

Inspection report for Woodnewton - A Learning Community

Local authority	Northamptonshire
Inspection number	376303
Inspection dates	10–11 May 2011
Reporting inspector	Georgina Beasley

Centre governance	The local authority
Centre leader	Julia Kitson and Ellen Wallace
Date of previous inspection	N/A
Centre address	Rowlett Road
	Corby
	NN17 2NU
Telephone number	01536 265173
Fax number	01536 408557
Email address	head@woodnewton.northants-ecl.gov.uk

Linked school if applicable	Woodnewton - A Learning Community
Linked early years and childcare, if applicable	N/A

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 year's inspector.

The inspectors held meetings with staff, community, health and social partners, a group of parents and carers, and representatives from the local authority.

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

Information about the centre

Woodnewton - A Learning Community includes a phase two children's centre. It was designated in March 2008 reaching full-core offer in September 2009. About 92% of families are from White British backgrounds and 8% from minority ethnic backgrounds.

The centre serves an urban community which is in one of the 30% most deprived wards in the country. An above average number of people living in the area are long-term unemployed. Around 20% of children live in families that receive workless benefits. Approximately 18% of children live in poverty. The number of lone parent families and that receive work benefits is not known. A 'Dad's and Kid's Club' runs fortnightly on Saturday mornings and, on average, is attended by 11 fathers and 23 children. An average proportion of teenage and young mothers are in education, employment or training. Eighty-three per cent of three-year-olds attend pre-school of some kind.

The centre provides a base for a wide range of educational, health and social services. Children's skills on entry to nursery is below expected levels. The local authority governs the children's centre but has delegated the leadership and management to the governing body of Woodnewton - A Learning Community.

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

Woodnewton Children’s Centre is satisfactory. Some aspects are good. Children and their parents and carers who access the centre enjoy learning and having fun together. Adult users are encouraged to engage in relevant training and courses which have helped build their confidence as parents and carers, and supported a return to work for some. There are good procedures for ensuring users’ safety and welfare. Everyone signs in on arrival and wears a badge showing who they are and why they are there. Daily safety checks ensure users’ physical safety. A growing number of minority ethnic families who have moved into the area are being encouraged to attend groups and activities through health-visitor clinics and school staff. Their attendance at groups other than health clinics is currently small but growing. Good arrangements exist to ensure that identified children in families whose circumstances have made them vulnerable attend groups and enjoy activities, including transport to and from the centre if necessary.

The centre knows the children and families who attend centre activities and groups well. Detailed assessments ensure individual needs are met well and there have been good improvements in the children’s confidence and social development as a result. Parents and carers have played an active role since its opening in recommending and organising groups and activities. For example, the self-generated ‘Dads and Kids’ Club’ runs on alternate Saturdays and ‘drop-in’ groups run regularly for parents and carers to enjoy each other’s company and share experiences. Most parents and carers who attend do so because their children attend the adjoining school or because a friend has encouraged them to come along. While this is an effective way to build attendance, users who live in some areas within the reach do not register or access activities and the centre does not have a clear enough picture why. Outreach services are in their infancy and while the centre is an established part of the campus learning community, it has not established itself at the heart of the wider community.

The centre’s capacity to improve is satisfactory. Since opening four years ago, staff have concentrated on ensuring that services effectively meet the specific needs of those who access it. Leadership and management are satisfactory. The collection and

use of data to target users' needs are new. There is insufficient data about user outcomes to inform strategic planning and to evaluate whether services and groups respond to, and meet, the needs of the wider community as well as those of current users.

What does the centre need to do to improve further?

Recommendations for further improvement

- Collect and use data relevant to the reach area to ensure that the centre and its partners are targeting the needs of all users, including those who live in the wider reach area.
- Develop and implement a strategic plan and range of services that respond to a rigorous analysis of user outcomes and to the needs of the wider community.
- Advertise, celebrate and facilitate the centre services, including outreach, so that the centre establishes itself at the heart of the community.

How good are outcomes for users?

3

Health outcomes are satisfactory. Health visitor clinics are well attended and promote babies' early health through encouragement to parents and carers to stop smoking, and advice about feeding and dental care. As a result of clinics and breastfeeding support run by parents and carers, an increasing number of new mothers breastfeed their babies beyond the first few weeks. At around 95%, the immunisation rate is average. Healthy eating is promoted and healthy menus are shared at groups. Despite this, levels of obesity and dental cavities in young children are high indicating that the centre's work is not yet having the desired impact on children's health across the wider reach area. There is little data to indicate how many children live in smoke-free environments as a result of their parents and carers either stopping smoking or choosing to smoke outside.

Babies and young children show that they feel safe when attending group activities by the confident way in which they engage with activities, each other and with adults. 'Meet and greet' sessions give otherwise reticent families the confidence to join group activities. Relationships are positive and respectful. Particularly effective has been the drop-in facility and individual and group support for adults subject to domestic violence. The Common Assessment Framework process gives effective support to families whose circumstances have made them vulnerable. Social services support ensures that the number of families subject to a child protection plan is low in comparison to the wider district figures.

Parents and carers play a full and active role in determining the type and content of group activities and so those who attend enjoy learning to play and have fun with their children. The nursery staff concur that children who attend centre activities start in nursery with good level of confidence and independence and in most cases are ready to learn. The proportion of children reaching 78 points at the end of the

Early Years Foundation Stage is increasing steadily and is in line with national expectations and well above those who live in similar socio-economic areas. The gap between the lowest 20% and the rest is closing much faster than the national rate and is now half of that in Corby. Volunteers, childminders, parents and carers who access the centre are actively encouraged to partake in training and courses to build their confidence and skills. 'Cool Talk' has given parents confidence to understand and so manage their children's behaviour effectively at home.

Users and staff treat each other with a great deal of respect. Children, parents and carers who attend groups make confident choices about where and with what to play. They are fully involved in planning group activities. For example, on opening the users' steering group made a positive contribution to the type of centre activities offered at inception and subsequent groups have arisen as a result of parent and carer voice. Feedback following groups and activities is regularly sought, although it is not always clear how these feed through into subsequent improvements to group content. The original steering group has transformed this year into a community forum group which is just starting to be involved in contributing ideas and making decisions. There are very few outreach services to ensure the centre is contributing fully to the needs of the wider community.

Practical support for training and finding work is well targeted for those who access groups and services. There is little information currently to indicate how many adults in the wider community are successful in gaining qualifications that will help them back into work. Regular opportunity is offered to families to gain advice about benefits and finding work but again there are no precise figures of how many families have subsequently improved their economic well being as a result. Children who attend centre groups are becoming inquisitive learners through well-planned play and learning opportunities, A good number of three year olds attend some kind of preschool provision. Precise data for the take-up of formal day care by low-income and lone parent families is unavailable. An average number of teenage and young mothers attend some kind of education or training.

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 concerns are identified and appropriate steps taken to address them	2
The extent to which all users enjoy and achieve educationally and in their personal and social development	2
The extent to which children engage in positive behaviour and develop positive relationships and users contribute to decision-making and governance of the centre	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?

The centre knows the needs of those who access centre activities well. As a result, services and groups meet the learning and development needs of these users well. Good assessment has resulted in several adult users completing accredited courses to enable them to gain additional skills. Although only a small number of children attend, the recently formed 'Pretenders and Explorers' group provides children with a varied range of resources, toys and experiences that promote their learning and personal development well. Adults record children's learning closely in learning stories and use the information effectively to target individual needs through well-informed adult interactions with children's learning.

Parents and carers who attend groups learn how to play and interact with their children through activities such as heuristic and creative play groups. The 'Songs and Rhymes' group helps support the development of children's language, particularly those who speak English as an additional language. Mini-MEND (Mind, Exercise, Nutrition, Do It!) provides fun and creative activities for families to learn how to make healthier life choices. 'Dad's and Kid's Club' builds positive relationships between fathers and their children and offer good opportunity for them to learn how to keep themselves and their families safe through bike checks and road safety talks. Crèche facilities enable parents and carers to 'take a break' or attend training and courses.

The range of activities is satisfactory. There are very few outreach services provided in response to data about the wider reach area to ensure the centre is meeting the needs of the wider community. Jobcentre Plus holds regular surgeries and has plans to hold appointments for lone parents at the centre so that they do not have to struggle into town. The centre has not had the opportunity to evaluate the impact of some groups and activities on children's and users' outcomes because they are new.

Care for users' safety and welfare is good. Support and guidance for users and families whose circumstances have made them vulnerable are good and result in well-matched support. Support and guidance are satisfactory overall. They are not always targeted sufficiently to the needs of the wider reach area in response to data, especially health and economic wellbeing outcomes.

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	3

meet the needs of users and the wider community	
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?

3

Governance is satisfactory. The community forum, newly formed from the previous steering groups, includes representatives from all partners including parents. The governing body receives regular reports about provision and the management of resources. It does not receive sufficient information about outcomes to enable members to challenge and hold the centre to account.

The centre takes the views of its users into account when planning for improvement. Strong focus on improving the quality of learning and development for adults and children has resulted in some improvements in children's and adults' achievements over the last three years. The centre is not using data about user outcomes across the reach area to set specific targets for improvement related to the needs of the wider community. Strategic planning therefore lacks focus.

Leadership of support for children and families with a special educational need is good and results in targeted and focused support. All users are made to feel welcome and are enabled to be fully included in activities and groups. The centre offers translation services to users who speak English as an additional language so that they can be fully included in activities and groups. Users support each other well by offering advice and sharing personal experiences. New mothers in particular value this support and this results in their increased confidence in caring for their babies.

Partnerships are satisfactory. Annual conversations enable the local authority to challenge the centre and hold it to account, but the lack of precise data about reach area outcomes presents a barrier for more focused discussions. Similarly, a lack of precise data about health outcomes across the reach area, limits the partnership with health professionals in targeting the needs of the wider community. The centre works closely with other children's centres in Corby enabling them to share training, resources, activities and services.

The centre gains user views through feedback after all groups and activities to evaluate its offer. Some groups are too new such as Mini-MEND and 'Dad's and Kid's Club' for the centre to have responded to users' evaluations from feedback. Some steps have been taken to seek the views of the wider community through focused interviews. However, the lack of precise information about the reach area and user outcomes inhibits the centre's ability to target resources and identify and adjust services and groups to meet user needs across the reach area. The centre gives satisfactory value for money.

Safeguarding arrangements are good. All staff know the arrangement for checking

the identity of visitors, and parents and carers follow the signing in procedures. Multi-agency partnership is effective in ensuring the safety and welfare of users and families whose circumstances have made them vulnerable. Social services work closely with centre staff, health visitors and family support professionals to identify effective supports, especially the support for victims of domestic violence.

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	3
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	2
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	3
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

Woodnewton Primary School – a learning community was judged good in its inspection in May 2011 and contributed to the children's centre inspection and 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 the Children's Centre at *Woodnewton - A Learning Community* on 10–11 May 2011. We judged the centre as satisfactory overall.

Thank you for talking to us about your own and your children's experiences at the centre. It was clear from visiting groups that you have fun with your children and enjoy learning with them. You make a good contribution to the centre's work by helping to organise and run activities, groups and drop in sessions. The centre takes full account of your views when planning and arranging groups for you and your children to enjoy. You are made to feel welcome and value the 'home-from-home' atmosphere it creates.

The centre staff know your needs and those of your children well. Subsequent activities and services meet the needs of those of you who attend well. Health clinics are well attended and are often the springboard for your attendance at later groups. The centre gives good care to your personal safety and well-being. Satisfactory support and guidance are resulting in some improvements in your family's health. Particularly noteworthy is the support given to families who have experienced domestic violence. You enjoy the courses that the centre puts on to help you build your skills and which have helped some of you to return to paid work.

The day-to-day management of centre activities is good. Safeguarding procedures are followed consistently to ensure your own and your children's safety when you attend groups and activities. The centre ensures everyone who wishes is able to attend centre activities through transport and translation services. 'Meet and greet' sessions help those of you who initially lack confidence to attend and join in.

The centre plays a full role in the Woodnewton Learning Community. It does not yet play a full role in the wider community because it has only just started to collect data about outcomes to help it target resources and help it to ensure it is meeting the needs of all potential users who live in the reach area. There are very few outreach groups and services to ensure the centre meets the needs of the wider community. The lack of data inhibits the centre's ability to evaluate the effectiveness of its work, and to plan for the long-term improvement of the centre's services and activities.

We have asked centre staff to collect data that is more specific to the reach area and so help the centre to identify improvement priorities that help it to be sure it is meeting the needs of everyone who lives in the wider reach area. The centre uses your views to plan for improvement. We have asked it to use the data it collects to create and implement a strategic plan that details precisely how it intends to improve yours and your children's outcomes and those of others who live in the wider community. We have also asked it to raise its profile in the reach area so that it establishes itself at the heart of the wider community and more users benefit from its services, groups and activities.

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

