

Inspection report for Gamesley Children's Centre

Local authority	Derbyshire
Inspection number	362483
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Reporting inspector	Sue Pepper HMI

Centre governance	Derbyshire County Council
Centre leader	Karen Foster
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected
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Linked school if applicable	Gamesley Early Excellence Centre
Linked early years and childcare, if applicable	EY340480 Gamesley Early Excellence Centre Child Care Community Interest Company

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 of Her Majesty's Inspectors and an early years inspector.

The inspectors held meetings with centre staff and senior managers, chair of the advisory board, health professionals, local community partners, user groups and parents. They observed the centre's work, and looked at a range of relevant documentation.

Information about the centre

Gamesley Children's Centre is delivered from a split-site. Services are provided at Gamesley Children's Centre which is a purpose-built extended building providing a Nursery school, childcare and adult community education and the adjoining Geoffrey Allen Community Church Centre. Services are also delivered from the Gamesley Sports and Community Centre nearby where the centre workers are based. Gamesley Children's Centre evolved from an early excellence centre programme. It was designated as a phase one centre in 2006. It provides the full core offer of services with the support of partners. A range of supporting services, including health and adult training courses are on site or within the reach area. Parents and carers are signposted to a range of universal and specialist services.

The majority of the population in the Gamesley ward is of White British heritage. Recent figures show that 355 children under five years live in the reach area and that 75% live in the 10% most deprived and disadvantaged areas in the country. Unemployment is high with 48% living in workless households. A high proportion of children in the area are eligible for free school meals.

Most children enter early education with a much narrower range of experiences and skills than those expected for their age. The early excellence centre is designated as an 'Enhanced Resource' for children with special educational needs and/or disabilities. Early Years Foundation Stage is delivered through the nursery, childcare

provision and group activities which the centre runs. Gamesley Early Excellence Centre has its own headteacher and board of governors who also manage Gamesley Early Excellence Centre Childcare Community Interest Company. Full day-care, education and out-of-school care is provided for up to 84 children in the early years age group of which no more than 16 may be under 2 years of age. The nursery is subject to separate Early Years inspection arrangements. The inspection report can be found at www.ofsted.gov.uk.

The local authority manages the centre. It is open from 7.30am until 6pm, Monday to Friday, 50 weeks of the year. The advisory board oversees Gamesley and two other local phase two children's centres which the children's centre co-ordinator manages - Glossop and Hadfield. The advisory board is made up of representatives from the local community, professional agencies and parents.

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

3

Capacity for sustained improvement

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

3

Main findings

The centre provides satisfactory outcomes for children and families in its reach area. A wide range of data is collected by the centre. Information which is up-to-date and pertinent to the reach is the most helpful. Where this is not the case, the centre's is slightly hampered in the planning of some services, although this does not impact on the centre's ability to assess the needs of children, parents and other users. The centre acknowledges data could be improved so that their plans can be enhanced to clearly evidence their impact on the outcomes for users. Although the centre's business plan identifies targets, they are not precise and therefore they cannot be easily measured. Equality and diversity are promoted satisfactorily through an inclusive ethos but the centre cannot be certain of how equitable its service delivery is as it does not yet accurately monitor the effectiveness of all the services it provides.

It was too early to judge the impact of some new developments which have been recently introduced and were at a very early stage. However, some of the centre's work is evaluated, although the evaluation of all the services is inconsistent. Attention to safety is high priority and, consequently, safeguarding is good. Parents

and carers say they feel safe and they see the centre as a very welcoming place. Children have access to good, high-quality childcare and education which promotes enjoyment and good progress in learning and development.

Provision is of good quality which promotes users' enjoyment, purposeful learning and personal and social development. Systems to assess the needs of those children and families who are in particularly vulnerable situations due to their circumstances are well embedded. Care, guidance and support are strengths of the centre. Trusting relationships have been formed with those families with whom the centre has worked directly and early intervention work has made a big difference to improving some users' lives. 'It is fantastic here' was the view of many users of the centre. The number of families registered with the centre is increasing. The centre is aware of those who do not attend and work to engage them is on-going.

The centre has been subject to changes in the premises and staffing arrangements since it was given phase one status. The centre coordinator is now managing a settled staff team who have developed some strong partnerships with other agencies. Multi-skilled centre workers deliver services effectively and conduct outreach work. Due to their non-judgmental approach, trusting and respectful relationships have been built with children and families. Parents and carers say that 'Services are brilliant, a real life line'.

Adult education facilities ensure a range of universal, accredited and non-accredited services can be accessed by adults. Very successful fund raising enhances the breadth and range of the opportunities provided. Attendance on some courses is good. Jobcentre Plus has a regular presence at the centre, as does the Citizens Advice Bureau which provides families with invaluable practical support. They often provide help with problems before issues escalate into a crisis. Whilst the centre is working well with key partners to address the issue of worklessness, the numbers of parents returning to work is low.

Despite difficulties using shared accommodation, day-to-day management arrangements are clear and the team set up good-quality services for children and families. A few parents and carers are members of the established advisory board which changed last year to an advisory group. This is beginning to embed and improve its impact. However, the number of parents and carers involved in decision-making and governance is low.

Given some of the successes the centre has had so far and the dedication to reaching all the vulnerable groups in the reach area it has satisfactory capacity to further improve.

What does the centre need to do to improve further?

Recommendations for further improvement

- Develop systems to gather and analyse reliable data to demonstrate the impact

- of services on outcomes for children and families.
- Ensure the success criteria in the business plan are specific and measurable so that the centre can be challenged and held to account for their work.
- Provide further opportunities for families to participate in planning of services to ensure more are involved in making a meaningful contribution to decision-making and governance of the centre.

How good are outcomes for users?

3

Users develop a good understanding of how to keep their children safe through targeted support, such as home-safety checks. The centre workers act as good role models, setting up rooms daily and checking the safety of the shared premises. They use cups with lids for hot drinks and some parents have now adopted this practice in their own homes. Parents and carers receive helpful advice when they attend courses like 'First Aid'. As a result of the centre's good promotion of children's safety, parents and carers pay sufficient attention to keeping them safe at home. Parents and carers told the inspectors they know the dangers of water to children and therefore they do not leave them alone in a paddling pool or at home alone in the bath. Children learn about keeping safe through effective role play, exciting topics and specific visitors to the centre. Parents said they feel safe and secure in all the sessions.

The Common Assessment Framework (CAF) is used effectively to target specific support for families whose children may be on a child protection plan. Centre workers liaise on a one-to-one basis in the families' homes or at the sessions with them. This intensive work fosters good relationships. Parents and carers say that are confident to share information and any problems with the centre workers because they do not feel threatened or judged by them. Parents and carers know they can turn to the centre in times of crisis and that they will be helped. One parent expressed the views of many by saying, 'Everything is great now; I was desperate for help'.

Health outcomes are variable. Effective partnerships with health partners ensure users' needs are identified at an early stage and families are signposted to relevant sessions or agencies. Successful strategies promote users' oral health. Children's dental health has improved significantly due to developing families' understanding of good oral hygiene habits through joint activities, displays and by providing free equipment. The take-up of immunisation programmes is also good. However, obesity continues to be an issue. 'Stay, Weigh and Play' is well attended and users report that this is a valued service where they can monitor their baby's growth and share tips and advice. 'Healthy Active Tots' is also a popular programme which promotes an active lifestyle.

The number of teenage pregnancies remains static and there is no evidence of numbers decreasing. Smoking cessation sessions are run, to which users are signposted, but the result of this work is very limited. The uptake of breastfeeding is low. Data showing the impact of the 'Little Angels' group that promotes the benefits of breastfeeding are not yet available.

Positive parenting courses have had a significant effect on many lives. A parent who attended the course said, 'When asking a child a question, waiting 10 seconds for an answer really does work'. Courses have helped many parents and carers learn new ways to manage their children's behaviour. 'I am more confident to be a parent now. I am not fighting and shouting with my child. We have more fun' was one of the comments from a parent after attending the course. The 'You Make a Difference' course promotes child-led parenting results in an edited digital video disc (DVD) of each individual family. Parents and carers consider this to be a powerful method of repeating and reinforcing the positive messages learnt. A parent said when she played the disc at home, 'It feels like someone is standing behind me saying you can do it.' Introducing routines to children through various methods enables some parents and carers to be more consistent with their children and results in families who are more confident in their parenting skills. One parent said 'You can make a difference if you look at life from a child's point of view'.

When a two-year-old was asked by her parent what she liked most about the centre, she described different toys but she said her favourite thing was the centre worker. This view shows how important relationships are to a child's feeling of well-being. Many parents and carers say that they enjoy attending groups regularly at the centre. This helps them to counteract the feelings of isolation they sometimes feel if they are at home all day. Attending groups is said to make them realise that they are not alone. They value their conversations with other parents, carers and the centre workers which help them to be more realistic in their expectations, particularly with their children.

Children and adults have access to high-quality childcare and education which ensure there are many good opportunities for them to enjoy and achieve at the centre. These promote children's and families' personal and social development very well. On entry to school, children's skills are mostly below the age-related expectations but recent figures and discussion with school show this is an improving picture.

The life experiences of some parents and carers can get in the way of them developing skills for the future. It can impact on the extent users' contribute to decision-making and governance of the centre. Some parents and carers are able to move on from adult community education and attendance on basic skills courses to more formal programmes. However, this is a big step for many, which can take a long time. Some parents and carers have found that attending placements is difficult due to a lack of crèche facilities. Tracking is in place to monitor adult's progress but the extent to which users develop economic stability and return to work is satisfactory.

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	3
The extent to which children are safe and protected, their welfare	2

concerns are identified and appropriate steps taken to address them	
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	3
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?

2

Gamesley Children's Centre is well established as the 'hub' of the community. Space is at a premium and the centre workers have shared use of facilities within the church premises attached to the centre or nearby in the community sports hall. This sharing of space can impact negatively on the range of services provided to some extent but not on the good quality of the provision. The centre workers overcome barriers to service delivery very well. For example, due to limited permanent display areas they regularly rotate good quality information for users by using portable display boards. Contraception and sexual health information is discretely shared due to the constraints of the church premises. 'Everyone is friendly here; it is all within walking distance. We are so lucky', was a typical view of users. However, some users stated they only attended sessions delivered from the church premises because they are reluctant to cross the road to sessions at the sports centre.

The centre workers know the 'tight knit' community very well. They go out of their way to build good relationships with the community such as meeting them in the community cafe. Consequently, users express high levels of satisfaction with the centre. The centre is aware that there are families which they are not reaching and so various strategies have been put in place to attract their interest. Taster days were unsuccessful in attracting new families so leaflets have been made more user-friendly and other ways are now being sought to ensure families do not miss out on the benefits the centre has to offer.

The centre recognises the important role fathers play in their children's development and they are welcome at all groups, although numbers attending are low. However, specific opportunities geared to engage fathers by adult education are extremely successful. 'Dads and Lads' activities, for instance, promote great enjoyment and purposeful learning through outings such as a fishing trip. Fathers in particular enjoy the opportunity to learn building and construction skills. These opportunities have given some adults the 'chance to shine' as some natural facilitators have emerged. Family trips out and about are extremely well organised and they promote confidence and community cohesion very well. The memories of these special events are often captured in published booklets.

A young parents group is well established and very well attended by mothers, some

of whom are reluctant to leave the group when they reach 21 years of age. The young parents have produced their own DVD called 'Teenage Kicks'. This is stated to be used in schools by the young parents to highlight the responsibilities of parenthood and the pitfalls of having a child when you are young. The centre workers provide practical support transporting young parents to appointments they may find difficult to attend.

There have been gaps in antenatal care. However, a new midwife has been appointed to specifically work with families who may have circumstances which make them vulnerable. Outreach services are targeted where they are most needed to ensure families can access good support. Assessment of the needs of all those who use the centre is good and enhanced due to good partnership work with health, social care colleagues and schools. Many parents join sessions like the 'Baby Massage', the 'Young Parents Group' or 'Stay and Play' which leads to interest in other groups like 'Messy Play' or 'You and me Time'. Some parents have attended various groups regularly for several years which has led to attendance on some training courses. Specific courses are commissioned and delivered locally to enable children and parents and carers to learn together.

Children's early learning and development are good and early intervention programmes are successful. The focus on communication, language and literacy is promoted well by partnership work particularly with the library service, early excellence centre and the local school. The 'Positive Play' provision is described as a 'fantastic resource' by parents and carers, especially the activities which take place during the school holidays that have gone from strength to strength. Families who are sometimes hard to reach have referred themselves to this service, which is a real success. This joined-up working is described by users as providing invaluable support for families. Good safeguarding strategies for children and adults prevent various family issues from escalating.

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?

3

The change of base for the centre co-ordinator and her team from Hadfield

Children's Centre into the locality of Gamesley is an improvement, but it is not ideal. The centre workers are now based nearer to where they deliver services. Locals understand this arrangement but the building does not have a sign to indicate to anyone new to the area that they are there. As a result, the base where some services are delivered is not easy to find. Good supervision and day-to-day management ensures good quality services are set up and cleared away daily. Governance and accountability arrangements are clear and professional supervision systems are well embedded.

Safeguarding is prioritised across all areas of the centre's work. Good arrangements are in place for recruitment and vetting of workers and partners. Centre workers have regular access to safeguarding training. The centre promotes equality and diversity satisfactorily. The ethos of the centre is inclusive and the 'Enhanced Resource' in the early excellence centre ensures that any children who attend with special educational needs and/or disabilities are very well supported.

Priorities are identified at local authority level and they are fed into the business plan but they are not clear and therefore cannot be measured. The coordinator for the centre is a reflective practitioner who motivates her team well using a common sense and a measured approach. She knows where there are gaps in the data and what information would help her to move forward. She acknowledges that there is insufficient focus on gathering data information to demonstrate the impact the centre is having on outcomes for children and families. This results in value for money being limited to satisfactory.

The advisory group includes a range of partners and a few parents. The Chair reflects and represents the locality well and is a parent of a child. She was elected last year when the advisory board changed its structure and became an advisory group. The Chair has a good understanding of her role; she understands what is going well and where improvements can be made.

Partnerships are a real strength of the centre. Childminders are very well supported. The centre has developed strong links with the local school. For example, the centre worker's regular presence at school assemblies not only raises the centre's profile but is also valued by families. The parents and children appreciate having someone they know in school to celebrate their achievements with them.

The coordinator is keen to develop a parent's forum. The centre has responded to the ideas parents have made through discussions and surveys. As a result, the centre has made some changes to meet users' needs which demonstrate their willingness to take users' views into account. The centre routinely evaluates the services it provides, although evaluations are mostly celebratory with minimal suggestions for improvement. The children's centre coordinator acknowledges that there is no clear system to ensure that parents and carers are fully informed. Some parents and carers are unclear about policies and procedures and unaware of the name of the children's centre coordinator. The advisory group have recently improved their advertising leaflet to make it more friendly and are keen to develop

the policy and file for parents and carers.

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	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	3
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	3

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

Gamesley Early Excellence Centre, together with Gamesley Early Excellence Child Care Community Interest Company, was inspected in 2010 and information from this inspection contributed to the judgements of Gamesley Children's Centre report. It was inspected last year and judged to be outstanding.

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaining about inspections', which is available from our website: www.ofsted.gov.uk. If you would like us to send you a copy of the guidance, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

Summary for centre users

We inspected the Gamesley Children's Centre on 16–17 March 2011. We judged the centre as satisfactory overall.

This is an established centre which offers services from both sides of the Melandra Castle Road. It provides a very safe place where families receive good quality care, guidance and support. You told us the centre is a place where you can be sure of a warm and friendly welcome. The centre workers, health and childcare colleagues work effectively together using their professional experience, knowledge and resources to meet your specific needs well. They assess any difficult situations successfully and they know what support to provide you with in a crisis. They have built good relationships with families.

We know that some mothers are successfully breastfeeding their babies and we hope that more of you will be interested in doing this. Many of you have enjoyed the 'Cooking with Kids' course which promotes healthy eating. The 'First Aid' course raises your awareness about safety, especially in the home and what to do if your child has an accident. We know many of you now use the local library and you understand the importance of helping your children develop good speaking and listening skills.

You told us that the positive parenting programmes have developed your confidence and self-esteem and taught you better ways of managing your children's behaviour. It was a pleasure to see and hear how well some of you are now able to more confidently manage your children's challenging behaviour in such a positive way.

Some parents said, 'Services are brilliant, a real life line'. You told us that you particularly enjoy the opportunity to meet one another at the 'Stay and Play' and 'Parents and Tots' groups which increase your understanding of the importance of play and how young children learn and develop. Those who have joined the 'Baby Massage' groups were upbeat about the benefits of using massage to improve your relationships with your baby. Some even reported improvement with their baby's colic problems. We have asked the centre to provide more detailed information so you can see how its work is improving outcomes for you.

You told us that the family events which run in the holidays are extremely popular and help develop a real community spirit. The centre workers have formed very good relationships with the local school to ensure that any gaps in your children's skills are acted upon. For example, the 'Positive Play Provision' programme is providing a very helpful way to help you prepare your children for school.

We have asked the centre to ensure they receive more up-to-date reliable data which they can use to plan services for you. We have also asked the centre to provide more opportunities for all family members to become involved in ensuring the services continually suit your specific needs. We hope this will make sure more people in Gamesley can benefit from support which can help change and improve

your lives. We know the centre is hoping that more of you will be interested in sharing your ideas and confronting the centre with your views. We hope more of you will be interested in joining the advisory group.

We would like to thank everyone who was willing to speak to us. We are very grateful for your help and wish you every success in the future.

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