

# Inspection report for Sherwood and Edwards Lane Children's Centre

Local authority	Nottingham City
Inspection number	365728
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Reporting inspector	Sue Aldridge

Centre governance	The local authority
Centre leader	Mrs Pamela Gamble
Date of previous inspection	N/A
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Linked school if applicable	Seely Infant and Nursery School
Linked early years and childcare, if applicable	NA

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 one additional inspector and one early years inspector. The inspectors held meetings with staff, parents and carers, representatives of the local authority, members of the advisory board, health professionals and representatives from other agencies. They observed the centre's work, and looked at a range of relevant documentation.

## Information about the centre

Sherwood and Edwards Lane Children's Centre opened two years ago. It is co-located with a nursery and infants' school but is separately managed. It serves a mixed socio-economic area with generally low deprivation. Levels of worklessness and families on benefits are relatively low. Most families in the reach area are of White British heritage; there is a low proportion from minority ethnic groups. On entry to early years provision, children's knowledge, skills and understanding are generally below that expected for their age.

The centre makes the full core offer, including integrated childcare and early learning, drop-in sessions, health services, family support and outreach services, a childminding network and links to Jobcentre Plus.

Since it opened, there have been changes in the way that the centre operates. It opened as a single centre then was jointly managed with another children's centre for a while. During this time it provided targeted services for children aged 0-7. Since June 2010, the centre became part of the new 'Family and Community Teams 0-19'. Since July 2011 the centre has been managed as a single centre by a community team manager and a part-time community service manager, both of whom are based at the site.

The centre is governed by the local authority. There is an advisory board, which is charged with providing direction, support and challenge to the centre. As a result of

re-organisations, there have been a number of changes in representation on the advisory board.

## 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

Sherwood and Edwards Lane Children's Centre is successful in securing consistently good outcomes for children and adult users. It provides good services and is led and managed well. The most notable feature contributing to its successes is the very high quality of partnership working. Professionals from many different agencies work seamlessly together to improve outcomes. The arrangements for safeguarding children, users and staff are outstanding. Many users comment favourably on the good care and support they receive, including sending thank-you cards and letters. One typically wrote, 'Your thoughtfulness was wonderful, your help second to none.' Similarly, adult users are grateful for the guidance they receive; this helps them improve their confidence, skills and life chances.

The local authority provides strong direction and, through its structures and procedures, encourages professionals to work towards common and well understood goals. Leaders and managers at the centre have high expectations of what might be achieved and they take good account of local and national priorities when planning developments. They know well the needs of those within the centre's reach and plan a wide range of enjoyable, good-quality activities that are open to all. For users with more specific needs and those whose circumstances make them vulnerable, there is good-quality integrated family support work. The assistance from a wide range of agencies is well targeted to improve the health, welfare, safety and economic well-being of users. The views of adult users are sought on every occasion, and parents and carers are able to influence decision-making as a result. Centre staff are responsive to users' needs and views; as a result, rates of engagement are improving well.

As a consequence of re-organisation, the work of the advisory board is at an early stage, but there is good representation of agencies and members of the community, and parents and carers have recently been recruited to join the board. Board

members are strongly supportive of the work of the centre. However, the board has not yet appointed a chairperson or implemented plans to provide direction and challenge in the future, as set out in the description of their purpose.

Partners are very positive about the way that the centre has improved in the last year. Leaders have been effective in securing a good range of improvements, including an increase in family support work. There is good capacity for further improvement. Self-evaluation is good. Managers make effective use of an increasingly useful set of monitoring data provided by the local authority in order to evaluate the effectiveness of the centre. They add to this the information they gain from users about how useful their activities and services are and have a generally good idea of what their strengths are and where areas for improvement lie. The centre's improvement plan, reviewed quarterly, shows it is successful in driving improvements, but targets in the plan are not measurable, which makes it difficult to evaluate the success of developments.

The centre provides a good range of enjoyable activities and services. Children's activities are well planned to reflect the areas of learning in the Early Years Foundation Stage. However, good practice such as that found in the 'Getting ready for nursery' programme is not replicated in all other activities provided for children. These do not always identify clear learning outcomes for children or lead to records showing what children have learned and achieved so that the next steps in learning can be planned.

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

### Recommendations for further improvement

- Improve the leadership and management of the centre by:
  - appointing a chairperson to the advisory board and implementing plans for the board to support the local authority in providing direction and challenge to the centre
  - ensuring that targets in the improvement plan are measurable whenever possible.
- Achieve consistently good planning for activities in the Early Years Foundation Stage by ensuring that:
  - plans identify clear learning outcomes for children
  - records give evidence of children's learning and point the way to the next steps in learning.

## How good are outcomes for users?

2
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The provision of several health services at the centre is influential in improving

outcomes for users. Popular clinics for expectant mothers, baby clinics and breastfeeding groups have led to high proportions of mothers who breastfeed for six months and high immunisation rates. One mother considered herself so well supported and enthused that she decided to continue to breastfeed for a year. Low numbers of pregnant women smoke in the area and there has been a reduction in the proportion of children entering Reception who are obese. Courses on healthy eating are much enjoyed, and have led in some cases to healthier eating habits being adopted in the home.

The coordination of services at community level means that timely support is allocated, such as from the child and adolescent mental health services, and this leads to users' improved mental and emotional well-being. For more complex cases, such as children on child-protection plans, looked after children or where there is an assessment under the Common Assessment Framework (CAF), integrated working of centre staff with others, such as a safeguarding nurse, ensures that expertise is shared and used to good effect. Early identification has led to an increased number of children on child protection plans. Outreach work leads to improved outcomes for families where there is domestic violence and a good number of family homes have been made safer as a result of visits funded by the Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents. Case study evidence shows the benefits of the work done by centre staff to support families where children have behavioural difficulties. The first aid course for users is a popular one. It is clear that children and adult users feel safe at the centre, and that adults have a good understanding of how to keep themselves and their children safe. For instance, they contribute their ideas about how to make the environment even safer.

In the last year, there has been an increase in the percentage of children reaching a good level of development in the Early Years Foundation Stage profile in both communication, language and literacy and personal, social and emotional development. The centre makes a strong contribution to this by preparing groups of targeted children for joining nursery classes. The 'Getting ready for nursery' groups are effective in familiarising children with routines, helping them to concentrate and take turns. Nursery teachers say that they can easily tell which children have been on the courses as they stand out from the rest.

The co-ordination of services and joint working is evident in improved outcomes. For instance, the Portage service for families with young children who have special educational needs and/or a disability is jointly delivered by trained centre staff and a specialist Portage worker. It is effective in giving parents an insight to child development and empowering them to use the strategies with their children. In one example, where it was combined with targeted support for speech and language therapy, there was a beneficial impact for the child on speech and language development, play and social responses.

During activities at the centre, adults identify what children have achieved and celebrate this by writing on a 'leaf' which is prominently displayed on a 'Pride Vine'. Children show their level of enjoyment by placing a clothes peg on a 'smiley

sunflower' or a 'sad' one. Adult users' views, through the parents' forum, are influential in determining what services will be provided, and parents and carers are consulted about what tasks and activities they would like at activities such as 'Stay and Play'. Those who use the centre get on well and treat staff and one another with respect. Children are well behaved and parents and carers recognise their responsibility in this respect. Users have contributed to the wider community by taking part in fundraising events such as Red Nose day.

Once each week, a Jobcentre Plus worker visits the centre. Individual interviews with users who are on benefits have positive outcomes over time. There are many examples of adults who have increased their personal confidence, skills and qualifications, and moved on to purposeful activities such as volunteering, adult education courses and ultimately work. Adults are well supported in returning to work. The centre also provides courses in basic literacy and numeracy, accreditation in healthy cooking on a budget and courses that support parents in their roles. Adults are signposted to colleges for courses the centre does not provide.

*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>2</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>2</b>
<b>The extent to which all users enjoy and achieve educationally and in their personal and social development</b>	<b>2</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>2</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>2</b>

## How good is the provision?

**2**

The quality and range of provision is good; it meets the needs of all groups in the reach equally well. The centre itself is a welcoming environment, with good-quality facilities and resources. Accommodation is used flexibly, allowing for maximum use of rooms. A covered outdoor area offers good opportunities for children to learn and play in the fresh air.

Good use is made of all the available information to identify the needs of the reach area. Through the CAF, the centre works effectively in partnership with others to assess individual users' needs. Where referrals are made, centre workers visit homes with other professionals and they assess further users' cultural, social and economic needs. Through the CAF process, users' needs are systematically monitored and

reviewed to ensure that any additional emerging needs are met.

Regular activities are supplemented well by themed events, such as Black History Month, National Bookstart Week and City Smiles Week. In the school summer holidays, the centre takes good account of events already planned in the local community and it provides activities, including trips, which avoids duplication. Variety and enjoyment are provided from occasional visitors, such as a theatre group. Visiting artists are used well, such as for the weekly 'Music Time' which is a popular and well-attended activity where children learn a good deal, including songs, rhythm, colours, numbers and working as a team. By participating in local events, such as Sherwood Festival, the centre publicises its activities. Partnerships with other professionals also help to spread the word about the centre, and this is adding to increased engagement among users. The work of both Jobcentre Plus and Relate professionals has a significant impact on the well-being of adult users, including their economic and mental well-being, self-esteem and relationships with their children. The way in which trust is building between members of the community and the centre is evident in the increasing number of self-referrals, and testifies to the centre's good quality care, guidance and support.

Outreach work is effective. Staff in schools speak highly of the work done to prepare children for nursery; those in playgroups value the support they have received, and case studies indicate the effectiveness of family support work. The childminder support network is well supported by a teacher who has provided training for these carers in planning and recording learning.

*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>2</b>
<b>The extent to which the centre promotes purposeful learning, development and enjoyment for all users</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which the range of services, activities and opportunities meet the needs of users and the wider community</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The quality of care, guidance and support offered to users within the centre and the wider community</b>	<b>2</b>

## How effective are the leadership and management?

**2**

The local authority has successfully communicated its vision for the city's services to all agencies, who have a clear understanding of the importance of early intervention, how the referral procedures work and their particular roles within the network of services. The very strong partnership work is rooted in the local authority's vision and fostered well by the centre's management. The local authority holds the centre to account for its outcomes and contributes to its direction by identifying clear

development priorities. Management of the centre is strong and it runs smoothly on a daily basis. All staff contribute to self-evaluation and those with particular responsibilities draw up clear action plans for improvement. Arrangements for supervisions and performance management are robust and well understood.

Although the advisory board has not been constituted in its current form for long, membership is strongly representative of all key partners, with good collective expertise. The board is supportive of the centre's work but has yet to make an impact on its direction or to provide challenge.

There is a determination to do the best for all members of the community and to increase levels of engagement. For instance, interpreters are provided for those who speak English as an additional language to help them access the centre's activities. Users' views influence developments; for example, a fathers' group requested an additional unstructured session on Saturdays, and this now happens, and fathers can decide themselves what activities are provided. The centre considers carefully the needs of those with disabilities, and is fully accessible. It has identified the need for further provision and plans to develop a sensory room. Evaluation has also shown low involvement of members of Black minority ethnic groups. The centre has good information about other services in the wider community and signposts families to support groups.

High-quality arrangements for keeping users and staff safe include well-integrated support from a wide range of agencies, rigorous and well recorded checks on staff to ensure that they are suitable to work with children, and careful risk assessment. Staff are well trained in all matters linked to child protection, health and safety. Because professionals have a heightened awareness of one another's roles and responsibilities and work so well together, users are referred quickly to the sources of support they need.

Resources are used efficiently and are well targeted to improve outcomes in those areas of greatest need. The centre provides good value for money.

*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>2</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>2</b>
<b>The extent to which equality is promoted and diversity celebrated, illegal or unlawful discrimination is tackled and the centre fulfils its statutory duties</b>	<b>2</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>1</b>
<b>The extent to which evaluation is used to shape and improve services and activities</b>	<b>2</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>1</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>2</b>

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

Inspection report for the Early Years Foundation Stage at Seely Infant and Nursery School (URN 122506)

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 Sherwood and Edwards Lane Children's Centre on 6–7 July 2011. We judged the centre as good overall.

Thank you to those of who spoke to us about the work that the children's centre does and how this has helped you. We were very impressed with the way that members of the centre's staff work jointly with those from other agencies, such as the health services. During our discussions, we were given many examples of how effective this work has been in improving things for children and adults in the area covered by the centre. These included examples of children being better prepared to go to nursery, families being helped to make their lives safer and more enjoyable, and of parents learning about how children develop so that they can help them learn and enjoy watching them grow. We also found out that the centre encourages healthier lifestyles well. The proportion of mothers who are breastfeeding their babies is good, and almost all make sure that their children are vaccinated. Adults have been supported well to gain confidence, skills and qualifications, and several have been able to get work as a result. Some have started by volunteering, which has then led to paid work. As a result, they have become better off financially. We

noticed that children's achievements are celebrated on the 'Pride Vine' and that many adults have been successful on courses such as 'Positive Parenting' and 'Healthy eating on a budget'.

We also learned that those in charge of the centre know what is needed in the area and they provide the right sort of services to meet people's needs. Users' views are also taken into account well in developing the centre's services. Several adults who have benefitted from the centre's help have written to thank the staff, and it is clear from these letters that they felt well supported. We found that there is a good range of courses and activities at the centre. In addition, many families are supported in their own homes by staff from the centre, who work closely with other professionals to make sure that families have all the help they need from different agencies. In doing this, staff help families to be healthier and safer; they also help parents and carers to understand how their children grow and develop and give them the skills to manage children's behaviour. Family relationships improve as a result of the support they are given.

When children have disabilities, the centre staff work with other agencies to give children a good start in life. Staff share their skills and knowledge and so parents and carers learn how to support children in developing language, how to get on with others and how to play.

We found that parents and carers value the support they are given. The word is spreading that the centre is helpful and so people are starting to come to the centre of their own accord as well as being referred by others when they are finding things difficult. Staff at the centre also work hard to involve people who have not been to the centre before.

The centre is led and managed well. In particular, the arrangements that ensure that all users and staff are kept safe are excellent. The local authority has a clear plan of how to provide services that children and families in Nottingham need. Those who work in the many different services and at the centre understand the plan and how they can work together to make it work well. What struck us as particularly good was how well they all work together. The centre's managers have good relationships with partners and all are determined to do their best for children and families.

We found a small number of things that we are asking the centre to improve. First, some of the activities for children are better planned than others. We have asked the centre to make sure that all activities have plans showing what children are meant to learn and keep records about what children have learned each time so that the next steps in learning can be planned.

We were pleased to hear that several parents and carers have agreed to be members of the advisory board. We have asked the board to agree who will be the chairperson and to support the governing body to help steer the centre in the right direction and provide challenge.

Managers and staff know what the centre does well and which aspects of its work need to be improved. Their plans for improvement are successful in moving things on. However, when targets for improvement are written into the plan they are too vague. We have asked the leaders to make the targets measurable so that they can see later how successful their actions have been.

We decided that the centre provides good value for money and that it is well placed to continue to improve. We wish the centre, you and your families all the best in the future.

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