

# Inspection report for Sue Walker Children's Centre

Local authority	Rotherham
Inspection number	365858
Inspection dates	16–17 March 2011
Reporting inspector	Jane Hughes

Centre governance	The Governing Body of Kiveton Park Meadows Junior School
Centre leader	Judith Elstone
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected
Centre address	Storth Lane, Kiveton Park, Sheffield, South Yorkshire, S26 5QT
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Linked school if applicable	Kiveton Park Meadows Junior School
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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 an additional inspector and an early years inspector.

The inspectors held meetings with representatives of the local authority, with the centre leader, with partner professionals from other agencies and with members of staff. Discussions were held with parents and carers.

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

## Information about the centre

Sue Walker Children's Centre is located on the site of Kiveton Park Meadows Junior School. The centre was designated in February 2008 and achieved the full core offer in December 2009, following delays due to flooding in April 2008 which necessitated extensive refurbishment and repairs. The centre is a phase two Sure Start children's centre. It serves a community with a mixture of private and rented housing in a semi-rural area with some pockets of social and economic disadvantage. There are many professional families but also families on low incomes. Of the children under five years of age, eight per cent live in households without paid employment or with low incomes. A similarly small proportion of families are in receipt of benefits. The large majority of families are of White British heritage.

The governing body of Kiveton Park Meadows Junior School is contracted to govern the children's centre in conjunction with the advisory board for the centre. The advisory board includes representatives from statutory and voluntary organisations as well as parents and carers. The centre leader took up her post in September 2009. She is also the headteacher of Kiveton Park Meadows Junior School. This school was inspected in the same week as the children's centre. The school's report can be viewed at [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)

## Inspection judgements

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

### Overall effectiveness

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

**2**

### Capacity for sustained improvement

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

**2**

## Main findings

The good overall effectiveness of Sue Walker Children's Centre ensures that young children and their families have access to good services and so experience improving outcomes. The centre is a calm, welcoming and well-maintained place of safety where children, parents and other adults feel safe, valued and listened to. They regard the centre as a haven. Many parents and carers took time to talk to inspectors about their experiences at the centre. Overwhelmingly, their comments reflected the positive view that they 'have only praise for the people and the place'. The centre is well led and managed and has successfully worked through a recent time of staff turbulence. Throughout this period, the centre's leader has ensured that the centre has targeted ever more successfully, the most vulnerable groups in its reach area. As a result, the engagement of teenage mothers, lone parents, disabled parents and those from workless households is above 50% and rising. This is considerably higher than the borough average, and particularly good for a centre with no day-care provision on site. Governance is firmly established, although the advisory board does not provide sufficient challenge to the leadership to ensure that outcomes continue to improve.

Outcomes for users are good. Children develop a firm foundation on which to build for future success as they learn to listen, share and take turns. For example, during a 'Parents and Toddlers' session, children took turns to play with the wheeled prams and cars outdoors and were then effectively encouraged by staff to help to tidy away. Parents and carers confirm that their experiences at the centre are equally life-changing. These help to re-establish a sense of self-worth and to provide ways for parents and carers to explore new hobbies and educational opportunities. There are also opportunities to enter the world of work for the first time or to re-enter following an extended absence. There is also clear evidence of improvements to users' emotional and mental well-being as they find ways to surmount depression, for example.

Users are keen to develop healthier lifestyles for both themselves and their children. To this end, they engage in a range of physical challenges and activities linked to living safe and healthy lives. For example, volunteers have created a garden area for

all users to enjoy. Users are able to help plant and then see the growing vegetables and flowers. They show their children and sometimes learn for themselves how to cook the vegetables as part of a nutritious meal.

Strong partnerships exist with other local agencies and support organisations. Staff work well together. This is a key to the centre's success and leads to prompt and well-targeted family support and outreach work. This means that users are able to draw the maximum benefits from the services offered by the centre. Users hold the staff in the highest esteem as they value this source of help and support. Less well developed are links with other local early years providers. This is because, since its designation, the centre has not had continuous support from an early years lead teacher. However, the centre promotes purposeful learning well with a good range of purposeful activities, supported by high quality resources and well trained and knowledgeable staff. Staff provide good verbal feedback to parents about their children's learning and play. Detailed case studies demonstrate the support provided for children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. However, for the children who attend sessional groups more regularly, there are no individual assessment records to show the good progress children make.

Rigorous safeguarding arrangements ensure that safety and well-being of all who use the centre are high priorities. There is close attention to inclusive practice so that equality is well promoted and diversity celebrated through positive images on display and informative projects that highlight festivals, such as Chinese New Year.

The centre continues to develop rapidly and to engage more users in its work. It evaluates accurately its strengths and areas to develop. The leadership has accomplished much in difficult circumstances, such as increasing the number of users who engage with the centre despite a smaller staff team, and ensuring a rapid response to what the regular data updates from the local authority show in terms of growing or fading impact. Consequently, the centre demonstrates good capacity for sustained improvement.

## **What does the centre need to do to improve further?**

### **Recommendations for further improvement**

- Develop further the provision and outcomes for children in the early years by:
  - re-establishing the role of the early years lead teacher so that early years provision and practice develop further
  - improving the use of assessment for those children who attend activities on a regular basis in order to focus on individual needs and to provide a more formal, ongoing record of learning and development for each child
  - expanding the existing links with other early years providers in order to share best practice and provide a smooth transfer for children into primary school.
- Strengthen governance by improving how well the advisory board offers appropriate challenge and support and holds the centre to account for outcomes.

## How good are outcomes for users?

2
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Many families engage with specific services such as 'Cook and eat', 'Active tots' and baby massage. Families from vulnerable groups, such as single parents and male carers attend with increasing regularity and confirm how beneficial these sessions are for them and their children. They are becoming increasingly aware of healthy practices through better understanding of the benefits of nutritious eating and regular exercise. The number of mothers who have accessed activities to promote and support breastfeeding continues to increase.

Children behave well and thoroughly enjoy sessions at the centre and trips out. Parents comment enthusiastically and one said, 'my child absolutely buzzes when she comes here!' and 'the centre has made a fabulous difference to my child'. Some children attend almost every day, others more sporadically. There is good evidence of improved outcomes for the few children who are either looked after or who have child protection plans. Children using services at the centre are effectively safeguarded and clearly feel safe as they tackle activities with confidence. Parents and carers confirm that they have the utmost faith in staff at the centre and turn to them in times of crisis or to help find solutions to everyday problems. Those experiencing change in their lives are fulsome in their praise of the centre. One user stated, 'The centre's opened up a whole new chapter in my life. Now, I'm not excluded any longer'.

Children develop effective speaking, listening and social skills that will serve them well in more formal educational settings. Non-verbal communication between mothers, babies or children in social situations also develops well. There are also examples of parents who were hard to engage who now enjoy regular activities at the centre. For example, the percentage of teenage mothers who access centre activities has increased by more than 50% this year. Staff make a full contribution to child protection plans and Common Assessment Framework processes when required, although the incidence of these is relatively few.

Users and centre staff treat each other with respect. Firm friendships develop among users from attendance at various activities and the evaluation forms bear strong testament to this. Users' voices are clearly heard through their participation on the advisory board. They have helped to effect change at the centre so that it meets users' needs more closely. Users' confidence grows as they develop enterprise skills, such as planning fundraising events or approaching businesses for support in establishing the garden.

The centre has not been providing services for long enough to accurately measure its impact on children's Early Years Foundation Stage profile scores by the end of their Reception Year in local primary schools. Children are not old enough to have reached that stage. However, parents report that their children enjoy socialising with others here and that the 'building blocks' for their future learning are clearly embedded through activities, such as 'music tots', 'making volcanoes', dancing with fans and

celebrating Chinese New Year. Staff plan well to ensure continuity between activities so that children maximise the learning outcomes from each one. For instance, children followed up a much enjoyed reading activity about the 'Gingerbread Man' by making their own gingerbread men and linking this with discussions on their '5-a-day' quota. Staff know the children well and ensure that questions challenge the children to think about what they are doing and problem solve when possible.

*These are the grades for the outcomes for users*

<b>The extent to which children, including those from vulnerable groups, are physically, mentally and emotionally healthy and families have healthy lifestyles</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which children are safe and protected, their welfare concerns are identified and appropriate steps taken to address them</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which all users enjoy and achieve educationally and in their personal and social development</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which children engage in positive behaviour and develop positive relationships and users contribute to decision-making and governance of the centre</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which children are developing skills for the future and parents are developing economic stability and independence including access to training</b>	<b>2</b>

## **How good is the provision?**

<b>2</b>
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Assessment of users' needs by centre staff ensures that, once known to the centre, families quickly benefit from the local knowledge, support and expertise of staff. The local authority regularly provides high quality data that show the leadership how well the centre meets families' needs. All activities are evaluated by staff and also by users. Evaluations are usually highly positive. This information is used effectively by leaders to ensure courses meet the needs of users precisely. For example, users identified a paediatric first aid course to equip themselves with the necessary skills to deal with medical emergencies. The centre ran this course and take up rates were so consistently high that these now run regularly. Childminders particularly appreciate their engagement at the centre for various activities as this allows them easy access to various other professionals and workers to the benefit of the children in their care.

Outreach services are good quality and many users consistently praise the contribution of the family support and outreach workers saying, 'they are amazing, they make you feel welcome'. As a result of their successful interactions with adults and children, more vulnerable users now engage regularly with the centre. They ensure services meet users' needs. Where it is impossible to provide training on site, staff and other agencies, such as Jobcentre Plus, signpost users to other local providers.

The centre is inclusive, welcomes everyone, and has regular representation from a

small number of users from minority ethnic backgrounds. Children with disabilities or of disabled parents are supported fully by staff. Local parents run a support group for children with autism in conjunction with the educational psychologist and local secondary school. Other vulnerable groups include grandparent carers and professional parents who have difficulty adapting to the changes that a new child brings to their lives. The centre puts them in touch with other parents in similar positions so that they can see they are not alone and can discuss ideas. Grandparent carers thoroughly enjoy participating in a range of activities with their grandchildren. They also appreciate meeting younger members of society and being invited to social occasions away from the centre, thus helping to remove feelings of isolation.

The quality of care for all users is good and much valued by them. The centre is known locally as the place to turn to in times of crisis because staff are supportive and are able to signpost relevant services to users. As a result of good quality information and advice, there is good uptake of immunisations and a large number of referrals by staff made to other services. Staff work well with other agencies to improve safety in the home for families and parents value the safety equipment installed for them. Although there is no day care on site, sessional groups run well in accordance with the Early Years Foundation Stage and Every Child Matters outcomes. A high performing local practitioner is now supporting the centre effectively for one day each week. The well-equipped crèche room provides children with access to a wide range of well-resourced indoor and outdoor activities. Nonetheless, notes and assessments relating to different children are not separately recorded to provide individual profiles of the developing skills of those children who attend regularly.

*These are the grades for the quality of provision*

<b>The effectiveness of the assessment of the needs of children, parents and other users</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which the centre promotes purposeful learning, development and enjoyment for all users</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which the range of services, activities and opportunities meet the needs of users and the wider community</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The quality of care, guidance and support offered to users within the centre and the wider community</b>	<b>2</b>

## **How effective are the leadership and management?**

**2**

The centre is emerging from a challenging period in its history. The current centre leader has managed well with, at times, an extremely limited senior leadership team, due to staff absence and changes. She has maintained a clear focus on the work of the centre and has continued to develop user engagement and provision during this difficult time. The centre is now re-establishing a stable staff team and is focusing its efforts on moving forward and developing provision further.

The centre runs efficiently day-to-day with a close regard for financial security. Leaders have a clear view of all outcomes and provide regular evaluations for the advisory board of what is working well and which elements require greater focus. Governance is supportive and the advisory board represents a wide range of health and other agencies, parents and local authority representatives. Nonetheless, the advisory board, which has re-established relatively recently, is still finding its feet, and does not ask enough questions of the leadership with regard to ensuring outcomes improve. Effective supervision and regular performance management enable staff to improve their practice through regular professional development. Staff are held in high regard by local health professionals because they are commendably flexible in their approach to solving problems for users and offer a wide range of contacts and possible solutions. Childminders access the centre's services in increasing numbers and the children they care for benefit from the good quality resources available. Strong links are well established with the local authority.

The centre actively promotes equality and successfully celebrates diversity. This is because all services are tailored to engage users from backgrounds across the local area. As a result of comprehensive self-evaluation, leaders continually look for new ways to engage users, particularly the harder to reach. To begin with, the centre was most successful in attracting more affluent parents to the centre. Now, its appeal is across all backgrounds and engages a wide variety of users, particularly the most vulnerable. Subsidised trips to museums have been particularly effective in stimulating interest among groups such as fathers. Word of mouth has also ensured that increasing numbers of users are registering at the centre. The centre provides good value for money.

Comprehensive safeguarding policies and procedures ensure that safety and security are priorities. All staff adopt recommended good practice in all areas. Systems are well known to all staff. There is a consistent approach to any concerns. Staff and adult volunteers undergo the required checks to ensure their suitability for this work. There is sensitive recognition of a range of emotional and mental health issues. The leadership ensures that a range of health professionals works successfully alongside centre staff and offer complementary skills and services. As a result, parents and children feel secure here and are able to flourish. Individual case studies show how the centre quickly identifies children who require early intervention and ensure that their needs are well met through well tailored, individual support programmes. Users are fulsome in their praise of the centre, its staff and their work. They are highly appreciative of the services on offer and the friendly smile awaiting them on arrival. Partnerships are strong, particularly among agency professionals.

*These are the grades for leadership and management*

<b>The extent to which governance, accountability, professional supervision and day to day management arrangements are clear and understood</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The extent to which ambitious targets drive improvement, provision is integrated and there are high expectations for users and the wider community</b>	<b>2</b>



<b>The extent to which resources are used and managed efficiently and effectively to meet the needs of users and the wider community</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which equality is promoted and diversity celebrated, illegal or unlawful discrimination is tackled and the centre fulfils its statutory duties</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness of the centre's policy, procedures and work with key agencies in safeguarding children and, where applicable, vulnerable adults</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which evaluation is used to shape and improve services and activities</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which partnerships with other agencies ensure the integrated delivery of the range of services the centre has been commissioned to provide</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>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</b>	<b>2</b>

### **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](http://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](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk).

### **Summary for centre users**

We inspected the Sue Walker Children's Centre on 16-17 March 2011. We judged the centre as good overall.

The centre is a happy and welcoming place. Increasing numbers of you enjoy visiting it regularly. You say that the staff are all 'first class, tremendously helpful' and that you meet a range of 'really friendly people' here. In addition, the feedback you recently gave the centre about how satisfied you are with the services on offer was also highly positive.

You told us that the centre stops you feeling isolated and helps you to build a network of friends. Many of you particularly appreciate the good value trips that the centre organises. For example, several of you told us that the recent trip to 'Eureka' has opened your eyes to the varied fun and learning opportunities to be enjoyed by you and your children at museums.

The centre helps you to learn a lot about how to keep yourselves and your children healthy and safe. For example, more mothers breastfeed their babies for longer and parents generally show a developing knowledge of, and interest in, how to provide nutritious meals and snacks for their children and families. Some of you are happy for the centre to organise additional safety equipment for your use at home. You and your children are well prepared for the future from the services you access at the centre. Family support and outreach workers provide just the right levels of care and support and introduce you to a wide range of professionals. They are able to put you in touch with potential training courses or employment opportunities. They also help your children to develop the basic academic and personal skills they will require at they move on to primary school.

You will know that there have been some staff changes and absences at the centre over the last year. In spite of this, the centre's leaders and staff have maintained good quality services and checked regularly what is going well and where things could improve further. The centre has been particularly successful at encouraging more vulnerable families to attend the centre over the past twelve months. Childminders have also benefited from the services the centre provides.

The advisory board supports the centre well and provides regular opportunities for you to voice your views. Strong partnerships develop with other agencies so that the centre can provide you and your families with the correct levels of support to meet your individual needs.

The local authority gives good support to the centre, particularly with regard to the detailed and regular sets of data which highlight the centre's successes and areas for future focus.

We agree with much of what the centre says about its work. There are two areas we would like the leadership to look at in particular. First, to further improve the early years provision for young children. We have asked the centre to develop the influence of the lead teacher, create individual records of how well children who attend regularly make progress, and build on the links with other early years providers in the area. Second, we want the advisory board to improve how they check the effectiveness of the centre by asking more questions of the leadership team.

It was a pleasure to meet many of you during the inspection, to listen to your views and to read your evaluations of the services on offer. Thank you to those of you who allowed us to join you in some of the activities taking place during the inspection.

We wish you the very best for the future.

The full report is available from your centre or on our website [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)