

Inspection report for Pastures Way Nursery School & Children's Centre

Local authority	Luton
Inspection number	367855
Inspection dates	28–29 June 2011
Reporting inspector	Anna Coyle

Centre governance	Local authority
Centre leader	Jan Allen
Date of previous inspection	N/A
Centre address	Pastures Way
	Luton
	LU4 0PE
Telephone number	01582 600691
Fax number	01582 600691
Email address	pastures.way.nursery.admin@luton.gov.uk

Linked school if applicable	Pastures Way Nursery School
Linked early years and childcare, if applicable	Pastures Way Day Care EY280683

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.

An inspection of the maintained nursery was carried out at the same time as the inspection of the centre under Section 5 of the Education Act 2005. The report of this inspection is available on our website www.ofsted.gov.uk.

This inspection was carried out by an additional inspector and an early years inspector.

The inspectors held meetings with the centre leader, the senior leadership team, health workers, groups of parents and representatives from the governing body and the advisory board. They observed the centre's work, and looked at a range of relevant documentation.

Information about the centre

Pastures Way Children's Centre is a phase two centre, which was designated in 2008 and is situated in the residential district of Lewsey in Luton. It shares the same building as Pastures Way Nursery School and the wrap-around day-care provision. The centre has provided the full core offer since 2009 and is overseen by the governing body of the nursery school. It also has a management group which acts as an advisory board and is made up of representatives from the local community, governors, parents, carers and centre staff. Local authority statistics show that the centre is in an area of local deprivation with the second level of child poverty in the east of England. The community is characterised by high rates of unemployment and social deprivation: data indicate that a significant proportion of children in the reach area live in workless households that are dependent upon benefits. Families are predominantly White British and there is a mix of minority ethnic groups, including those of Asian, Chinese and Black heritage. There are high levels of obesity, tooth decay and infant mortality. Teenage conception rates are significantly higher than the Luton average. Most children enter the Early Years Foundation Stage with skills that are below those expected for their age. The centre has achieved the Under Fives Healthy Eating Award.

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

The centre is led and managed well by a leader who is passionate about the children's centre. She is also the headteacher of the nursery and is supported effectively by a well-qualified team of professionals who are committed to providing good opportunities for the children and families in the reach area. The centre's strong focus on promoting equality and diversity ensures that all users feel valued. As a result, children, parents and carers receive plenty of advice and support within a warm, welcoming and friendly environment. The views expressed by parents and carers reflect the good care, guidance and support provided by the centre. They particularly like the co-location of the maintained nursery and the wrap-around care because these provide easily accessible facilities for them. One parent summed up the views of many by saying that the centre has, '... very approachable staff who are really helpful'.

Children and their families benefit from the centre's wide range of integrated provision and outreach services, and outcomes are good. Staff work hard to ensure that the centre meets users' needs effectively and, as a result, children achieve well in their personal, social and emotional development. Many adult users increase their confidence and basic skills when attending the enjoyable activities at the centre; for example, staff are readily available to support them in aspects such as literacy and numeracy. Good links with Jobcentre Plus and other employment agencies have a positive impact on users' access to employment opportunities and the centre actively encourages many users to become volunteers.

Although the centre keeps useful records of children's activities in 'Learning Journals', it does not have a system for collecting data and tracking users' progress. This hinders them when planning for the next steps that children and adult users are to take in their learning. In addition, the centre does not receive enough data from health professionals to help staff target services. Nevertheless, staff adapt services where necessary by reviewing daily sessions and using parental evaluations. The centre has strong partnerships with external agencies. It works closely with partners to support those who are referred by external agencies and families who are vulnerable because of their personal circumstances. However, the centre has rightly

identified that the hard-to-reach groups, such as pregnant teenagers, fathers and lone parents, are more difficult to engage, and it is keen to improve this.

The centre makes sure that there are safe working practices, safe recruitment of staff and good safeguarding arrangements. The governing body provides effective governance on behalf of the local authority and ensures good value for money. The advisory board provides effective support for the staff and regularly seeks the views of users. Based on the centre's strong leadership, its good improvement since it became a children's centre and effective action planning, there is good capacity for sustained improvement.

What does the centre need to do to improve further?

Recommendations for further improvement

- Encourage the health authority to provide more data about the health of users in the reach area such as live birth data, immunisation rates and mental health.
- Enable more people in the hard-to-reach groups, such as pregnant teenagers, fathers and lone parents, to participate in the centre's services.
- Set up a system for assessing, recording and tracking users' progress, and use the information gathered to inform daily planning.

How good are outcomes for users?

2

Effective partnerships with health professionals and family support workers benefit users. However, there is only limited data available to the centre from the health authority which impedes the centre's work. There is no data available to the centre about live births, immunisation rates and users accessing mental health services. Even so, staff have a good focus on promoting breastfeeding through targeted support from the coordinator and good links with partner agencies. Midwives and health visitors encourage pregnant and new mothers to give up smoking during home visits, and the centre actively encourages smoking-cessation among families. The 'Bumps2Babes' antenatal classes are well attended and new mothers enjoy the 'Young Parents Group' which meets regularly. Children eat healthy fruit and snacks at the centre such as melons and oranges, and they have water or milk to drink. Parents and carers enjoy cooking food such as fishcakes in 'Make and Take' sessions and they speak highly of staff, saying that they have helped them to change their families' eating habits. This is helping to reduce the very high rates of obesity in the reach area. Home visits to new mothers are used well to encourage healthy lifestyles and physical activity, and staff signpost users to available services such as the 'Women Only' fitness classes.

Users say that they feel safe when they are in the centre. They are aware of how to keep themselves safe at home and have benefited from staff visits to conduct home-safety checks. Strong links with the fire service have enabled some users to have safety equipment fitted such as stair gates, window closers and winders for blinds. Parents and carers increase their knowledge about how to keep their families safe because staff focus well on this. Aspects of safety are introduced in the new parents'

sessions and in 'Stay and Play' activities. Users' individual needs are discussed thoroughly, including the needs of those who are potentially vulnerable and those with special educational needs and disabilities. These are followed up carefully through effective use of the Common Assessment Framework (CAF) where necessary, and support is provided to help children and their families, including looked-after children and those who have child protection plans.

Children achieve well and show good enjoyment of activities increasing their personal, social and emotional development effectively. They settle quickly because staff are friendly and caring and they provide careful nurturing for the youngest children. Early communication skills are developing well through activities such as 'Baby Signing' and 'Baby Massage' sessions. These activities and the early education programme help to strengthen the relationships and bonds between parents, carers and children. Data from the adjacent nursery confirm a steady trend in the numbers of children attaining the expected level in the six areas of learning by the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage. One parent commented: 'We really like the children's centre. Since our child came here, he is learning to read and say his ABC.'

Many parents and carers have become volunteers, which enables them to become actively involved in the centre's activities. They express their views through regular surveys and evaluations of services, and some contribute well to decision making and governance. The centre signposts users to relevant courses at local colleges and to job vacancies. Its good links with local agencies and Jobcentre Plus benefit users by providing them with good access to employment opportunities.

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	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	2
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

Assessment is satisfactory overall because the centre keeps a record of each child's development in 'Learning Journals' and staff have begun to keep progress sheets. However, there is no system for collecting and analysing data and tracking users' progress. The lack of health data, particularly live birth data, hinders staff when

planning services and identifying the next steps in users' learning.

Children and adults learn and develop well because the centre staff know the families well. Parents and carers appreciate the centre's provision and some commented, 'There is good signposting to local help', and 'Staff are very good at listening to parents' difficulties'. Individual needs are identified carefully and reviewed regularly so that staff can adapt activities accordingly. This means that users have good opportunities to participate in well-organised activities that are tailored to their needs. For example, family learning courses in literacy and numeracy are well organised and enjoyable for users: a mathematics session in which adults completed the addition of two- and three-digit numbers and tackled fractions was enjoyed by all involved. The early education programme that runs on Tuesdays and Fridays for children who are due to start in the nursery prepares them well for the Early Years Foundation Stage.

A wide range of outreach services enhances the centre's provision so that it caters effectively for the community it serves. This is because the family support team and health professionals work together closely to provide a good range of fully integrated services to support the welfare needs of all groups of users and the wider community. Midwives provide plenty of advice and medical checks during antenatal and postnatal clinics. Parents and carers especially like the 'Baby Break Drop In' and 'Baby Movers' sessions held at the centre. They also benefit from the centre's well-organised toy library and sessions for parents and carers of children with special educational needs and/or disabilities. Hard-to-reach groups have been more difficult to contact; for example, some lone parents, teenage parents and fathers are not accessing services. The centre provides monthly sessions known as 'Dads & Co' on Saturday mornings to support fathers, which is much appreciated by the users who attend. One father has built useful play items for the children to use and made a recycling board at the front entrance to help parents, carers and children to focus on sustainability of the environment.

The centre provides good care, support and guidance for children and adults which has a positive impact on their well-being. Caring adults build trust with children, parents and carers. They are sensitive to families who are most in need of emotional support. The centre provides plenty of helpful information for users who are seeking work and those who want to increase their basic skills and build their confidence in preparation for the world of work.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The effectiveness of the assessment of the needs of children, parents and other users	3
The extent to which the centre promotes purposeful learning, development and enjoyment for all users	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	2

How effective are the leadership and management?

2

The governance and accountability of the centre are good and the advisory board provides effective support. Members of the two groups give their time willingly and bring a wide range of expertise to the centre. Leadership of the centre is well focused on driving improvement and maintaining high expectations for users and the wider community. The centre leader is highly committed to supporting children, parents and carers. She is well supported by good teamwork from the conscientious staff who show enthusiasm and enjoyment in all that they do. Self-evaluation is accurate and the centre development plan is detailed. This has led to ambitious targets and a clear vision for the future to ensure good value for money. Parents and carers are very complimentary about the leadership of the centre: 'She always says "Hello" to everyone at the Monday baby groups. They used to be at 10.00 but many people were struggling to get here so the centre moved the time to 10.30 - more people come now.' Users greatly appreciate that their views are considered and one commented, 'The centre leader always consults us before making any changes'.

Leaders and managers ensure the safe recruitment of staff, and all adults who work with children are checked carefully. Safeguarding arrangements are good and records are updated regularly. Good partnerships with external support agencies mean that provision is managed and integrated effectively into the centre's day-to-day activities. Good professional relationships ensure that expertise is readily available for families who require help and support. For example, children and families in need and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities benefit from swift referrals where necessary and the centre's good cooperation between multi-agency groups and counselling services. This contributes well to improving the emotional development and well-being of users.

The centre celebrates its diverse community effectively and it values all children and their families equally. The views of users are sought regularly to help staff develop the provision and meet the needs of the whole community, including users who are potentially vulnerable. Users who are hard to reach are not easy to contact and the centre rightly wants to improve its outreach work for them and engage them more effectively than it does at present. The nursery school, which is co-located on the same site, contributes well to the effectiveness of the centre because the centre leader is also the headteacher. This leads to a seamless transition for children and their families when they transfer to the nursery.

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	2
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	2
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	2
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

The inspection of Pastures Way Nursery School took place at the same time, and the findings were taken into account. The nursery school was judged to be good.

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 Pastures Way Nursery School & Children's Centre on 28–29 June 2011. We judged the centre as good overall.

We really enjoyed talking to you and finding out about all the things you are involved in. We visited a wide range of activities during the inspection, such as 'Stay and Play' sessions and the 'Baby Massage' group. You told us that you enjoy coming to the children's centre and that you find the staff helpful and approachable.

You told us that you particularly like activities such as the healthy eating cooking sessions 'Make and Take' when you make food like fishcakes. You told us that the staff help you to improve the eating habits of your families. We were pleased to see that the sessions provided at the centre are well planned and of good quality. As a result, your children are making good progress and developing well in their communication, personal and social skills. There are good opportunities for you to receive helpful advice and guidance from midwives during antenatal classes and the 'Young Parents Group'. These sessions help you to learn about how to look after young children. The staff also provide good support for dealing with children's behaviour at home through family learning sessions.

The centre provides good quality of care, guidance and support for you and your children. You told us that the staff are sensitive to your needs and help you willingly, especially in times of crisis. They make sure that you get the support and help you need because there are strong partnerships with a wide range of professionals and external agencies who contribute to the centre's activities. The centre supports those of you who are looking for employment by providing useful information about jobs in the locality and through its good partnerships with Jobcentre Plus and other local providers. We know that the centre asks for your views and opinions and we are aware that many of you are actively involved with the centre, either as volunteers or as members of the governing body or the advisory board.

The centre is led and managed well by the centre leader who is passionate about supporting you and your children. The good teamwork of the senior leaders and staff means that the centre provides a safe environment for all of you and all staff are checked so that they are suitable to work with children. The governing body of the nursery school and the advisory board provide the centre with good support and advice. To strengthen the centre's effectiveness, we have asked the leaders and managers to obtain more data from the health authority and to try to get people who are hard to reach to access the centre's services. We have also asked them to improve the system for assessing, recording and tracking progress so that they can use the information when planning activities.

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