

Inspection report for Derwent Children's Centre

Local authority	Derby City Council
Inspection number	365671
Inspection dates	13–14 July 2011
Reporting inspector	Deborah Udakis HMI

Centre governance	Local authority
Centre leader	Stephanie Scarborough
Date of previous inspection	Not applicable
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Linked school if applicable	Beaufort Community Primary School URN 131980
Linked early years and childcare, if applicable	Derwent Stepping Stones Nursery EY330097

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 of Her Majesty's Inspectors and an early years inspector.

The inspectors held meetings with senior managers and leaders, members of the advisory board, health, social care and education professionals, representatives of the local authority, adult learning services, family visitors, early years professionals, parents and carers.

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

Information about the centre

Derwent is one of 18 children's centres in the local authority. It is a phase one centre which was designated in March 2005. Centre services are provided at various sites in the locality. The centre provides the full core offer through a range of integrated services that include health, family support and outreach work, adult training and childcare provision. The head of centre reports to the local authority which is responsible for the governance of the centre. There is also a newly established advisory board which supports the governing body.

Statistical data for the area indicate that it is an area of significant social and economical disadvantage. The percentage of workless households and those dependent on benefits is above the national average. Children start nursery with skills and knowledge that are below the expected levels. The population is predominantly White British with a growing population from minority ethnic backgrounds, predominantly from Eastern Europe.

The centre has partnership links with Beaufort Community Primary School and Derwent Stepping Stones Nursery which provides childcare places, including funded places for two-year-olds, and a before- and after-school club.

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

This good children's centre plans its services well, effectively targeting families in the locality who are made vulnerable by their circumstances. Teenage parents, lone parents, families experiencing domestic abuse and parents and carers with learning difficulties receive outstanding care, guidance and support from highly skilled staff. By developing trusting relationships with families and working collaboratively with high-quality multi-agency partners, the centre provides a wide range of services which are inclusive. As a result, outcomes for children and their families are good, as is the provision and the leadership and management of the centre.

The well-qualified and reflective leaders and managers demonstrate a shared vision and enthusiasm. Members of the leadership team are highly motivated and enthusiastic. They are appropriately ambitious for the success of the centre, although the self-evaluation form modestly underestimates the effectiveness of the centre in many aspects. The centre's development plan has underpinned recent successes but does not always contain sufficiently detailed targets and success criteria to help bring further rapid improvement. Nevertheless, leaders provide effective focused leadership with shared ambition and purpose. Leaders at all levels have high hopes and aspirations for the families living in the reach area and this commitment is shared by partner agencies.

The skilled staff team carries out its duties with integrity and high levels of competence. For instance, good quality services have been developed to support survivors of domestic abuse, teenage parents, and children with special educational needs and/or disabilities.

Safeguarding arrangements are secure and thorough. The senior leadership team expertly manages child protection and early intervention strategies. It takes a positive, non-judgemental approach to safeguarding children and adults who are seen as particularly vulnerable and would benefit from support. Staff's effective use of the Common Assessment Framework and the recently developed family visitor

assessment toolkit, and the effective multi-agency working supports the work with children and families and ensure that they receive timely and sensitive support. Parents who made their comments known were particularly in praise of the centre as one parent commented, 'the centre means a lot to a lot of people'.

The centre has equality, diversity and inclusion at its heart and this is evident in all aspects of its work. There is good evidence of the narrowing of the gap in the Early Years Foundation Stage. This is also seen in the positive outcomes for families who are supported to improve their employability through the high quality learning and development opportunities provided. For instance, the provision of crèche services helps users to access training opportunities. This effective and inclusive approach has led to the greater engagement of teenage parents and a significant increase in centre membership over the last six months.

Users who expressed a view say they are happy with the services provided. They report having trusting relationships with centre staff. They are made to feel welcome and feel well supported. The parents' panel is proving very popular with some parents and is a valuable forum for discussion and consultation but does not provide opportunities for parents and carers to be involved in decision-making and governance of the centre. The advisory board includes representations from highly skilled partner agencies including health, education, social care, and the local community. However, there are no parent or carers representatives currently on the board.

Partnerships with professionals and external agencies are strong and effective. This is key to the success of the centre and its journey from a centre that was judged satisfactory by the local authority at its annual conversation in January this year. This, coupled with the effective work of the centre's outreach family visitors, supports the delivery of a cohesive package of integrated services. The success of the work of Jobcentre Plus has helped users to find helpful pathways to employment and adult learning opportunities.

The majority of the good range of well-planned and targeted services is aimed at families with the greatest need. Participation rates in all training courses, groups and activities are good and improving. The number of families engaging with the centre has increased significantly this year. However, the centre's membership figures do not fully reflect the number of children and families who are accessing services or participating in activities. Leaders are aware that the completion of the centre's membership application form is deterring some parents and carers from becoming members of the centre and are considering strategies to overcome any barriers.

The existing strong infrastructure and effective governance provide a firm foundation to drive forward improvements and ensure that the centre's the capacity for sustained improvement is good. In addition, the centre's strong emphasis on meeting the needs of the most vulnerable families and its commitment to the good deployment of staff and finances help it to use its resources efficiently and effectively. Actions taken to tackle areas for development are effective in delivering improved

provision and outcomes. Good-quality inter-agency partnership arrangements have contributed to the significant improvements in the quality of provision and outcomes for families over the last year.

What does the centre need to do to improve further?

Recommendations for further improvement

- Ensure that self-evaluation fully reflects the centre's achievements and that the development plan sets out clearer targets against which all priorities can be measured, along with a higher profile to increasing the centre's membership.
- Improve the extent to which parents and carers contribute to decision making and governance of the centre.

How good are outcomes for users?

2

Users benefit from a strong promotion of healthy lifestyles through antenatal and postnatal services, baby and childcare groups with positive evidence of improved healthier lifestyles. Parents and carers are well supported to give their children a good start through antenatal and breastfeeding support. Programmes to help families understand children's emotional needs are having a significant impact on improving relationships and behaviour. Teenage parents receive highly valued support from the Family Nurse Partnership which has proved to be influential in promoting the aspirations and ambitions of young parents. Parents and carers receive high-quality support to encourage improved health and well-being including support to stop smoking, and weaning advice and guidance.

Parents and children say they feel safe and secure within the premises where centre services and activities are provided. They are confident to approach centre staff for support. Where there is concern, individual parents are well supported to improve safety in their homes. For instance, many families have benefited from the provision of home-safety equipment and first-aid training. Parents say confidently that they have made firm and trusting friendships with other parents and carers through the centre.

Highly-skilled family and parenting support is having a significant effect on improving parenting skills to potentially reduce harm or injury to children. Parents and carers particularly highlighted that staff are well qualified and this promotes safe practices. The children and families considered to be particularly vulnerable are extremely well supported. Children on child protection plans receive sensitive and well-planned support and guidance. The strong partnerships with health, police, social care and education agencies ensure that the plans are regularly reviewed and actions agreed in consultation and agreement with parents and carers whenever possible. All staff are well-versed in the use of the Common Assessment Framework and the lead worker for these complex assessments is highly trained and experienced in their completion. Risk assessments are very thorough and the lone working risk assessments are of very good quality and well understood by staff.

Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage make good progress. Children with special educational needs and/or disabilities and those at risk of language delay receive highly-effective support. The implementation of communication, language and literacy programmes have had a positive impact on children's learning and development. There are good transition arrangements for children who leave the nursery to attend local schools. Many parents are actively involved in their children's next steps as they journey from nursery to school and their feedback indicates high levels of satisfaction with the arrangements. Partnerships between parents, carers and the nursery staff are strong and trusting.

The centre successfully engages with families who have previously proven hard to reach or have had negative experiences of education. Several parents have gained National Vocational Qualifications to Level 2 through the Open College Network programme. Learning activities has a positive impact on the quality of parenting and furthering their chances to improve their economic well-being. The careers information, advice and guidance sessions, Jobcentre Plus and local colleges have supported hundreds of parents and carers to consider their employment pathways and learning needs. The centre supports a large number of parents and carers as volunteers in partnership with the local Volunteer Bureau. One parent commented, 'I now go to work full-time because of the support I have received from the children's centre'.

Many parents and carers report increasing confidence and self-esteem. Those who find communication difficult or are experiencing low self-esteem receive invaluable support to make their views known. The parents' panel enables some parents to express their views about the centre. However, the parents' panel is not a forum in which parents can contribute to decision making and governance. Children develop a good understanding of positive behaviour as a result of the good quality activities. They are developing a good understanding of how to take calculated risks and to behave in a safe manner during outdoor play. There are positive relationships throughout the centre.

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	3
The extent to which children are developing skills for the future and parents are developing economic stability and independence including	2

access to training	
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How good is the provision?

2

The centre demonstrates a positive approach to adult learning. The range of services, activities and opportunities, including outreach services, meet the needs of users and the wider community. Opportunities are varied and are delivered in consultation with families which has led to good participation rates. Parents and carers who sign up for the early education 30-week programme demonstrate tenacity and commitment in their continued attendance. The majority who complete the programme are rewarded with improved self-esteem and emotional resilience, and a nationally recognised Level 2 qualification. Particularly successful and eagerly requested adult training includes paediatric first aid and positive parenting programmes. Survivors of domestic violence, fathers, lone parents, parents and carers with learning difficulties and teenage parents are well represented in adult learning activities. The centre promotes good quality purposeful learning development and enjoyment for all users. One parent commented, 'We want to learn and we value our learning'. Families new to the area and those with English as an additional language are increasingly well served by the centre.

Children's learning journeys in the Early Years Foundation Stage provide an informative analysis and assessment of children's good progress supported by photographic evidence. Parents are actively encouraged to engage in their children's learning and contribute to the ongoing assessment of their progress. Parents and carers are empowered to make improvements to their circumstances and those of their children through the effective way centre staff engage them in the assessment process.

The sensitive care, guidance and advice provided by staff to families are excellent. The staff and leaders know the community well. The work of the family visitors has been instrumental to many of the achievements of the centre. Participation and take-up data show that the centre is well used by families who historically have been difficult to engage. In discussion, parents spoke very favourably about the success of home visits carried out by family visitors. The work they do is easily understood by the majority of parents and carers and is helping to reduce isolation and supporting positive outcomes for families and the community. There is a strong focus on supporting parents who suffer from low self-esteem and confidence. Participants in services and activities regularly report significant increases in confidence and self-esteem as a result of attending workshops and sessions and this is having a positive impact on the relationships with their children. The work of the centre and its partners to combat domestic violence is helping women and children to improve their physical and emotional well-being. There are very good first aid arrangements in place and this ensures that children receive prompt and appropriate attention if they have an accident.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The effectiveness of the assessment of the needs of children, parents and other users	2
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

Leaders at all levels are suitably ambitious for the success of the centre and work effectively to improve the outcomes for children and families living within the reach area. They understand that achieving successful outcomes is an ongoing process and are committed to develop the centre further. However, in the centre's development plan some of the priorities do not have sufficiently sharp targets against which further success can be measured.

Governance is good; the local authority's arrangements for holding the centre to account are clear and understood. The advisory board is a recent development and includes a substantial membership consisting of professional partners, many of whom have notable safeguarding credentials. While the parents' panel provides a forum for discussion, the centre has not yet established parent and carer representation on the advisory board and, as a result, parents and carers are not routinely involved in decision making and the governance of the centre.

The centre's policies and procedures for safeguarding are good and staff's knowledge and expertise ensure children's well-being and safety are paramount. Staff recruitment procedures are comprehensive and are designed to ensure all staff employed at the centre are suitable to care for children. Staff receive regular, professional child protection training appropriate to their roles and responsibilities. Good quality, early intervention support is provided to families in crisis including those who are experiencing domestic violence. Effective and cohesive partnerships and communication between external agencies, in particular health and social care, contribute to the centre's effective safeguarding arrangements.

In assessing the quality of the services provided, the centre routinely explores the views of users and the parents' panel is a useful forum used for consulting with families. Leaders carefully analyse evaluations and use the information to drive improvements. The centre's self-evaluation diligently includes all aspects, but it is too modest.

The inclusion of all children and families and the centre's determination to engage equally with those from the wider community, including teenage parents, lone parents, and families experiencing domestic abuse has ensured greater participation by families in greatest need of support and services. In addition, children with special

educational needs and/or disabilities and those identified at risk of developmental delay receive well-planned targeted support in partnership with their parents. The centre's engagement with the wider community is commendable. Data suggests, however, that not all families who are regularly using centre services and attending activities become formal members of the centre. As a result, centre membership figures do not accurately reflect families' engagement with the centre.

The centre's policies and procedures are routinely reviewed and are used as part of the induction process to promote the understanding of the importance of inclusion for staff, students and volunteers. Diversity is celebrated effectively through a range of activities, including training, and staff challenge discrimination of any kind.

The centre provides good value for money. Efficient and effective use is made of highly-valued resources through effective professional multi-agency partnerships. They have worked collaboratively, and to great effect, to reduce any duplication of work, target resources and reduce costs without compromising the high quality of service provision.

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	3
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	3
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	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 Derwent Children's Centre on 13-14 July 2011. We judged the centre as good overall.

We would like to thank those of you who spoke to us. We were impressed with your enthusiasm and strong feelings of support for the centre and its staff. Your views were very helpful to the inspection team. You told us that the centre staff are welcoming and helpful. We found that the wide range of good quality services and activities on offer are exciting. Services and activities provided are helping you to improve your parenting skills and enabling most of you to develop qualifications and skills and gain confidence and self-belief. We judged that those of you who are experiencing difficulty in your lives receive excellent care, guidance and support from the centre and you are very well supported to make your families and children safe and healthy. Many of you were keen to tell us how the centre has helped you when you have experienced real difficulties. As a result, outcomes for children and families who attend centre services are good.

We watched you thoroughly enjoying the activities, such as the toy library, where you talked to each other and played with your children. Many parents and carers have enrolled as volunteers and are working to deliver centre services including childcare. Those of you who made your comments known spoke of the centre and its staff with very high regard.

You told us that one reason why you like coming to the centre is because of the well-trained, helpful and friendly staff who work there. Staff are very enthusiastic and motivated. They have high hopes for the families living in the Derwent area and work effectively in partnership with you to help you to make improvements to your lives. For example, the family visitors are expertly working with you to ensure that the services and activities that you need are available. The centre has good partnerships with other agencies like the health service and social services to make sure that any help provided is just right for you and your family. Some of you were very keen to tell us that, without the help and support from the centre, you would not have been able to achieve what you have, including greater confidence and self-esteem, improved parenting and stronger relationships with your children. In addition, the training and development opportunities available via the centre are helping many of you develop skills which have led to employment and further adult learning.

There have been a number of significant changes in centre leadership over the last couple of years. The new leadership and management team are proving to be effective in bringing about important and positive changes to the centre. The centre's advisory board is beginning to provide challenge and members are developing a clear understanding of their role.

The centre leaders have been successful in safeguarding the families who use the centre. The centre is doing well reaching out to engage with the most vulnerable children and families in the community and those who benefit from the centre's help. Leaders take care to check how the activities on offer are leading to improvements, both for you, your family and also for the community overall.

We have asked the centre to make some improvements. We have asked that the centre continues to increase the number of families who join the centre's membership. We would like more parents and carers to become involved in decision making and the governance of the centre. We would also like to see parents and carers represented on the advisory board. In addition, we have asked the centre leaders to improve the accuracy of their self-evaluation and to improve their development plan by setting out clearer targets against which success can be measured.

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