

Inspection report for Leatherhead Trinity Children's Centre

Local authority	Surrey
Inspection number	367831
Inspection dates	11–12 May 2011
Reporting inspector	Maureen York HMI

Centre governance	The governing body of Trinity Primary School
Centre leader	Hazel Davies
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected
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Linked school if applicable	Leatherhead Trinity 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.

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Introduction

The inspection addresses the centre's contribution to:

- facilitating access to early childhood services by parents, prospective parents and young children
- maximising the benefit of those services to parents, prospective parents and young children
- improving the well-being of young children.

The report is made to the local authority and a copy is sent to the children's centre. The local authority may send the report to such persons it considers appropriate and must arrange for an action plan to be produced in relation to the findings in this report.

This inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's inspectors and one early years inspector. Inspectors held meetings with senior leaders at the centre and of the school and members of staff. They also met with partners and professionals from other agencies.

Discussions were held with the local authority and governors. Inspectors observed the centre's work and looked at a range of relevant documentation.

Information about the centre

Leatherhead Trinity Children's Centre serves the area of North Leatherhead, which is ranked as the most deprived in the Mole Valley district. Local authority data show that around 10% of dependent children live in workless households and that the numbers of income support claimants is above the national average. Around a quarter of the adult population have no educational qualifications. Over three quarters of families are of White British heritage and the remainder are from a range of ethnic backgrounds. Over the last four years there has been an increase in the number of families from Eastern Europe moving into the area, and there are two Traveller sites.

Leatherhead Trinity Children's Centre was established in 2006. The centre works in partnership to deliver services across the area. Governance of the centre is provided by Leatherhead Trinity School Governing Body in conjunction with an advisory board. There is a link governor who sits on both groups, and the head of centre is a member of the school senior leadership team. The Children's Centre was designated as Phase 1 and it provides the full core offer of extensive family support, including outreach, a 54-place day-care provision and a Nursery class. The day-care and nursery provision were not part of this inspection.

The centre has extensive outdoor provision. The majority of services are delivered on site but other venues in the town centre are also used. Currently, the centre leader

manages two other centres in the area and the local authority is planning a full merger into one children's centre. Children's levels of skills and experiences are often lower than is typical for their age when they join the centre.

Inspection judgements

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

Overall effectiveness

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

1

Capacity for sustained improvement

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

1

Main findings

This is an outstanding children's centre which provides a very high quality service to the community and which is securing improving outcomes for parents, children and families. Centre leadership is excellent and teamwork is a real strength. The centre leader has high expectations of the staff, and they meet them. Leatherhead Trinity Children's Centre is characterised by a highly inclusive ethos and the working relationship with the school is outstanding. It runs extremely well on a day-to-day basis and families benefit greatly from the services and support which the centre has to offer.

Partnership working is outstanding and is delivering integrated care and support to vulnerable families. Parents and carers feel very comfortable and safe in the centre and know they will get a warm welcome from the staff. Users told inspectors that staff are kind and that they would find it difficult to manage without the support which the centre offers. The approach to safeguarding the well-being of users is robust and ensures that all are aware of the need to be vigilant.

Outcomes continue to improve for the children who use the centre in many areas of their development. They are very well prepared for the next stage of their learning and they play very well together, showing very good relationships with other children and adults. Adults make extremely good use of the wide range of courses on offer at the centre and as a result they grow in confidence and skills to provide very well for the needs of the children and their families. There are several examples of parents gaining employment at the centre and some have gone on to higher education and gained degrees.

The range of services and courses on offer is outstanding and work with families at home ensures that the centre is reaching out into the community. Many users told

inspectors that they appreciated the opportunity to meet other parents and to share their experiences. The commitment of the staff to meeting the needs of both adults and children is very impressive and they are constantly looking for ways to improve what they do. This contributes to an open and friendly atmosphere where everyone feels free to ask for help when they need it.

The centre has an outstanding capacity to improve because leaders pursue excellence in all that they do. Self-assessment and evaluation processes are very sharp. A wide range of data is used to support accurate self-assessment. Leaders know, for example, that there is more to do to involve the Traveller community and firm action has started on this. Senior staff regularly monitor the work of the centre through line management arrangements and by seeking the views of users on the quality of the services they receive. As a result, planning for improvement is very strong and there is a shared sense of common purpose and ambition, which is shared by staff and governors. One user commented, 'You have great staff and (I) am delighted with the whole atmosphere.'

What does the centre need to do to improve further?

Recommendations for further improvement

- Extend the centre's work with the traveller community.

How good are outcomes for users?

1

An excellent range of provision ensures that outcomes are high. Parents and carers speak with enthusiasm about the support they receive and say that they feel comfortable and safe; as one commented, 'The staff here will help me with anything.' Children are happy and engaged when they are in the centre and safeguarding procedures are clear and very robust. Children and users are effectively safeguarded and there are visible reminders for parents of the safe and healthy practice expected when they bring their children into the centre. For example, the 'stay and play' session always includes a safety tip of the week. In addition, various courses have helped raise parents' awareness of personal safety issues and this is reinforced when families are visited at home. As such, children, parents and carers feel safe at the centre and gain a good awareness of how to be safe at home and in the wider community.

Effective support for parents on behaviour such as the Parenting Puzzle course is helping them to manage their children's behaviour more effectively and outreach work successfully builds on this by modelling approaches through play. One parent who was experiencing difficulties with her child felt that this support had helped her to set boundaries and that her child's behaviour has improved as a result.

The centre works closely with the school and nursery to track the progress that

children make towards the Early Years Foundation Stage learning goals, and there has been a significant improvement in their personal and social skills and linguistic development. The school notes that children who have attended the centre settle into school more quickly and confidently. This growing confidence is also evident among the parents and carers where they have benefitted from courses such as 'Volunteering in School'. A well-run crèche means that parents can study while their children are looked after. They enjoy the opportunity to meet others and to get informal support and advice. Many had felt very isolated in the home and they speak with passion about the difference that the centre has made to their lives.

An effective partnership with health professionals together with a wide range of services and advice actively promote healthy lifestyles. There is a major emphasis on outside play and the centre has developed the outdoor area to a high standard. This has contributed to an improvement in the children's physical development, which the school attributes to the work of the centre. Last year the scores in this area of the Early Years Foundation Stage were higher than the county average. There has been a similar recorded improvement in children's emotional well-being. A baby massage course provides very early support and written comments from parents show that this is appreciated, 'It was lovely to see how my baby relaxes during these sessions.'

Job Centre Plus is unable to staff sessions on site but the centre is providing excellent support to compensate for this. Outreach staff have training in areas such as tax credits and are able to provide initial advice on a range of areas which is supplemented by regular sessions run by citizens advice staff. The centre's emphasis on learning and development means that many parents who began as volunteers in the centre have gained childcare qualifications and are now in paid employment. As one said, 'I feel so proud of what I have done.'

The centre is responsive to what parents say and has changed both course timings and content in response to users' views. As a result, sessions and courses provided by the centre are very well attended, with some significantly oversubscribed.

These are the grades for the outcomes for users

The extent to which children, including those from vulnerable groups, are physically, mentally and emotionally healthy and families have healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which children are safe and protected, 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	1
The extent to which children engage in positive behaviour and develop positive relationships and users contribute to decision-making and governance of the centre	1
The extent to which children are developing skills for the future and parents are developing economic stability and independence including access to training and employment	1

How good is the provision?

1

The quality of care is excellent overall because the support is very personalised and enables users to develop the well-being of their families so that the outcomes for them are excellent. Staff make use of a very wide range of assessment information to supplement a good local knowledge of the community. The views of adults who use the centre are typified by the comment that 'All the services are excellent and they fulfil all my family needs.' Staff in the centre are also flexible and adapt services to meet developing individual and community needs. For example, many working parents make use of the day-care facilities and as a consequence health visitors noted the important role that grandparents play in many families. As a result the centre has recently started a support group for them where they can meet and share experiences.

There are very wide-ranging systems for assessing the needs of the children and families who use the centre, and the needs of these families are well known and understood by partners. Outreach staff are successful in using home visits and centre sessions to reach out to those who are initially reluctant to use the centre. Parents who had lacked the confidence to go to the centre are now acting as volunteers and they have had their achievements marked at celebration evenings. Although the centre works hard to engage with the Traveller community in the area, they recognise that more could be done to work with partners in improving what is on offer to these families.

Services to support transition into nursery and school are excellent. The 'Moving On' group is successful in helping parents to provide support and understanding for their children as they move on to the next stage of their education. Several case studies also tell of the centre's significant success in meeting the specific needs of individual families and children. In particular, the needs of families where there are children with special educational needs and/or disabilities are identified early and appropriate support is provided. As a result they are able to enter nursery and school with the appropriate support already in place. In some cases, outreach staff accompany the children into the Nursery to ensure a continuity of support between home and the centre. Strong support is also provided at the centre through such groups as 'Reach for the Stars', which provides advice and support on special needs.

Parents and children enjoy coming into the centre and the wide range of courses offered to adults is a significant strength of the centre's work. In many instances the impact of these opportunities has been life changing for many of the parents. As a result of the accredited courses on offer, one father is now working as an early years practitioner in the childcare facility and speaks highly of the encouragement which he has received from everyone in the centre. Such achievement is routinely celebrated at well-attended awards events which boost confidence and encourage even greater participation.

Sessions for parents, such as Parents Matter and Art Attack, are leading to improved parenting skills and increasing parents' confidence in helping children's learning at home. A Dads' group is also providing good opportunities for informal learning; as one commented, 'I just enjoy seeing my children play.'

These are the grades for the quality of provision

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

How effective are the leadership and management?

1

There is a strong sense of teamwork which extends across the centre and also demonstrates the very effective partnership with the school. Both the governing body and staff are clear that this integrated and cohesive approach is crucial to the centre's success in providing high quality support for users. The day care is very well integrated with centre policies and approaches.

The centre leader provides very effective leadership. She and the staff are committed to the area they serve and this passion is shared by the governing body. As a result, governance is highly effective in holding the centre accountable for what they do and in challenging them to do even better. Good support is also provided by the local authority. Recent changes have strengthened the advisory board, which has a wide representation of partners, and they regularly contribute to the setting of priorities and strategy.

Day-to-day management is excellent. Roles and responsibilities are clearly understood and effectively delegated to centre staff. Professional supervision is conducted regularly and performance management is used effectively to develop the skills and expertise of staff. Key priorities for improvement are identified and shared with partners. They are also used to inform individual targets for staff so that they are aware of the aims and vision for the centre. As a consequence, staff are aware of the contribution that they make and speak with pride about their portfolios of achievement.

The centre leader collects a wide range of data to support the development of the centre's effectiveness but there are a few gaps in the data provided by partners; for

example, on smoking cessation and levels of breast feeding. Self-assessment is nonetheless very accurate and evaluation is used extremely effectively to ensure that services are tailored to meet both individual and family needs.

Safeguarding is robust and processes for monitoring the welfare of children and the sharing of concerns are applied with rigour. Staff are confident in their knowledge of child protection; their training is regular and up to date. Excellent partnership working ensures that support is given to families at times of crisis while support to parents in keeping their children safe is sometimes delivered in the home if they are reluctant to attend the centre. Recruitment and vetting procedures are adhered to and full risk assessments carried out for all activities. The Common Assessment Framework is well understood by the staff and is used effectively to target help to where it is most needed. Team work between different agencies contributes much to the effective safeguarding arrangements. Leaders do, however, recognise that the current policy is in need of updating.

The centre has a very strong inclusive ethos. In many sessions there is a diverse ethnic mix of parents and carers, who socialise and enjoy the opportunity to meet a wider range of people. There are courses designed to support users in acquiring English as an additional language and efforts are made to encourage recently arrived families from Eastern Europe to make use of the centre. Leaders are always looking for ways to involve everyone, and any form of discrimination is tackled with vigour. Leaders effectively identified the need to involve the Traveller community even more. They are actively involved in developing this and are keenly working to do more still for this group of users.

Financial resources are managed well. The centre is very welcoming and accommodation is very attractive, well maintained and well used. Outdoor resources are extremely well presented and there are good quality toys and books. Partners enjoy coming here and they say that staff are friendly and accommodating. Considering the impressive outcomes for users, the centre gives outstanding value for money.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The extent to which governance, accountability, professional supervision and day-to-day management arrangements are clear and understood	1
The extent to which ambitious targets drive improvement, provision is integrated and there are high expectations for users and the wider community	1
The extent to which resources are used and managed efficiently and effectively to meet the needs of users and the wider community	1
The extent to which equality is promoted and diversity celebrated, illegal or unlawful discrimination is tackled and the centre fulfils its statutory duties	1

The effectiveness of the centre's policy, procedures and work with key agencies in safeguarding children and, where applicable, vulnerable adults	2
The extent to which evaluation is used to shape and improve services and activities	1
The extent to which partnerships with other agencies ensure the integrated delivery of the range of services the centre has been commissioned to provide	1
The extent to which the centre supports and encourages the wider community to engage with services and uses their views to develop the range of provision	1

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Summary for centre users

We inspected Leatherhead Trinity Children's Centre on 11–12 May 2011. We judged the centre as outstanding.

During the inspection, we held meetings with the centre's staff and some of the other people who work from the centre. We were pleased to be able to talk to some of you about the centre and the activities it provides for you. We would like to thank the people who came to the centre specially to meet with us. We took account of the views of all the people we met when we made our judgements about the centre. We also looked at some of the evaluations that you had completed for the centre about the sessions you attend. Many of you told us how warm and welcoming the staff were and that the support you receive is invaluable. One parent said that she did not know what she would do without it.

Leatherhead Trinity is doing some impressive work with individual families, who benefit from the very strong partnership working of the various services that operate from the centre. The care provided supports your needs well when you need it most. There is excellent support provided by the centre staff who visit you in your homes. You have told us how helpful you have found their advice on behaviour, for example. You are all made to feel very welcome and the centre is keenly working to encourage more families from Traveller heritages to join activities.

With support from a range of professionals, staff provide you with very good quality advice on healthy eating and the outdoor play provision is excellent. This is helping to improve the health and physical well-being of your children. Staff are careful to ensure that you and your children are safe and you told us that you feel comfortable

and welcome in the centre. Your children are very well prepared for nursery and school and are making progress in many areas of their learning.

Many of you have attended the courses run at the centre and you spoke very movingly about the difference that these had made to you. For some you have gone on to achieve childcare qualifications while for others they have helped you to understand how your children learn and develop.

We wish you and your families the best for the future.

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