is promoted and diversity celebrated, illegal or unlawful discrimination is tackled and the centre fulfils its statutory duties	1
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	1
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	1

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

Caverstede Early Years Centre Nursery School and registered childcare provision were inspected in November 2010. Both were judged outstanding.

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Summary for centre users

We inspected the children's centre on 9–10 March 2011. We judged the centre as outstanding overall.

Your children's centre is an example of excellence in almost all respects. The centre staff are extremely caring and well-qualified professionals. They provide you with the high-quality resources and services that are designed specially to meet your and your children's needs whatever they may be. Many of you told us how marvellous the staff are and how they have helped you out in times of crisis. You also told us how very much your children enjoy coming to the centre for activities, childcare and the nursery. We delighted to watch them all having so much fun in activities like 'Babbling Babies', 'Rhyme Time', breakfast club and lunch club. Your centre makes sure that you too have a great time when you join your children for sessions, and the centre staff help you to develop your skills as parents and carers brilliantly. The

centre staff and other professionals who provide services treat you and your children as unique individuals. They talk to each other and pool their skills so that you receive excellent help, support and advice designed specially to meet your particular needs. The centre is rightly acknowledged for its work in supporting those of you who have children with additional needs. Staff listen to your feedback and adjust things if they are not quite what you would like or if they are not working well enough for you.

Your children make outstanding progress at the centre and move on to nursery and then school with ease. This is because the professionals check how well your children are doing and support them excellently as they grow up. Your children behave beautifully at the centre. We were also so impressed with how very well you get along with each other and staff. This is because the staff make you and your children feel incredibly welcome and ensure that everyone is fully included and valued. They encourage you and celebrate your achievements with you. Some of you have been able to return to education and work because the centre has inspired you and supported you. We think that there are even more of you who could benefit from the services available to support you in becoming better off financially or in helping you to take those small steps towards returning to work when the time is right. We have asked the centre to think about ways to make this to happen.

One of you told us that it takes exceptional people to turn a terrible day into a better one. We are able to confirm that people who work in the centre are exceptional in more ways than one. You are benefiting from their excellent skills that compare with some of the best available in the country. However, this just would not happen without outstanding and inspirational leadership. The leaders, managers, members of the governing body and the advisory board are totally committed to achieving the highest possible standards of education, care and services for you. Your safety and that of your children is given the highest priority. They are constantly thinking about ways to improve things and make detailed plans to ensure this happens. We found that targets set for improvement are not easily measured so we have asked that these are made more precise.

We would especially like to thank you to those of you who gave up your time to talk to us, meet with us, or wrote letters of support for us to read. We listened to all that you had to say and it was so important to hear your views. It took tremendous courage for some of you to share your experiences and explain the complexity of your children's needs and we are extremely grateful to you. We are confident that your centre will continue to thrive and hope that you will continue to take full advantage of all that it has to offer. It was a privilege to spend time at the centre and we wish you and your families the very best for the future.

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