

# Inspection report for Ashby Sure Start Children's Centre

Local authority	Leicestershire
Inspection number	366325
Inspection dates	18–19 May 2011
Reporting inspector	Sheelagh Barnes

Centre governance	Local authority
Centre leader	Paul Harrison
Date of previous inspection	Not applicable
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Linked school if applicable	Woodcote Primary School
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 the coordinator of the centre and the locality partnership coordinator, representatives of the local authority and of the locality partnership group, parents, outreach workers, health workers, and family support workers. They observed the centre's work, and looked at a range of relevant documentation.

## Information about the centre

Ashby is a phase two children's centre. It opened in 2008 and provides the full core offer. The centre is one of a cluster of eight, all administered by the same coordinator, supported by a locality partnership coordinator. The local authority is the designated authority for governance and there is also a locality partnership group, but no commissioned childcare. The 'Family Information Service' is used to signpost families to childcare, which is provided through private, voluntary and independent sources. Levels of deprivation in the area range from the bottom 70% nationally to relatively advantaged families.

The majority of families in the area are White British. Teenage pregnancies and the proportion of teenage parents not in employment, education or training are relatively low. The proportion of families where no-one is in work is below the national average. The centre has no data on the proportion of families with children under five in receipt of benefits other than those in workless households. Children's attainment on entry to early years' provision is below that expected for their age. There are currently approximately 1% of children in the reach area with a child protection plan of which the centre is aware. No children at this point have been assessed under the Common Assessment Framework.

The centre opens from 9.00 am to 5.00 pm, five days a week, 48 weeks per year. There are links with Jobcentre Plus, the Citizens Advice Bureau, local childminders and childcare providers, adult learning, youth services and health services such as visitors and midwives. The centre is fully accessible to disabled parents, carers and children.

## 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**

**2**

## Main findings

The centre meets the needs of children and families in the area satisfactorily. Those who use the facilities, such as the breastfeeding cafe and the young parents group, are very happy with the work the centre does and are keen supporters. They say things such as, ‘I’ve learned so much!’ Mothers with few relatives living close by describe the centre as a ‘social life-line’. The work to ensure equality of opportunity is satisfactory, as is the work to promote safeguarding. This is because suitable policies are in place and are followed satisfactorily.

Many impressive improvements have been introduced since the local authority’s review of its children’s centres in January 2011, including the appointment of a permanent local partnership coordinator and a systematic review of provision. The local authority is reviewing and collating data for each centre, using information from a variety of agencies. This contains much of the information the centre needs to focus its work on the most vulnerable. Centre leaders are using this to build a clearer picture of the needs of families in the area. However, the gathering of recent and relevant information is ongoing and new information is still being added to the picture of the reach area. Information to measure the impact of actions taken and sessions run is accumulating to support the information the centre already has on the effectiveness of its work, from analysing individual case studies.

There has been some limitation in communication between agencies in the past. On occasion, information from different sources within the partnership of agencies has been conflicting. Communication has now been strengthened to tackle this, although leaders accept that there is potential for this to be refined still further. Information

has not been integrated consistently across and between partners.

The local authority has reviewed the extent to which parents and carers are active partners who are incorporated into decision making at all levels in the development of its centres. The locality partnership group now has a clear action plan for the involvement of parents and carers in all eight of the centres in the North West Leicestershire cluster. Governance and accountability arrangements are clear. There is now open formal and informal dialogue with parents, involving them in the beginnings of a system to allow their views to start to alter the direction of the centre's development. This has already resulted in some changes to provision. Parents and carers feel that this is a very positive step forward and say they are impressed with the progress so far.

A formal quarterly and annual monitoring system is in place. Monitoring is undertaken of all family outreach workers work and an audit and checklist of administrative requirements completed. Self evaluation is now undertaken with rigour and is being used to plan future developments. All these factors point to a good capacity to continue to improve.

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

#### **Recommendations for further improvement**

- The relevant authority should ensure the centre has comprehensive and up-to-date information in order to:
  - establish a more accurate understanding of the needs of all groups within the reach area
  - monitor the impact of the actions taken to support these groups.
- Involve parents and carers at all levels and incorporate their views fully into decision making.
- Improve the consistency of sharing of information across and between partner agencies.

### **How good are outcomes for users?**

<b>3</b>
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The health outcomes for children and families are satisfactory. The small size of the centre limits some activities, such as outdoor play opportunities and cookery courses for parents. However, the outdoor area is currently being developed and is used for 'teddy bears' picnics' for young parents and their children. Safety is given a high priority and babies and young children respond to the well managed and comfortable environment of the centre. They are relaxed and happy. Parents appreciate the care taken by staff to ensure that the environment is safe, clean and attractive. Families where no-one is in work are guided to the Marlene Reid Centre for support in providing safety equipment in the home. This means that they receive useful items free of charge.

The enjoyment and achievement of adult users is satisfactory overall; it is good for young children and babies. A higher proportion of children than nationally attain 78 points across the Early Years Foundation Stage Profile with at least six points in communication, language and literacy and personal and social development. The gap between the lowest performing 20% of children and the rest is being effectively diminished. The setting is enabling children to develop good skills for the future. However, achievement for parents and carers is not given as much emphasis and active links with Jobcentre Plus are limited. The centre provides few formal training opportunities, although those that are provided, such as first aid, are appreciated by users. Parents and carers say 'this has increased my confidence'. The centre 'signposts' parents to training by other providers, but leaders do not follow this up by systematically monitoring the outcomes. As a result, while it has information on isolated individuals, the centre has little information on how successful adult training has been.

The work with children who have a child protection plan is satisfactory. It is not better than this because of flaws in communication channels, resulting in all agencies not being fully informed. This is rightly identified as a focus for improvement in the centre's development plan. Staff are trained in the Common Assessment Framework, but at the time of inspection, while assessment procedures have been newly started, none have been completed. Children engage in positive behaviour, and sessions such as 'Little Pelicans' provide good opportunities for them to share, join in and develop positive relationships. Children enjoy helping parents, carers and sometimes grandparents to put out equipment. Users' involvement and their contribution to decision making has been given a much sharper focus in recent months. Formal meetings are held with parents, which they say are providing a new breadth of approach aimed at the future. Already, some changes have been made as a result of users giving their views.

*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>3</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>3</b>
<b>The extent to which all users enjoy and achieve educationally and in their personal and social development</b>	<b>3</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>3</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>3</b>

**How good is the provision?**

**3**

The centre promotes purposeful learning satisfactorily. For young children and babies, the provision enables them to make good progress in many aspects of the six areas of learning within the Early Years Foundation Stage. For parents and carers, the provision is planned and evaluated less systematically. The centre provides a limited range of programmes for parents to study and improve their skills on site. For other courses, the system tells users where courses are running and how they can access them.

The centre has put in a great deal of effort in recent months, with local authority support, to start to systematically revise and develop its knowledge of the needs of users. There is new data coming in all the time; for example, on the proportion of families where there are smokers, lone parents, families with access to benefits and child immunisation rates. The centre is now in a stronger position to tailor provision to where it will have the greatest impact. Centre leaders plan to use the developing information to measure how well its actions improve such things as community health. Support for mothers who are breastfeeding is a real strength of the centre. Parents commented positively, for example by saying, 'my friends tried to dissuade me, but here I had support' and 'outside the centre I was made to feel awkward about breastfeeding, but my mentor at the centre allowed me to see it is a normal, healthy process.' As a result of this good provision, the proportion of mothers who continue to breastfeed beyond six weeks is higher than the national rate.

The centre acknowledges that it has not given sufficient priority previously to liaising with local communities, including minority ethnic groups. Nor has it sufficiently involved parents in the development of its services. This is a fundamental part of the more targeted programme outlined in the centre's development planning. Parents interviewed spoke of the long-term vision for the development of the centre and their keenness to become more involved. Several of those spoken to were glad that this is being developed in a carefully planned and methodical way with real thought for the future. The information about various changes has been fed back formally to parents and carers, who see this as a positive step.

Outreach work is provided for families satisfactorily. Much good work is done to support individual families in times of crisis, for example, following accidents or illnesses. To help to improve communication, a specific outreach worker is allocated responsibility for coordinating the work in each centre. This is still at early stages, but is already benefiting users by maximising the information shared between agencies and is having a positive impact on the support given to families.

*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>3</b>
<b>The extent to which the centre promotes purposeful learning, development and enjoyment for all users</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The extent to which the range of services, activities and opportunities meet the needs of users and the wider community</b>	<b>3</b>

<b>The quality of care, guidance and support offered to users within the centre and the wider community</b>	<b>3</b>
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## **How effective are the leadership and management?**

**3**

The senior leadership team and other leaders and managers are strongly motivated to drive continued improvement. They are focussing effectively on clearly-defined priorities following the recent review in January. Self evaluation is accurate and honest: leaders know well the centre's main strengths and areas for development. Clear plans that set priorities aimed at improving outcomes are in place. Systematic evaluation is underway to ensure that resources are targeted at the areas of greatest need. Leaders effectively communicate high expectations and ambitious targets for improvement for users and the community. As a result, motivation is high and staff and representatives of partner agencies are enthused. New rigorous procedures are in place to ensure that provision delivered by the centre and that which it commissions is of high quality.

Governance is satisfactory and improving rapidly. Accountability arrangements have been strengthened in recent months and are understood by all parties. Provision is strategically planned through the increased use of data. Measurable milestones help leaders to check on the centre's provision with commissioned services involving phased payments. Quality-assurance arrangements are outlined clearly and involve weekly catch-ups and monthly formal supervisions. Clear targets for improvement have been set and are understood by all. The effectiveness of systems to promote equality and celebrate diversity is satisfactory. There is appropriate support for children with special educational needs and/or disabilities. Resources are deployed to provide satisfactory value for money.

Safeguarding procedures are satisfactory. All members of staff are trained in first aid. Information from criminal record checks and staff qualifications are recorded well. The centre has clear and appropriate policies for health and safety, child protection and risk assessment, which are all up-to-date and reviewed regularly. Multi-agency work to support families who are vulnerable due to their circumstances is satisfactory.

*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>3</b>
<b>The extent to which equality is promoted and diversity celebrated,</b>	<b>3</b>

<b>illegal or unlawful discrimination is tackled and the centre fulfils its statutory duties</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>3</b>
<b>The extent to which evaluation is used to shape and improve services and activities</b>	<b>3</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>3</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>3</b>

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

The findings of the inspection of Woodcote Primary School were considered. The inspectors also took into account the links between the school and the centre. These are productive and benefit families. As a result, children make good progress in the Early Years Foundation Stage.

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 Ashby Sure Start Children's Centre on 18 and 19 May 2011. We judged the centre as satisfactory overall.

I would like to thank those of you who spoke to us during the inspection and gave us your views of the centre. You told us how much you value the help and guidance of the staff and how sessions such as the breastfeeding cafe provide a real support to you. We agree with you that the accommodation and the resources are bright and attractive. Several of you made a point of telling us that the cleanliness of equipment and the centre generally is very important to you. We saw how relaxed your children are at the centre and how confident they are growing as a result. The centre enables you and your families to develop healthy lifestyles, keep safe and prepare for economic well-being satisfactorily.



Before the centre was opened, there was a survey of the needs of families in the area. Since that time, the centre has not been provided with a systematic update of the changes in the locality. The local authority is now providing this information for the centre and others in the authority. However, this process is not yet complete and during the inspection some of the information was still coming in. We have asked the centre leaders, in conjunction with the local authority, to continue to build on this data and use it to focus sessions where there is greatest need for all families in the reach area. We know that staff take note of how well your children are developing. However, there has been less monitoring of how effective sessions are for you as adults, particularly those at other venues that centre staff tell you about. It is difficult, therefore, for the centre to evaluate how well it is doing compared to others, both locally and nationally. We have asked the centre leaders to keep records of how many of you make requests for courses and how well you get on or how successful groups are, such as those provided to help you gain further qualifications.

We know that centre leaders and the local authority want more of you to have a say in the way it develops. Some of you told us about the meetings with parents that have recently taken place. Although none of you are currently on the Locality Partnership Group, we know that there are firm plans for this to happen. Your views have already started to cause changes, such as in arrangements for clothes drying at 'messy play' sessions. We have asked the centre to extend the input of ideas from parents and carers. This way you can play a more active role in how the centre develops further.

We have also asked the leaders to refine the systems of communication between the different agencies that work through the centre for your benefit. We know that this has been already identified as an area for development by the centre leaders themselves. As a result, there is now a named key outreach worker to collate the work and information of each centre. This is having a positive impact in helping centre managers monitor what is going on and how effective it is. However, there are still some improvements to be made, as different agencies do not all have identical information about the needs in the area. They do not all know exactly what others are providing. This impinges on their efficiency and effectiveness.

We hope that you, your children and the families who live in and around the Ashby area will continue to enjoy and benefit from the services the centre offers. Thank you for contributing to our evidence base by sharing your comments and thoughts so openly.

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