

# Inspection report for Alice's View Children's Centre

Local authority	Derbyshire
Inspection number	362424
Inspection dates	13–14 July 2011
Reporting inspector	Pamela Blackman HMI

Centre governance	Local authority
Centre leader	Lisa Buxton
Date of previous inspection	N/A
Centre address	Alice's View
	North Wingfield
	Chesterfield
	S42 5XA
Telephone number	01246 852228
Fax number	01246 852228
Email address	<a href="mailto:Lisa.buxton@derbyshire.gov.uk">Lisa.buxton@derbyshire.gov.uk</a>

Linked school if applicable	Heath Primary School
Linked early years and childcare, if applicable	Clowns Nursery

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 registered early years/childcare provision was carried out at the same time as the inspection of the centre under Section 3 of the Childcare Act 2006. The report of this inspection is available on our website [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk).

This inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and an early years inspector. The inspectors held meetings with parents and users of the service, centre staff, managers, local authority representatives, and partner agencies.

They observed the centre's work, and looked at a range of relevant documentation.

## Information about the centre

The centre opened in 2004 and was developed from a Sure Start Local Programme that had been part of the local area since 2001. It provides the full core offer that includes a range of services including; family support, actions to improve the health and emotional well-being of children and their families, support to young mothers, fathers, support for children with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their families and supporting parents into employment or training. The local authority is responsible for the governance of the centre. There is also an advisory board with a range of members including representatives from the local community. The advisory board is chaired by an independent chair and is supported by the local authority.

The centre is purpose built and has a small satellite provision in Heath Primary School. Childcare and early education is provided by Clowns Nursery which adjoins the centre and by the Pre-school Learning Alliance nursery within Heath Primary School. On behalf of the centre, Heath Nursery provides wrap-around childcare for three- and four-year-olds during term times and childcare for children aged two to five years during holiday periods. Most children enter childcare and early education with a narrower range of experiences and skills than expected for their age. The

proportion of children with special educational needs and/or disabilities, including those with a statement of special educational need, is above average.

Alice's View Children's Centre serves a group of communities to the south west of Chesterfield that are mainly within the 30% most deprived areas in the country. Nearly all local families are of White British heritage although there is a small but increasing proportion of minority ethnic families for whom English is an additional language. The proportion of children attending schools in the area who are entitled to free school meals is above the national average as is the proportion of children aged under four who are living in households where no one is working and families are on benefits. A number of families from the travelling community are located within the designated area that the centre serves. Unemployment rates for the area at 4.1% are higher than those for England at 3.7% (Office for National Statistics website, July 2011).

## 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

Alice's View Children's centre provides good services for young children and their families. It has built outstanding partnerships with a wide range of settings and these are now well established and are effectively meeting the needs of families in the area including the most vulnerable. Of particular note is the good working relationship with children's social care ensuring looked after children and children with a child protection plan can access good provision and support. It effectively promotes the learning, development and enjoyment of all its users particularly for children with special educational needs and/or disabilities.

Families feel safe in the centre and contribute well to their own safety. The centre staff know the families and the area well and the centre is accessed by a large majority of families in the reach area. The centre promotes equality and diversity well and is particularly good at working with families and children who have a disability.

The centre works hard to promote healthy lifestyles. However, challenges remain to

increase the numbers of women breastfeeding as these rates are well below the national rates. In addition, increasing numbers of young children are obese despite the centre working hard to support healthy eating and provide opportunities for regular exercise.

Families thoroughly enjoy the activities offered by the centre especially the good opportunities to play, learn and have fun together. Children develop their speech and language well and start school well prepared. Good use is made of the sensory room especially in supporting children with disabilities. Children make good progress with their speech and language and this is well supported by regular input from specialist speech and language staff.

Adults who attend the centre have good opportunities to develop, including excellent support for volunteering which includes an accredited programme. Users comment that completing the programme increased their skills and confidence to seek employment. Most volunteers go on to engage in further training and a good number have found employment. A high number of adults who use the centre go on to access additional learning programmes thereby increasing their self-esteem and improving their economic stability.

While the centre has high numbers of families attending, there are some families in the reach area who are not able to attend because of limited transport. While outreach opportunities are on offer in some of the more isolated areas, one area remains not as well served. Women from this area say they would like to participate more if activities were offered within walking distance.

The newly appointed independent chair of the advisory board is providing sound leadership and challenge to the centre to drive improvement. The good management of the centre ensures staff work well together and deliver good activities and support to families. Parents and carers are increasingly involved but parent forums have not been held routinely. Larger consultation events are being planned to ensure parents are able to express their views as a matter of routine. Parents are now involved in the advisory board. However, this is a new initiative and it is too soon to determine how this will impact on improvements at the centre.

The centre provides good value for money and has a high commitment to sustainability. Safeguarding has a high priority and staff are well trained and experienced in recognising signs of abuse. All relevant checks on staff other agencies and volunteers are recorded. Excellent partnership working ensures information is effectively shared between agencies to ensure services are well integrated to promote health, education and financial management.

The centre has good capacity for sustained improvement. The self-assessment process is robust and well established, and effective scrutiny and challenge is provided by the governing body. The new advisory board arrangements are working well. The centre's systematic and accurate management of information is fully embedded. Accurate and timely data is used well by managers to set challenging

targets to bring about further improvements.

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

### Recommendations for further improvement

- Improve health outcomes by continuing to work with partners to increase the numbers of women breastfeeding and to lower the rates of obesity in young children in the reach area.
- Improve parental contribution by using more systematic ways to obtain their views and ensuring the parents who are on the new advisory board have support and training to develop their role.
- Take more targeted steps to extend the centre's work into the reach area that is not well served so that services are more effectively meeting the needs of those families who do not use the centre.

## How good are outcomes for users?

2
---

Regular high attendance at child health clinics run by health visitors and nursery nurses ensures that parents and carers receive good early advice about the health of their babies. Cook and eat sessions are well attended which promote healthy eating. Evaluations from these sessions are very positive. Participants report that they have more knowledge about cooking and ideas to promote healthy eating to their children. The fruit and vegetable cooperative is popular with families who use the service and ensures that they have good access to affordable high-quality fruit and vegetables. The 'Family Fit' project is popular and well attended by families in the reach area and users comment that this is having a very positive impact on their well-being and that of their children. Although there is a range of health initiatives and activities which are improving the health of families, these have not been successful in increasing breastfeeding rates and reducing childhood obesity.

A good range of activities such as baby massage, parent and toddler groups and 'Messy Monkeys' promotes the benefits of practical play. This is helping parents to improve their children's personal, social and emotional development and to build good relationships. Regular sessions from the speech and language therapist are promoting good communication and language skills effectively. Consequently, schools report an increasing proportion of children are achieving beyond their expected levels of communication, language and literacy development. The toy library provided centrally as part of the outreach work is well supported by volunteers and is used extensively by users, including travelling families. It is helping to improve children's speaking and listening skills.

The centre is sensitive to the needs of the most vulnerable families and does all it can to help them stay safe. Children behave well in the centre and play safely. Parents and carers have a good understanding of how to keep their children safe and

contribute well to risk assessments. Secure and effective use of the Common Assessment Framework (CAF) means that families feel well supported. Good working relationships with social care staff ensure that children in need, looked after children and those subject to a child protection plan are well supported. Families make good use of the safety equipment available at the centre.

Numbers of children achieving at least 78 points across the Early Years Foundation Stage has increased from 36.6% in 2008 to 50% in 2010. Although this is below the county and district figures, it is a significant improvement. Narrowing the gap between the lowest achieving 20% in the Early Years Foundation Stage profile and the rest has significantly reduced and this is part of a good improving trend. The centre offers a wide range of opportunities for parents and carers to play and learn together. Evaluations from parents and carers indicate how much they enjoy the sessions and how it has helped their children to develop.

Some parents and carers contribute well to the centre in a variety of ways, from suggestions about sessions to more formal contributions on the advisory board. However, parent forums are not yet operating formally. Parents and carers comment their views are valued and taken seriously. Children's views are canvassed regularly to ascertain which activities they enjoy.

The centre is excellent at supporting and encouraging users to become volunteers. Volunteers complete an accredited programme of learning and the vast majority progress on to other learning programmes or into employment. The centre offers a good range of adult education courses including numeracy, literacy, information and communication technology (ICT) and a range of family learning programmes. Particularly popular are the crafts and gardening programmes run for parents and toddlers. Participation rates are good for these programmes. The Citizen's Advice Bureau (CAB) provides a kiosk which is used well by families to help them have good access to on-line information and advice. This includes information about job vacancies, housing advice and other issues. Users of the centre say that they have gained confidence and increased their work skills. For example, users have participated in a number of accredited programmes and some regularly volunteer at the centre.

*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</b>	<b>2</b>

parents are developing economic stability and independence including access to training	
---	--

## How good is the provision?

2
---

Good outreach services are provided because the needs of the most vulnerable families are assessed effectively and responded to appropriately. Confident and good use of the CAF showed an increase in its use from 33% to 40% in 2009/10 of all users of the service. All staff have an excellent understanding regarding their responsibilities for identifying needs of vulnerable children in the reach area. Centre workers play a key role in helping families with children with special educational needs and/or disabilities and those whose safety is a risk through domestic violence. The centre works effectively with the local women's refuge which is located in the reach area. Parents and carers who attend user groups have their needs identified effectively and are signposted to other provision when appropriate.

The promotion of learning and development is at the heart of much of the centre's work. Careful attention is paid to observing and recording children's learning and progress. Planning is effectively shared so that all users can understand how the activities on offer ensure progress across the area of learning. In all sessions observed, parents, carers and children showed excitement and pride at their achievements. Differences are recognised and the centre pays excellent attention to supporting and enabling children to understand the needs of different children. Effective links with a speech and language specialist provides parents with a sharp focus on improving communication skills.

The centre is good at reaching the most vulnerable families in its area, including good work with the travelling families both at the site and also in the centre. For example, coffee mornings are now being accessed on the travellers' site. In addition, the mobile library and toy library are visiting the site regularly and participate rates are good. Good work is undertaken with young mothers at the centre in helping them to build confidence. They want to establish their own group and continue to fund raise to support activities and further training opportunities. Users say how helpful it is to have good-quality crèche facilities available for when they are undertaking courses.

Staff take good care of children and adults who attend the centre's activities. Families say that staff are non-judgemental and this helps build a great deal of trust between families and staff and between other users of the service. Support is well tailored to meet users' individual needs. A wide range of good-quality advice and guidance is available for users about health, education, employment and training opportunities to support their on-going development and that of their children. Partner agencies meet users in locations accessible to them and sessions are offered flexibly to best meet their needs. Families say the support they receive is invaluable particularly in times of crisis, 'I sometimes feel I live at the centre'.

*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**

Effective governance and challenge is provided by the local authority and council cabinet member who is also a member of the advisory board. New governance arrangements are beginning to have an impact, particularly in regular reporting and support to the centre. The recently appointed independent chair of the advisory board is optimistic about the success of the new arrangements. Senior local authority managers are clear about their roles and responsibilities for governance and ensuring secure oversight of the centre. This includes quality assurance, performance management and sound financial accountability, ensuring good value for money. A small number of parents are involved in the decision making and governance of the centre although this is at an early stage and, currently, only five parents have come forward. The local authority is planning to provide training for the parents who contribute to the advisory board.

Good use is made of high-quality data, ensuring targets are set which are measurable and time bound. Managers are ambitious for the centre and effectively communicate high expectations to all staff and users. The business plan sets out priorities and challenging targets for improvement and effectively identifies the resources required. All partners are clear about the priorities and they work well with the centre to ensure they are met. Staff are well supervised and understand their personal targets and their contribution to the wider targets of the centre. Excellent staff communication both formal and informal makes staff feel well supported. Appraisal is effectively linked to the centre development and this used to plan future training and development.

The centre's high-quality resources including, a purpose-built sensory room, a sensory garden, good play space and a well-resourced toy library are well targeted. This results in strong improvements to outcomes, particularly for families in greatest need. All areas of the centre are safe and spotlessly clean making them attractive to both children and adults. The centre recognises that it does not extend its outreach work to the Heath area for those families who currently do not attend the centre. Multiple use is made of all resources for example sessions for fathers run alongside 'Branching Out' activities for children with disabilities on a Saturday to maximise usage. The centre has a high commitment to sustainability, including a focus on



recycling and encouraging users and families to consider sustainable resource usage, for example, with the allotment and gardens. Staff are well deployed across the reach area to ensure their expertise is best used. Good use is made of county-wide staffing to support the centre, for example the volunteer coordinator, 'Dad's' worker and speech and language therapist.

Sound policies and procedures ensure the centre meets its legal and statutory requirements in relation to promoting equality and diversity and ensuring actions are taken to prevent discrimination of any kind. All staff have attended equality and diversity training, and resources and sessions reflect a variety of cultures to help develop users understanding of diversity. The centre works hard to celebrate diversity through recognition of cultural events and special celebrations.

Thorough risk assessments ensure the safety of users in all activities and rooms. All necessary safeguarding policies are in place and include the single centre record for staff, volunteers and partners agencies.

An excellent range of partnerships effectively supports the delivery of the service. Partners speak highly of the centre and the services offered. Long-standing partnerships with social care teams ensure that the assessment of children and their families are effective in identifying their needs. Excellent partnerships with local schools help children make good transitions to school. Adult training providers work extremely well with centre staff to make sure that users have a wide range of learning opportunities. Multi-agency teams are now co-located at the centre offering good opportunities for joint working where older children are involved.

*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>2</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**

Information from the inspection of Clown's Nursery and the previous pilot inspection of the centre was used to inform some of the judgements.

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 Alice's View Children's Centre on 13–14 July 2011. We judged the centre as good overall.

Thank you for those of you who came to speak to inspectors. We read some of the things you have said when you have been on courses. We found that many of you who use the centre enjoy the courses and activities you attend. The centre places a high priority on helping you and your children learn new skills and this is helping you to develop in confidence and your children to be better prepared when starting school.

While lots of you told us that the centre gives you good information about being healthy, we want the centre to work a bit harder with its partners to make sure that more mothers breastfeed their babies. We are concerned that some young children are overweight and so we have asked the centre to make sure that it continues to work with partners to help with this.

We know that those of you who act as volunteers at the centre have learned a great deal and have been able to achieve a certificate as a result of this work. We are really pleased that many of you have gone on to other training programmes or gained employment. We found that the centre is a safe and welcoming place for you and your children. It works exceedingly well with its partners and other agencies to protect the welfare of your children.

The centre offers a number of different services which are helpful to families. These include baby clinics, play activities and healthy-eating sessions. We found there is lots of helpful information for you and many of you are making good use of the information kiosk provided by the Citizen's Advice Bureau, particularly for finding work. We learned that children with special educational needs and/or disabilities are particularly welcome at the centre and lots of you make use of the sensory room and gardens. We know the travelling families are very pleased to have access to the library and toy library on their site and we are pleased that the coffee mornings are proving so successful. We know that the Heath area is not being offered as many activities as some of the other areas and we have asked the centre to make sure that more is available for those of you who live in the Heath area.

The centre is good at making sure that families receive the right sort of support when they need it. Many of you told us that you feel valued when you come to the centre and you like the fact that nobody judges you. The centre is good at asking you and your children about what you have enjoyed and what else you would like to do, but we think there are not enough of you being helped to work with the centre to decide what else needs to be done. We have asked the centre to work on this and support more of you to attend the advisory board. We have asked the centre to make sure that you are properly trained to do this. Thank you once again to those of you who came to speak to us. We wish you all the best for the future and every success with your new allotment venture.

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