

Inspection report for Wingate Children's Centre

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| Local authority | Durham |
| Inspection number | 362627 |
| Inspection dates | 4–5 April 2011 |
| Reporting inspector | Jean-Marie Blakeley |

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| Centre governance | Durham Local Authority |
| Centre leader | Sue Howe |
| Date of previous inspection | Not previously inspected |
| Centre address | Partridge Terrace |
| | Wingate |
| | Durham |
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| Linked school if applicable | 113971 Wingate Community Nursery School |
| Linked early years and childcare, if applicable | EY336563 Wingate Community Childcare Ltd |

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 additional inspector and an early years inspector.

The inspectors held meetings with staff and senior managers from the centre, parents and carers, members of the advisory board and representatives from Durham local authority. Inspectors also met with a number of partners from health, education, Jobcentre Plus, voluntary organisations and community representatives. They observed the centre's work and looked at a range of relevant documentation.

Information about the centre

Wingate Children's Centre is situated in Wingate in the Easington district of Durham. It is a phase 1 children's centre and was designated in 2006. The centre is sited between a maintained nursery school and a family centre forming a physical link between the two. The centre includes a day-care facility, consultation room and drop-in area. It serves a former coal mining community.

The area is one of high deprivation and unemployment rates are above the national average. The majority of local families are of White British heritage with a small percentage of families from minority ethnic groups. The centre provides the full core offer of services and is part of a children's centre cluster that includes six other children's centres and one outreach centre. Health services are delivered from the family centre and the children's centre. The cluster manager, supported by a team of senior staff responsible for aspects of the provision, oversees the work of the centre.

The percentage of children who are living in households where no one is working is well above the national average at 33%. The number of families that are dependent on benefits is also high, with 51% of children in families in receipt of family tax credit.

Governance arrangements are through Durham Local Authority. Children enter Early Years Foundation Stage provision with skills and abilities that are slightly lower than those found nationally. A company limited by guarantee, Wingate Community Childcare Ltd provides full day care within the children's centre. It provides day care for children aged from birth to five years and is open 10 hours a day, 50 weeks a year. This provision was subject to its own inspection in January 2011 and the report can be found at 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

3

Capacity for sustained improvement

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

3

Main findings

The overall effectiveness of Wingate Children's Centre is satisfactory. Outcomes for users, quality of provision, leadership and management and capacity to improve are all satisfactory.

Users benefit from a range of services already well established in the building prior to the designation of the children's centre in 2006. Children and families in Wingate clearly enjoy the on-site provision, which includes: the nursery school, some health services, the day care and services provided by the family centre and those delivered by the children's centre. However, the leadership team and local authority recognise that services are not well integrated. This is because of a lack of clarity in service level agreements, some weaknesses in partnership working and inconsistencies in centre staffing. Children's centre staff, who work in up to seven centres, are stretched due to staff vacancies. The centre does not have an on-site manager to give strong leadership and coordination to the centre's services. As a result, it has been difficult for the centre to establish its role among existing services. Although individual services are of high quality, the overall impact on improving outcomes is only satisfactory.

Children attending day care enjoy their sessions, which is evident in their happiness and good behaviour. For children attending the linked nursery school, inspectors found in December 2010 that this provision was outstanding. Local authority data clearly indicate improving outcomes for children, above local and national averages,

in the Early Years Foundation Stage Profile. Gaps between children's achievements are reducing well. However, engagement of adult users is only satisfactory and their outcomes are not well evidenced by the centre.

Parents and carers attending sessions such as 'Let's Bake', delivered by the partner family centre, enjoy fun activities with their children and increase their parenting skills. Although these families live in the reach area, a low number are registered centre users. Parents and carers do not have sufficient opportunities to make gains in their personal development through adult learning or volunteering programmes. The partnership with Jobcentre Plus is increasing and users benefit from up-to-date information on job opportunities through a 'job spot' file which is available for parents to access at all times. Individual case studies demonstrate some success in users' progression and development. However, the centre has little evidence to demonstrate that adults are gaining qualifications, progressing to training or gaining employment.

Effective procedures are in place to ensure users' safety, and parents and children feel safe at the centre. All safeguarding regulations are met and staff receive suitable training and know what action to take in the event of a safeguarding issue. Protocols and practice for making referrals and sharing information are in place and staff cooperate with other agencies to reduce the risk of harm to children.

The centre's commitment to promoting equality and diversity is clear and there is some success in engaging with its target groups. Users who met with inspectors have a high regard for the centre and the non-judgemental and welcoming approach by staff. Although registration of users is increasing, the number of families that engage with the centre is only satisfactory.

Membership of the advisory board lacks balance due to the high number of delivery partners and low number of parents or representatives from the community. The local authority provides a range of useful data. However, leaders and the advisory board do not use data on outcomes effectively to evaluate impact or set precise and measurable targets for improvement. Support from the local authority and the recent reorganisation of the leadership team are beginning to have an impact on improving partnerships, services and outcomes. The centre demonstrates a satisfactory capacity for further improvement through its understanding of its own effectiveness and the issues that are having an impact on improving outcomes for users.

What does the centre need to do to improve further?

Recommendations for further improvement

- The local authority should ensure:
 - the clarity of service level agreements between partners to support well-integrated provision
 - the centre has sufficient staff to coordinate and deliver services effectively
 - the centre redresses the balance of members on the advisory board to increase parental and community representation.

- Increase the effective use of data in order to enable:
 - the centre to improve the evaluation of outcomes
 - leaders to set precise and measurable improvement targets
 - the local authority and the advisory board to challenge outcomes.
- Increase guidance and access to qualifications, training and volunteering opportunities to improve users' economic well-being.

How good are outcomes for users?

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Families are developing a satisfactory understanding of how to keep healthy through the promotion of healthy meals, snacks and physical activity. Outcomes for children in the nursery school are excellent and good for those in day care, as identified in their respective inspection reports. The number of mothers who breastfeed their babies is increasing but is low and too few women give up smoking during pregnancy.

Children in day care make good progress and those in the linked nursery school make excellent progress in their personal and social skills, and in their communication, language and literacy skills. These gains are the result of well-planned and enjoyable learning. Parents and carers who engage in the family centre's activities enjoy their sessions and improve their confidence and parenting skills. However, the children's centre has limited evidence to demonstrate improving outcomes for adults.

Children's behaviour is good and relationships between families and with staff are warm and respectful. Some parents are contributing through their involvement in the developing 'Parents' Forum'. Some service users have volunteered or gained employment in the centre. However, a volunteer programme is not in place to enable users to develop work skills.

These are the grades for outcomes for users

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| The extent to which children, including those from vulnerable groups, are physically, mentally and emotionally healthy and families have healthy lifestyles | 3 |
| The extent to which children are safe and protected, their welfare concerns are identified and appropriate steps taken to address them | 3 |
| The extent to which all users enjoy and achieve educationally and in their personal and social development | 3 |
| The extent to which children engage in positive behaviour and develop positive relationships and users contribute to decision-making and governance of the centre | 3 |

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| The extent to which children are developing skills for the future and parents are developing economic stability and independence including access to training | 3 |
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How good is the provision?

3

Careful and effective assessment of children's needs in day care and in the nursery has a positive impact on their outcomes. Systems to assess the needs of those registering with the centre are developing. The centre is trying to find ways of identifying and assessing the needs of those families not currently engaging with it. The use of the Common Assessment Framework to support children at risk is satisfactory.

Provision to help children to learn and develop in day care is satisfactory and in the linked nursery school it is outstanding. For other users of services, learning is promoted adequately. The centre's lack of accommodation restricts opportunities for its staff to provide activities. Developing outreach services provides some services for families in the wider community. Users interviewed enjoy going to sessions in the partner family centre. The improving partnership with Jobcentre Plus means that a 'Work Club', is to take place in the centre.

The range of services provided by the centre and its partners meets the needs of users adequately. Registration is increasing but participation rates are only satisfactory. Some partners are successful in engaging with key target groups, such as teenage parents. Crèche facilities provided for courses ensure equality of access.

Partners provide individual care and support for families. However, support and guidance are no better than satisfactory because they are not well-coordinated across all partners. Some partners work closely together but this does not include all relevant parties. Health visitors refer families needing support, in times of crisis, to the family centre. Health professionals promote sexual health and give advice on contraception to teenage parents. However, there are insufficient data to measure the impact of this support. One parent said, 'I had no friends or family in Wingate when I moved here. I was poorly. The centre "saved me". I came here every day.' Children's centre staff are responsive to families that they know need support but these numbers are low. The centre works well with outside agencies such as the district's domestic violence team. However, users receive little routine guidance on adult learning opportunities in order to encourage them to progress.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

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| The effectiveness of the assessment of the needs of children, parents and other users | 3 |
| The extent to which the centre promotes purposeful learning, development and enjoyment for all users | 3 |

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| 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 | 3 |

How effective are the leadership and management?

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There are clear links between strategic planning and service provision. Staff have a good understanding of their roles and responsibilities and are appropriately supervised by their own agency. However, significant partners, providing good individual services, are not fully engaged in supporting integrated provision.

Leaders and managers are motivated to seek further improvement. They know the centre's major strengths and areas for development, including who their key target groups are and the challenging factors influencing outcomes. The centre has implemented satisfactory development plans. Some on-site services, particularly the childcare and the nursery school, are well integrated leading to improving outcomes. However, data are not used effectively to enable precise target-setting and careful evaluation of outcomes.

The use of resources has a satisfactory impact on outcomes for users. The centre building is a bright and welcoming environment. However, the lack of its own accommodation restricts the number of activities children's centre staff can directly provide. The number of users the centre successfully engages with is restricted by staff vacancies and the lack of an on-site manager. Outreach provision to vulnerable groups in the community is beginning to have an impact. The centre provides satisfactory value for money.

Centre staff and partnership agencies are committed to promoting the inclusion of all children and their families. The centre promotes inclusive practices for children with disabilities; this is particularly evident in the day care and linked nursery school. However, there is little analysis of the centre's impact on community cohesion or narrowing achievement gaps. Working parents have access to a limited number of activities as there is little evening or weekend provision. The number of men engaging with services is low. One young parent said: 'I came to baby massage, weaning parties and various other sessions. It stopped me being isolated.'

Safeguarding is satisfactory. Policies and procedures to ensure the protection of users on the site are effectively implemented and updated. Staff have a clear understanding about their role in identifying and reporting concerns and do so promptly. As a result, users' ability to stay safe is increasing. The centre collaborates with other key agencies to reduce the risk of harm to children. The centre has clear systems in place for recording information related to the vetting and recruitment of staff. Activities are risk assessed and include the views of users. The buildings are secure and reception staff are vigilant in checking visitors to the centre. Users say

that they and their children feel safe at the centre.

Self-evaluation is systematic and is supported by some evidence of the impact on outcomes. There are clear links between the centre's ongoing evaluation of its services and priorities set out in its development plan. The local authority and advisory board monitor and evaluate the work of the centre. However, evaluation lacks challenge, as the focus is mostly on the extent, quality and enjoyment of services and not sufficiently on outcomes. There is insufficient evidence of other services evaluating outcomes. The centre is developing and improving its systems to evaluate the longer-term impact of the provision on improving outcomes for children and adults.

A strength of the provision is the good partnership between day care and the nursery school that enables good transition arrangements for children. However, partnerships overall do not provide cohesive services. There is a lack of sharing of information between some partners. As a result, partnership activity increases opportunities for users but does not result in good and improving outcomes. The centre and partners seek and make use of feedback from parents to develop the range of provision. Outreach services are developing and targeting identified needs in the community. Those engaging with the provision express high levels of satisfaction.

These are the grades for leadership and management

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| The extent to which governance, accountability, professional supervision and day to day management arrangements are clear and understood | 4 |
| 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 | 3 |
| 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 | 4 |
| 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

Information from the most recent Ofsted inspection of: Wingate Community Childcare Ltd and Wingate Community Nursery School has been taken into account when writing about early years provision and outcomes for children in this report.

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 Wingate Children's Centre on 4 and 5 April 2011. We judged the centre as satisfactory overall.

We would like to thank all the people who spoke to us. Those of you we spoke to told us you enjoy coming to the centre and that it meets your needs. Your views were very helpful.

We found that staff have a good understanding of child protection procedures and that they are well trained. The buildings are secure and reception staff are vigilant in checking visitors to the centre. You said that you feel your children are well cared for and that they are safe at the centre.

You told us that all the staff are friendly and give you good support and that services provided are helping you and your families. We found that individual partners give you good support but it is not sufficiently coordinated between all the partners. We have asked the local authority to make sure there are clear service level agreements with the partners to ensure they work closely together.

Your children enjoy attending the day care and the nursery school. Inspectors who inspected the nursery school in December 2010 found that its provision was outstanding. The day care and the nursery school work closely together which helps children move between them. Those of you that attend sessions in the family centre enjoy activities such as 'Let's Bake' but not many of these families are registered with the children's centre.

The centre's commitment to promoting equality and diversity is clear. It helps children, especially those who may be disadvantaged in some way, to get a better start in life. We found that the centre has not been able to engage with as many families as it would like to. The centre is developing services out in the community to reach more families.

The centre is working with Jobcentre Plus to develop opportunities for you to access guidance and support to gain employment. We would like the centre to help more of you to get involved in volunteering and training and to take qualifications to help you build skills to gain employment.

Your children behave well and you all get on well together. Centre staff listen to you and ask you what you think of the services and activities they offer. Some of you are becoming involved in making decisions about your centre through the parents' forum. We suggest that the advisory board increases its membership of parents and representatives of the community.

We recommend that the advisory board, local authority and centre staff monitor the outcomes more closely and really challenge the centre to improve further. We recommend that the local authority makes sure there are sufficient staff to coordinate and deliver services. The advisory board and the centre staff really want to improve the centre. Because they already know the things they need to do, we believe that the centre will continue to improve.

Thank you very much for sharing your views with us. We wish you all the best for the future.

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