

Inspection report for Market Place Children's Centre

Local authority	Nottinghamshire
Inspection number	384005
Inspection dates	3–4 August 2011
Reporting inspector	Alison Veall HMI

Centre governance	Nottinghamshire Health Care
Centre leader	Rosemary Phillipson
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected
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Linked school if applicable	Not applicable
Linked early years and childcare, if applicable	Oceans Day Nursery EY389292 Leen Mills Pre-School URN 253045

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.

Published: August 2011

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 the senior leadership team, and representatives from Nottinghamshire Health Care, the local authority, the advisory board, health services, partner agencies, frontline workers, parents and carers.

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

Information about the centre

Market Place Children's Centre is a phase two centre which was designated in 2008. The centre manager was appointed in 2010. The centre is situated in the John Godber Centre which is owned by the Church of England. The children's centre is one of three within the Hucknall area. The strategic management of the centre is provided by Nottinghamshire Health Care which is commissioned by the local authority to provide children's centre services in the Ashfield district of Nottingham. Support and guidance are provided for the centre by a local advisory group which consists of a range of professional partners, community representatives, staff, and some parents and carers.

The children's centre serves a community where, traditionally, employment has been predominantly in the mining and textile industries. The decline of these industries now means that 21% of the children in the area live in workless households. Rates of domestic abuse are reported to be high. The centre serves an area where 94% are White British; the remaining 6% are from Asian and Eastern European backgrounds. Generally, children enter the Early Years Foundation Stage with skills expected for their age, except in communication, language and literacy where skills are below those expected.

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’s senior management team and staff have built good effective relationships with many families. The commitment of the staff and the creative manner in which resources are used are significant strengths of this children’s centre. Although the centre’s accommodation is very limited, the centre provides a good-quality service because staff use the available space well and signpost users to specialist services where necessary. Support for breastfeeding mothers is good. As a result, breastfeeding continuation rates at six weeks are good. Weaning sessions are also well received by families, who comment on how helpful they are and how they enable them to resist pressure to begin weaning too early. Fitness and healthy eating initiatives, which are delivered in collaboration with a range of partners, ensure that families are developing a good understanding of how to lead healthy lifestyles.

The centre is proactive in its work with neighbouring children’s centres and voluntary agencies to ensure families access the most appropriate provision. As a result, data are showing that outreach work in the local community is consistently reaching families particularly among those who are most vulnerable. Sessions and groups offered at the centre are aimed at fathers as well as mothers which ensures that improvement in parenting skills is not confined to one particular group. The centre makes a strong commitment to inclusion and community cohesion, recognising and celebrating cultural, religious and ethnic diversity. Sessions and groups are well attended, and the feedback from attendees is mostly positive, highlighting the benefits of being able to access services within the town centre. Parents report that the centre has made a difference to them and their families.

The centre has helped many families to develop a good understanding of how to keep themselves safe. This is as a result of parents and carers attending activities, receiving consistent messages and working effectively with the centre and its partners. Popular courses delivered with a view to improving safety are ‘Paediatric First Aid’ and the ‘Incredible Years’ parenting course. The prevention of domestic violence is given a high priority and, in partnership with neighbouring children’s centres, a very successful ‘Freedom’ programme is run. The centre’s strong commitment to the Common Assessment Framework and the effective

implementation of safeguarding procedures ensure that children are well protected.

Children make good progress in their learning. Parents and carers learn the value of good-quality interaction with their children through positive role modelling by centre staff and early years partners. Adult learners access a good selection of courses, many delivered in partnership with outside agencies. The volunteer programme is developing skills and confidence well and, in some instances, participants have gone on to further training and employment. The centre and its partners track the number of attendees, their ongoing attendance and involvement and the choices and progress they are making through the use of the 'Horizon' booklet. However, the centre is unable to access data from Jobcentre Plus in relation to the number of adults successfully gaining employment as a direct result of their contact with the children's centre.

Senior leaders have good knowledge of partnership working. They work effectively across the range of partner organisations. Many aspects of the centre's work with health services are good. However, difficulties in communication and information sharing make this the weakest of all partnerships. Information in relation to teenage pregnancies is received from the local health trust. The centre does not receive this data from its neighbouring Nottingham City Health Trust which hinders the centre's ability to make contact pre-birth with these young people.

There are clear lines of management and accountability within the centre which are very well understood by all. The centre is supported and challenged by the local authority and the centre's local advisory group. Parent and carer representation on the group is very much in the minority which limits the impact they are able to have on the strategic decision making. However, the parents and carers who are involved report that they are developing skills and confidence as a result of the responsibility they are given.

The staff team is led well by the centre manager, and all demonstrate a passion for improving the lives of users and their families. The children's centre's most recent improvement plan indicates that the centre knows where its strengths and weaknesses are. The centre manager has identified that previously some targets may not have been sufficiently challenging. However, effective use of data to track and monitor the impact their services are having on outcomes for users and to target where most needed has rectified this. This indicates that there is good capacity for sustained improvement.

What does the centre need to do to improve further?

Recommendations for further improvement

- Work with Jobcentre Plus to obtain data which will enable the centre to assess its success in helping users into employment and to plan for future development.
- Strengthen partnership working with health professionals by:

- improving communication and information sharing at a local level
 - agreeing systems to ensure that the children's centre is informed of all birth data within the reach area so that it is in a position to make early contact with all pregnant teenagers.
- Improve users' contribution to the centre by ensuring that parents and carers are more involved in the decision making of the centre.

How good are outcomes for users?

2

Users and their families access a wide range of services which improve their health and well-being. Adults take part in 'Push for Fitness' and 'Body Conditioning' sessions and children and adults exercise together through 'Toddle Woddle' and 'Busy Feet'. Mothers comment upon how the breastfeeding support has enabled them to successfully overcome any problems. This has led to a significant increase in the continuation rates at six weeks. 'Cook and Eat' and weaning sessions are popular. Parents report that they find these groups valuable. They praise the staff for the time taken to explain things and for the information they are given. Data and anecdotal evidence suggest obesity rates in the area are low. Immunisation rates in the area are in line with national averages.

Parents report positively about the impact the parenting course has had on the lives of the whole family. Users' comments give an indication of the feelings of the families. One parent, for example, said, 'The course helped me to see that I was a good parent. I just needed a bit of help.' Another said, 'It has made so much of a difference. My partner and I now do the same, we work together.' The use of the Common Assessment Framework plays an increasingly significant role in the centre's work to protect children from risk of harm. 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 centre provides effective support for families experiencing, or at risk of, domestic violence and ensures that these families are provided with tailored, multi-agency support. Referrals to the Freedom Programme and the Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conference ensure that parents and carers are well supported as they seek to improve their personal circumstances and keep their children safe.

Smoking cessation courses are well attended and are leading to a reduction in the number of smokeless households and a greater understanding of the impact of smoking on young children. Case studies and attendance at meetings show that parents and carers understand the safeguarding procedures and are aware that they are in place to protect their families. The Common Assessment Framework is used effectively within the centre in its preventative work with families. Its use has reduced the number of cases that move on to a higher level of intervention and child protection procedures. Parents and carers comment on how the 'Paediatric First Aid' course and home visits from centre staff and the fire service have improved their understanding of safety. As a result, their children are protected from accidents within the home and parents and carers understand what action they should take should one occur.

Most schools report that children are entering the Early Years Foundation Stage with skills close to those expected for their age. In some instances, communication language and literacy achievements are below those expected. Targeted interventions, such as 'Every Child A Talker', 'Home Talk', the provision of 'Story Sacks', the appointment of a language lead and work with the speech and language therapy service, are producing improved outcomes and children are progressing to a level expected for their age. Parents comment upon how they enjoy the activities such as the 'Terrific 2s', 'Baby Business', 'Wonderful 1s' and 'Messy Play'. Fathers who attend the 'Dads Group' talk about the benefits of being able to play with their children and take part in activities. They talk about improved bonds with their children.

The centre provides firm evidence to show how parents and carers have been nurtured into training and development opportunities. A small number move into volunteering and employment, increasing their economic and social well-being. However, the centre is unable to provide evidence to show that this is happening in significant numbers. Comments from parents and evaluations show how the knowledge and confidence levels of parents and carers are growing as a result of the planned progression in the courses and activities offered. Some of the comments were: 'I had no confidence until I attended sessions at the centre.' 'I am now volunteering and have funding for a National Vocational Qualification Level 3 course.' Parents and carers confidently share their views of the centre through a variety of media. Parents and carers who are involved on the local advisory group comment upon the confidence it has given them.

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 access to training	3

How good is the provision?

2

The centre has worked successfully to engage and work over sustained periods of time with a good proportion of the centre's reach population and particularly those most in need. The quality of care, guidance and support for families who visit the

centre or who receive services at home is good. Parents and carers told inspectors that the help from the centre has made a major difference to their lives. 'I now believe I can do things to make our lives better,' said one user. The centre provides a large amount of information in and around the building in relation to the aims of the children's centre, activities and sessions, health and family support, employment opportunities and domestic violence. Parents and carers receiving family support confirm how staff go 'that extra mile'.

The inclusive nature of the centre ensures that children with special needs and disabilities are supported through a wide range of initiatives and partnerships. The children's centre teacher supports childcare staff in the delivery of good-quality play and learning opportunities for children with additional needs. Assessments in the Early Years Foundation Stage led by the centre-based qualified teacher are being used increasingly skilfully to produce secure evidence of children's good progress. Regular networking opportunities involving maintained, private and voluntary sector education and childcare providers are used to share information and develop best practice. Parents are engaged in their children's learning and contribute to the ongoing assessment of their progress. Focused work with the children's centre, the language lead and speech and language therapy services are responsible for the improvement in children's communication, language and literacy recorded by the centre. The centre staff use activities such as 'Home Talk' to model effective talking and listening skills when working with families on outreach.

Community development staff work effectively with training and development agencies such as Nottingham New College to deliver a wide range of learning opportunities for adults. There is a strong commitment to ensuring that all learning is tailored to individual need and is progressive. For example, a learner may begin with confidence boosting activities but opportunities are available if they wish to move on to National Vocational or higher qualifications.

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	2

How effective are the leadership and management?

2

Senior leaders contribute to the success of the centre and the improving outcomes for children and their families. The centre manager and the staff team demonstrate a passion for improving the lives of families who access services from the centre. The

governance arrangements between Nottinghamshire Health Care and the local authority are clear and understood by all. There is good support and robust challenge for the children’s centre coordinator and manager through the local authority’s annual conversation and regular line management meetings. As a result of the challenge, support and the increasingly effective tracking and monitoring, target setting has become much more realistic and has enabled the centre to significantly increase the centre’s success in engaging families who may be vulnerable. It has also supported the centre in its creation of the development plan which has clear targets and easily monitored timelines. Supervision arrangements are good. The centre gives good value for money. Resources are used effectively and creatively and are shared with children’s centres in the area and a range of partners to ensure there is no duplication in the services offered.

Centre staff and most partner agencies gather the views of parents, carers and children at every opportunity. These views are shared at the local advisory board meetings, evaluated and used very effectively to shape and target services. The centre’s approach is very inclusive. It is positive in its work with children with disabilities and in its approach to the cultural, religious and ethnic differences of its users. It makes a significant contribution to community cohesion and to breaking down the barriers between families of different backgrounds. The centre’s improvement plan identifies that work still needs to be done in this area.

The centre’s arrangements for safeguarding children and families meet requirements well. A central record of Criminal Records Bureau checks is maintained and updated as necessary. Health and safety checks and risk assessments are carried out. Effective use of the Common Assessment Framework ensures that a range of agencies support children’s development and ongoing safety and well-being. Most partnerships are very well established and representatives speak highly of the centre and its committed staff team. They support effective multi-agency working. However, difficulties in communication and information sharing with the health authorities make this the weakest of all partnerships.

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	2

agencies in safeguarding children and, where applicable, vulnerable adults	
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	2

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

Leen Mills Pre-School was inspected on 25 May 2011. All aspects of the provision were judged to be outstanding.

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 Market Place Children's Centre on 2 and 3 August 2011. We judged the centre as good overall.

As part of the inspection, we visited a number of activities, looked at the centre's documentation and talked with a range of children, users of the centre, staff, community representatives and partnership workers. We also read some of the things you have written about the centre when you have been on courses or attended activities with your children.

Under the careful guidance of the manager, the staff team provides good-quality care, guidance and support for all who use the centre. Those of you who spoke to us said that you feel the centre has helped you to believe in yourselves. Most importantly, you said it helps improve your lives and those of your families, particularly for those of you who are facing difficult challenges. As a result, you value the centre and have no hesitation in using the services regularly. We know that the centre seeks your views on all of the activities you take part in and on the contact

you have with centre workers. We also know that a few of you are involved in the local advisory group. However, we have asked the children's centre to ensure that more of you are involved in the decision making processes. We have also asked the children's centre, Nottinghamshire Health Care and the local authority to improve communication and information sharing.

Many of you who start by making contact with the centre become more involved than you expect to. We saw that, for some of you, your contact with the centre has led you to develop new skills, go on to further training, gain qualifications, become volunteers and then find work. Many of you said how this is improving your lives, and how much you appreciate the support and encouragement the staff team gives to you. We have asked managers to look at ways in which Jobcentre Plus could be more involved. We think they should be providing more information on the number of you who gain employment after contact with the children's centre. This information will help them to assess how effective their training and development activities are and if they are helping you to secure employment.

The staff at the centre encourage you to engage in play with your children from a very early age at sessions such as the 'Terrific 2s', 'Baby Business', 'Wonderful 1s', 'Messy Play' and 'Baby Massage'. Inspectors were really pleased to get the opportunity to talk to fathers who attend the 'Dads Group'. We enjoyed hearing how beneficial you found the activities. We could see how much you and your children enjoy the activities you access at the centre and those of its partners and the positive effect these are having on you and your families.

Children who attend the wide range of childcare services, including the linked school's nursery, the designated day nursery and crèche provision are making good progress. The effective transition arrangements with some schools in the area mean that your children enter the next stage of their care and education with confidence and are ready to get down to hard work.

We would like to thank everyone who came to speak with us. It was a privilege to be able to talk with you. Your honest and open discussions with us helped us immensely during the inspection. We thoroughly enjoyed spending time at your centre and we wish you and your families the best for the future.

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