

Inspection report for Stanhope Children's Centre

Local authority	Nottinghamshire
Inspection number	365732
Inspection dates	15–16 June 2011
Reporting inspector	Andrew Clark

Centre governance	County Health Partnerships
Centre leader	Sue Shiggins
Date of previous inspection	Not applicable
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Linked school if applicable	Stanhope Primary School and Nursery
Linked early years and childcare, if applicable	Not applicable

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 one additional inspector and one early years inspector.

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

Stanhope Children's Centre opened as a phase two centre in October 2008. The centre offers family support, parental involvement and links with Jobcentre Plus, schools, health and other services. The centre is located on the same site as Stanhope Primary School. The governance of the centre is provided by County Health Partnerships commissioned by the local authority to provide children's centre services in the Gedling District of Nottinghamshire. They work in conjunction with an advisory board made up of centre users and service providers. The centre leader, who was appointed in June 2008, also manages a children's centre in nearby Netherfield, which is subject to a separate inspection. The centre provides crèche facilities and other activities on site.

Most children enter early education with knowledge and skills which are below those typically expected for their age. The centre serves a community which experiences high levels of social deprivation and economic disadvantage. The proportion of children who live in workless households without paid employment or with low incomes is high as is the number of families in receipt of benefits. The area has a mix of social, privately rented or privately owned housing. The majority of families are White British, with a small number from other ethnic groups.

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

Stanhope Children's Centre provides good services for young children and their families. The centre has made rapid progress in developing the quality of provision and its impact on the community in the time that it has been open. The centre is extremely well led and governed and staff have a clear knowledge of the centre's strengths and weaknesses. Outcomes for children and their families are good. Identified priorities for improvement have been tackled quickly and successfully. There is an excellent partnership with other services and the centre receives good support from its local advisory group. The centre has a positive impact on the lives of its users. 'Contact with the centre has really turned my life around. What I have gained from Stanhope I want to give back to the community,' is a comment from one user, reflecting the views of many. These factors give the centre a good capacity for further improvement.

The centre has a good impact on the health of its users. There is a good improvement in mothers engaging in breastfeeding and the take-up of immunisation for babies. The centre is successful in helping mothers to give up smoking during pregnancy. Many activities, such as baby massage and weaning courses, contribute well to children's well-being, although activities to promote some aspects of adult fitness are less well established. Staff take excellent care of the children and their families both in the centre and through the advice and support they provide through home visits. Children and adults develop an excellent understanding of how to keep themselves and others safe through; for example, through the very well-received training on first aid and the guidance given on home visits.

There is a great sense of enjoyment in all the centre's activities and families, which have previously been hard to engage, enjoy coming to the centre. The excellent tracking of children's progress in the crèche and other activities and the outstanding partnership with services such as speech therapy contribute to strongly improving skills. The centre promotes equality well and its support for young children is starting to close the achievement gap. Adult learners, particularly those in vulnerable circumstances, are progressing well in literacy and numeracy skills. The centre

provides well planned opportunities for adults to become volunteers and prepares them successfully for future employment. As a result, the centre has set up a very effective parents' forum which provides them with a strong voice in decision-making for the centre.

The centre knows the families it serves well and the assessment of individuals' needs is outstanding. Excellent partnerships with other agencies including health and social care also ensure the early identification and support for those who are vulnerable and for children with special educational needs and/or disabilities. The centre uses this information well to develop a good range of targeted outreach services and activities to meet the needs of users. However, the centre is further developing use in its self-evaluation of increasingly accurate local information and data provided by partnership agencies to target services even more effectively. The close partnership with health and local authority safeguarding groups contributes to the extremely rigorous procedures to keep children and their families safe.

What does the centre need to do to improve further?

Recommendations for further improvement

- Ensure that self-evaluation procedures incorporate the most recent and accurate information and data from all sources to effectively support all users within the centre's area.
- Improve the range of activities for adults, as well as children, to further develop their fitness.

How good are outcomes for users?

2

The healthy food training gives parents and carers a good insight into how different food groups affect emotion and well-being. Children and adults relish eating healthy snacks and fresh fruit because the centre promotes this aspect of learning well. Initiatives such as weaning groups and children's sessions such as 'Busy Feet' and 'Rattle, Rhyme and Roll' and links with weight-watchers promote healthy lifestyles amongst almost all groups of users. These have contributed to the centres 'Healthy Children's Centre' status. The centre is exploring ways to develop opportunities for adult fitness activities, which are less well established, to run alongside these activities in response to its own evaluation and requests from parents. Such activities also contribute to reducing rates of obesity amongst children.

An improving trend in breastfeeding rates at above local rates for new mothers is a result of excellent links with health professionals, inter-agency working and carefully targeted individual support. Baby massage and 'Tums to Tots' activities are as much enjoyed by parents and carers as they are by babies and contribute to everyone's health and well-being. The outstanding relationship with health visitors and midwifery services all make a strong contribution to the health and well-being of families in crisis both through specific projects and by carefully planned individual

programmes of support. Recent improved data from health and social services has identified possible further areas of need and potentially vulnerable families within the area, which the centre is beginning to incorporate into its development planning, although this is at an early stage.

Outcomes for staying safe are excellent. Staff are extremely well trained in identifying any safety and child protection concerns and taking swift and appropriate action. They provide leadership to other professionals in several aspects such as establishing Common Assessment Frameworks for vulnerable children and families. This is complimented by the excellent multi-agency links and the role of the Family Support Workers. The individual support the centre provides for its most vulnerable families and the work with babies contributes to their future economic well-being. Users' quotes such as 'Without the centre I would be nowhere. They have given me my life back,' reflect the views of many adults who have been supported by the centre. The home safety packages provided by the centre staff help to reduce local admissions to hospital and have been particularly successful in meeting the needs of those involved in domestic violence. Children's behaviour is excellent because of the excellent calm and purposeful ethos. Several initiatives such as 'The Incredible Years' programme also contribute to the high quality of behaviour and children's attitudes. Rigorous risk assessment procedures ensure children and adults are safe both when on the premises and at home.

Children attending crèche and other services settle quickly and respond positively to the good care provided by their key workers and other adults. Children make good progress towards the Early Learning Goals through all the centre's activities and support for other pre-school providers. There is a positive trend of rising standards, especially for the most vulnerable learners, narrowing the gap for the lowest achievers faster than locally and nationally. Children play well together, displaying good relationships with others in all aspects of provision.

Parents make new friends through attending centre-based sessions, and they display a good sense of enjoyment during activities. A particularly good feature is the strong focus on language development, particularly through regular links with speech therapy professionals, which are helping children to overcome learning and communication barriers. These programmes are now nationally recognised and accredited for their effectiveness. Storytelling sessions and song and rhyme activities help parents and carers become more involved in their children's early language development.

Good links with the link primary school and other early years providers contribute to children's smooth transition to the next stage of learning. The information from providers on children's progress is regularly improving. The centre makes a good contribution to adult literacy and numeracy skills. They have a hundred percent success rate in level two courses for an increasing number of parents. This and other training promote economically viable skills which have directly led to future employment. The regular links with Jobcentre Plus also contribute to helping adults back into employment and reducing dependency on benefits. Above all, well planned

support and training by the adult learning coordinator and community development worker at the centre and the work of the local advisory group has led to a significant proportion of parents participating in volunteering activities. This includes adults with emotional and mental health problems, who have significantly increased their vocational and life chances. 'My induction and training gave me the confidence to apply for jobs – and I got one!' is typical of the views adults express.

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	2
The extent to which children are safe and protected, their welfare concerns are identified and appropriate steps taken to address them	1
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	1
The extent to which children are developing skills for the future and parents are developing economic stability and independence including access to training	2

How good is the provision?

2

The centre provides an outstanding quality of care, guidance and support through its centre-based activities, family and outreach support and home visits. 'Staff are great, supportive and friendly. You can ask for help and advice and are confident that it will be acted upon,' is typical of users' opinions. Constructive relationships with staff help parents and carers to feel confident to seek advice and support. This is a harmonious centre where adults and children from a variety of social and economic backgrounds support and care for each other. All staff who work for, and with, the centre are passionate about their roles and have a good level of expertise and professional knowledge to successfully help families improve their health, well-being and achievement. Outstanding multi-agency partnerships make certain that the individual needs of children and their parents and carers who are referred to the centre are assessed quickly so that interventions and support can be targeted appropriately. For example, the staff are well informed in making accurate and appropriate referrals to other agencies through the 'Pathways to Provision' process. They act quickly and thoroughly on referrals from health and social care professionals. Assessment of individual cases is extremely robust and the use of the Common Assessment Framework is successfully ensuring that teams can be gathered quickly to support children and families identified as in need. Where a child protection plan is in place, the centre works effectively with social services and the child protection team.

Parents and carers report that the timeliness and quality of individual support is good

and available for as long as needed. Staff know the community well; they are aware of the needs and demands for services and activities. The centre is proactive in taking services out to groups who are hard to reach and who they know to be vulnerable. These services are supported by excellent partnership working and the centre's persistence in establishing links with hard-to-reach groups through schools and other partner agencies. The centre is particularly successful in meeting the needs of the minority ethnic families and young mothers within its reach. Fathers also feel the centre caters for their needs. There is an increasing use of a wide range of data to evaluate and support the centres work. However, the centre does not use new information showing the areas of greatest vulnerability from partner services effectively.

Assessment is used extremely effectively to record children's progress and inform teaching and learning in the Early Years Foundation Stage. The childcare facilities receive good and valued support from the Early Years Foundation Stage teacher and local authority staff. This is promoted further by a good partnership with the local primary schools. All groups of parents and carers contribute to the effectiveness of the centre through the parents' forum and other opportunities for giving feedback. For example, they have organised a 'Fun Day' and made suggestions for extending the range and scope of health and fitness activities which are recognised by the centre as a need for improvement. The strengths of the parents' forum are recognised by the host school which aims to use its experience in supporting its own parents and friends association. A good proportion of parents contribute by volunteering for childcare, supporting adult learners and as peer worker in breastfeeding groups. The passion and purpose of all those involved in the centre effectively promotes the learning and personal development of children.

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	2
The extent to which the range of services, activities and opportunities meet the needs of users and the wider community	2
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?

2

Leadership and management are good at all levels. The centre leader provides excellent clear leadership with high expectations for the community firmly at the heart of the centre's work. Her professional experience in health and early years and her local knowledge make a good contribution to the success of the centre. Staff share high aspirations and are well motivated in providing a wide range of good quality and effective services to the community, particularly to those who are hard to

reach and potentially vulnerable. As a result, the centre has a good understanding of its strengths and areas for development and sets ambitious targets based on good self-evaluation. This leads to good-quality action planning which is supported by good partnerships.

Evaluation of the impact of the work with individual families takes place within team and multi-agency meetings, case studies and through regular supervision of staff. The success of group activities is closely monitored. The leader, staff and partnership professionals have a good understanding of the priorities and needs of the centre and the community it serves, and a particularly good knowledge of the impact of services. There has recently been an improvement in the accuracy of information from health and other services which enables the centre to pinpoint accurately areas of likely vulnerability. However, the centre is still embedding its evaluation in response to the increasing range of data from, for example, the 'IDACI' scores, providing very localised information, to even more closely meet the needs of the area.

Resources are used well to provide a welcoming environment, particularly as the limited amount of space available at the centre means it is necessary for some services to be delivered at outreach sites across the area. Financial management systems are used effectively to monitor day-to-day expenditure. The delegation of responsibility for resources is at an appropriate level to ensure timely and effective packages of support to families. This ensures good value for money.

Excellent safeguarding arrangements are supported by the clear lines of communication and collaboration between agencies to ensure children are safeguarded. All checks, vetting and recruitment processes fully meet current guidelines and all staff have up-to-date and high levels of training in safeguarding, child protection and first aid. The centre places a strong focus on developing the skills of all staff through high-quality training. The impact is well recorded and presented in detailed case studies.

Equality and diversity are promoted successfully. All services are designed to engage users from the range of backgrounds in the local area, including the promotion of inclusive practice for children with special educational needs and/or disabilities. The manager and partner agencies have a reflective approach to working and continually look for new ways to reach into the local community and include groups of users effectively. The partnership and local advisory group's role in systematically ensuring the views of all those involved in providing and receiving services are fully reflected in the centre's work. Governance arrangements are excellent and there are extremely robust systems of accountability at all levels of leadership and management.

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
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The extent to which ambitious targets drive improvement, provision is integrated and there are high expectations for users and the wider community	2
The extent to which resources are used and managed efficiently and effectively to meet the needs of users and the wider community	2
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	1
The extent to which evaluation is used to shape and improve services and activities	2
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	2

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. 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 Stanmore Children's Centre on the 15-16 June 2011. We judged the centre as good overall.

Many of you told us how much you enjoy the activities provided through the centre. You told us that staff listen to you and make sure that you get the right advice and support. We found that the centre is good at helping people at times in their lives when they most need it. The centre staff provide outstanding care of you and keep you and your children extremely safe. Action is taken quickly and different people and organisations work well as a team to support both children and families. We

found the centre to be warm and welcoming to all families and busy with activity and children's enjoyment. The staff have a good level of expertise and offer good practical and emotional support to families who need it.

The centre works well with a range of partners and providers such as health services including midwifery, social care and education. Service professionals work well together as a team to give help and support to families where children have physical or emotional difficulties. The centre provides good support for children to make sure they get a good start in life. Adults are guided well so they can realise their potential. You told us that you particularly enjoy English lessons and mathematics courses. Several of you work as volunteers in the centre and its partner agencies and this work is well-organised. However, there are not enough opportunities for adults to improve their fitness and so we have asked the centre staff develop this provision.

The childminder, breastfeeding and other groups provide good opportunities for social interaction and further education. The whole family is at the heart of what everyone is doing and this is seen in the wide variety of activities on offer. Sessions related to healthy cooking, child development and practical activities are examples of effective support. You told us that you love the baby massage and 'Tums to Tots' sessions. The centre also does well in offering guidance about how you can play with your children at home by, for example, in 'Home Talk' and 'Toddler Talk' activities. Families borrow books and toys from the centre and through the family support workers' home visits, which enriches children's learning. The centre has excellent systems to assess the progress children make in all their activities and the usefulness of the support they give you.

Children are extremely well-behaved and they explore the learning environment confidently. The 'Little Explorers' group and 'Incredible Years' programme help children to be adventurous in safe ways and for you to take good care of them. You play an important role too. We were impressed by the positive and supportive relationships you have with one another and with your children. The people in charge of running the centre are doing a good job. The governance of the centre and multi-agency support are excellent. The centre does not take full advantage of increasingly accurate data and information on the needs of the community to target its services even more effectively. We have asked the centre to take steps to make sure that this happens. The centre manager and staff work hard to make sure that everything they do for you will make a positive difference to your lives. They make sure that everyone who works with the centre share this commitment.

Thank you very much for your welcome and our openness with the inspectors. We are very grateful and wish you every success in the future. The full report is available from your centre or on our website www.ofsted.gov.uk.