

Inspection report for Austin Sunnyhill Children's Centre

Local authority	Derby City Council
Inspection number	367737
Inspection dates	10–11 August 2011
Reporting inspector	Deborah Udakis HMI

Centre governance	Local authority
Centre leader	Dawn Slater
Date of previous inspection	Not applicable
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Linked school if applicable	Village Primary School URN 135116
Linked early years and childcare, if applicable	EY279852 Homelands Neighbourhood 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.

This inspection was carried out by one Her Majesty's Inspectors and an early years inspector.

The inspectors held meetings with senior managers and leaders, members of the advisory board, representatives of the local authority, health professionals, adult learning services, centre support workers, 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

Austin Sunnyhill is one of 18 children's centres in the local authority. It is a phase one centre which was designated in June 2004. Centre services are provided at one of two 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, new to this post in May 2011, reports to the local authority which is responsible for the governance of the centre. There is an established advisory board which supports the work of the centre.

Statistical data for the area indicate that there is significant social and economic disadvantage within the centre's reach area. 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 Asian and Asian British backgrounds. Increasingly,

over the last few years, growing numbers of Eastern European families, including those from the Roma community, have settled in the area.

The centre has partnership links with the Village Primary School. Homelands Neighbourhood Nursery is located within the centre and provides childcare places, including funded places for two-year-olds.

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

Austin Sunnyhill is a good children's centre. It is established and effective, and parents and carers say it has changed their lives for the better. The effective leadership and management inspire trust, and encourage and promote good-quality services. Current good practice provides a platform to drive forward the vision and ambitions of the leaders and staff. The capacity for improvement is good. The good-quality inter-agency partnership working arrangements have resulted in positive improvements in the quality of provision and outcomes for children and families over the last year. The efficient use of resources, the commitment to maximising service provision through shared initiatives and the effective use of cost-unit analysis mean that the centre provides good value for money.

Parents and carers make a positive contribution to the governance of the centre. The centre's advisory board is established and includes good representation from parents and carers. Others express an interest in getting involved in the life of the centre. The centre's development plan includes well-targeted key areas for priority which stem from the centre's good-quality assessment of the needs of children and families. The plan clearly indicates specific timescales, designated levels of responsibility and measures for success. Recent revisions to the plan clearly describe the vision of the centre. All leaders are aware of the centre's priorities and they have a firm understanding of the centre's strengths and areas for development. The centre's self-evaluation document modestly underestimates its achievements in some aspects. In addition, parents and carers are not involved in the assessment of risks nor are their views captured within the centre's self-evaluation document.

Nevertheless, parents and carers routinely contribute their views on the range and quality of services provided. Their views are valued and are used to adapt activities and services to ensure they remain relevant and appropriate to the needs of users.

Staff demonstrate a good understanding of and respect for different cultures and backgrounds. Leaders and staff take positive actions to tackle unlawful and unfair discrimination, inequality and unfairness through a range of activities and by providing an inclusive and welcoming environment. A key feature of the centre's success is the good level of trust established with children and families. Families appreciate and reciprocate the way the centre staff promote positive relationships and respect. Parents reported that the initial home visits by the family visitor are an important opportunity to get to know about the centre's services. Parents and carers from all social backgrounds are positive about the services provided by the centre within their community. They particularly appreciate being able to have access to a range of professional support and guidance under one roof.

Families' financial situations are improved by the effective input from Jobcentre Plus and financial management training. One parent who attended the training commented, 'It has been a real eye-opener and has helped me with ideas to talk to my child about money.' However, the centre has limited documented evidence to demonstrate the impact of its work supporting families to maximise their income.

All of the parents and carers who expressed a view rated the nursery as good or better in a recent survey. The parents' action group is proving popular with some parents and is a valuable forum for discussion and consultation. The advisory board is chaired by a parent. It includes representatives from highly skilled partner agencies including health, education, social care, and the local community.

The centre has a well-considered, active approach to keeping children safe. The centre's duty of care is communicated to parents and carers through a well-formulated policy, in line with local safeguarding children board procedures. Regular safeguarding training ensures that staff have an up-to-date knowledge and understanding of current requirements. They are confident about recognising the signs and symptoms of abuse, knowing exactly what to do should they have any child protection concerns.

What does the centre need to do to improve further?

Recommendations for further improvement

- Improve the extent to which parents and carers access information regarding benefits and tax credits to improve their economic stability.
- Extend opportunities for parents and carers to contribute to the centre's self-evaluation and make sure that the self-evaluation fully reflects the centre's achievements.

How good are outcomes for users?

2

There is a common purpose among all staff and key partners to improve outcomes for children. Parents are supported well to give children a good start through breastfeeding. The breastfeeding support group provides invaluable reassurance and advice. Health visitors provide well-integrated services within the centre with the good-quality support of family visitors. Programmes provided to help parents and carers understand children's emotional needs are having a significant impact on improving children's behaviour and the relationships between parent and child. All staff treat each other, children and families with consideration and respect. Expectations and aspirations are high and there is a strong commitment to improving outcomes for vulnerable children and those who are most at risk. Staff demonstrate how they reduce the differences in outcomes between groups while improving outcomes for all.

Highly-skilled family and parenting support is having a significant impact on improving parenting skills which helps them to avoid harm or injury to their children. The effective use of the Common Assessment Framework and very effective partnership working with social care and health colleagues ensure that children and families, and especially those children on child protection plans, receive timely and sensitive support. As a result, outcomes for these children and families are considerably improved. Parents and carers who expressed a view unanimously agreed that the centre is a safe and secure place where they and their children feel safe and welcomed. Safeguarding arrangements at the centre are thorough and are well established.

Children attending the nursery make outstanding progress and benefit from a high-quality learning environment and, as a result, there is secure evidence of the narrowing of the gap between the most able children and those with low starting points. Transition arrangements are excellent and are consistently managed in collaboration with the local schools. Parents and carers take an active role in their children's learning and make regular contributions to their children's 'learning journeys'.

Learning opportunities for adults are of good quality and are having a positive impact on the quality of parenting. One parent who attended the 30-week parenting course said, 'I suffered postnatal depression and this group has helped me to enjoy being a mum.' Parents and carers make invaluable contributions to the life of the centre. They are actively involved in the governance of the centre as members of the advisory board and parent action group. A few parents and carers volunteer within the centre and this is helping them to develop skills and gain experience. This is opening up new training and employment opportunities for them.

The percentage of families living in workless households within the area remains significantly higher than the national average. The centre, with its partner agencies,

provides good-quality opportunities designed to improve the economic outcomes for these families. Training is effective in moving willing individuals towards taking up new interests that benefit their families and lead to recognised qualifications and employment. Jobcentre Plus provides regular opportunities for parents and carers to gain advice on how to apply for jobs and courses on financial management to help them to address debt. However, the centre is not able to securely demonstrate how effective it is in helping parents and carers to access information regarding benefits and tax credits and, thereby, contribute to their economic stability.

These are the grades for the outcomes for users

The extent to which children, including those from vulnerable groups, are physically, mentally and emotionally healthy and families have healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which children are safe and protected, their welfare concerns are identified and appropriate steps taken to address them	2
The extent to which all users enjoy and achieve educationally and in their personal and social development	2
The extent to which children engage in positive behaviour and develop positive relationships and users contribute to decision-making and governance of the centre	2
The extent to which children are developing skills for the future and parents are developing economic stability and independence including access to training	2

How good is the provision?

2

Assessments in the nursery are very rigorous and secure. Staff use their expert observations and evaluations to gauge children's progress. 'Learning journeys' provide a wonderful record of children's progress and achievements. They are routinely shared with parents and carers who contribute their observations of their children's learning. The effective use of assessments plays a 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 consistent and effective way centre staff engage them in the assessment process.

The good range of services is prioritised and targeted, following careful and considered assessment of the needs of children and families, to support the most vulnerable groups. Activities for Asian women, fathers, teenage parents and the high-quality parenting programmes are among the most successful with the greatest number of attendees. Parents and carers attending the Asian women's group reported that positive relationships have been generated within the group. They explained the important role the group provides to assist and support women and their families who are new to English. The centre's focus on improving provision for the families in greatest need is also having a positive impact on outcomes for all

families.

The centre has been instrumental in reducing social isolation and raising parents' and carers' confidence and self-esteem through good-quality learning and development programmes. Participation and take-up data show that the centre is well used by families who, historically, have been difficult to engage. Parents and carers clearly enjoy the activities provided as they attend regularly, and eagerly and enthusiastically engage in a range of activities provided via the centre. In discussion, parents spoke very favourably about the success of home visits carried out by family visitors.

The care, guidance and support for children and their families are good. The vast majority of parents and carers who expressed a view are very happy with their centre, including the way they are supported in times of crisis. Staff know each family well and are fully involved in providing effective pastoral support, especially for the most vulnerable children and families. The centre seeks out families who are new to the United Kingdom, particularly from Eastern Europe and Roma families, to ensure they receive appropriate support to help them become established within the community.

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

The good-quality leadership at all levels, the staff's high expectations and aspirations for children and families, and the commitment and teamwork of all staff all contribute to the experiences of children and families using the centre. Governance is good; the local authority's arrangements for holding the centre to account are clear and understood. The advisory board is chaired by a parent representative and its membership includes professional partners, many of whom have noteworthy safeguarding credentials. Parents and carers are represented on the advisory board which ensures that they have a forum to make their views known. The parents' action group provides an additional forum for further discussion and consultation.

Staff are skilled in finding and applying effective approaches to communicating with, relating to and working with children. Staff expertly assess progress, and they recognise the smallest steps as well as large jumps in childrens' progress. Rigorous

monitoring, evaluation and reflective practice ensure that leaders and staff are effective in supporting and understanding the needs of the children and families they serve. However, parents' and carers' views are not routinely contributing to the centre's formal self-evaluation. In addition, the leaders and staff are in the process of reviewing the centre's self-evaluation to ensure it fully reflects the work of the centre.

The centre's safeguarding arrangements are thorough. Staff receive appropriate and regular training in child protection procedures and they demonstrate a good level of awareness and understanding. Staff regularly update their knowledge and expertise in subjects related to safeguarding such as domestic violence, paediatric first aid, and the emotional health of children and their families. As a result, they are well placed to provide support to the most vulnerable groups in the community. Protocols and practices for referrals are well known, and the safeguarding of children and their families is at the heart of the work of the centre. The centre ensures the safe recruitment of staff. All staff employed at the children's centre are subject to an enhanced Criminal Records Bureau check. The centre diligently records checks carried out on volunteers and those undertaken by partner agencies for staff working at the centre. Effective multi-agency partnership working arrangements securely safeguard children. The effective use of assessment processes by all agencies involved ensures that children and families receive timely support and advice.

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

The centre's work to promote equality and tackle discrimination against vulnerable groups is good. The centre makes a positive contribution to community cohesion and the breaking down of barriers between families of different backgrounds. The centre is doing well to reach out to the community to ensure its work is understood and to engage further with families in need. Children and families with special educational needs and/or disabilities receive good-quality support. Children with additional learning needs attending the nursery are making rapid progress and are quickly closing the gap between them and the most able children.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The extent to which governance, accountability, professional supervision and day to day management arrangements are clear and understood	2
The extent to which ambitious targets drive improvement, provision is integrated and there are high expectations for users and the wider community	2
The extent to which resources are used and managed efficiently and effectively to meet the needs of users and the wider community	2

The extent to which equality is promoted and diversity celebrated, illegal or unlawful discrimination is tackled and the centre fulfils its statutory duties	2
The effectiveness of the centre's policy, procedures and work with key agencies in safeguarding children and, where applicable, vulnerable adults	2
The extent to which evaluation is used to shape and improve services and activities	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

Homelands Nursery was inspected on 10 August 2011. The nursery was judged to be outstanding in all aspects. Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage make outstanding progress towards the early learning goals.

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 Austin Sunnyhill Children's Centre on 10 to 11 August 2011. We judged the centre as good overall.

We would like to thank those of you who spoke to us. It was a great pleasure to speak to you, and you were unanimous in your praise of the work of the centre's workers. You explained how well staff support you, help to raise your self-esteem and confidence, and encourage you to achieve. The centre staff are welcoming and helpful. The care, guidance and support for you are good. This is because staff are successful at working closely with children and families and engaging with you. Also, the successful partnerships developed with staff from across different agencies ensure that children and families access high-quality services as quickly as possible. Professionals working in multi-agency teams and voluntary organisations, who spoke to inspectors, all hold the centre and the work of its staff in high regard and told us about the positive partnerships between different agencies.

Several of you believe that your contact with the centre has been life-changing. The centre is making a positive difference to children's well-being and learning. It is particularly making a difference in helping children to experience a safe start to childhood. Children have good opportunities to develop their play and learning within the centre and this is helping them to prepare for their next steps into nursery and on to school. Children who attend the nursery make outstanding progress in their learning in the Early Years Foundation Stage.

A new leadership and management team was established in May 2011. In a relatively short time, leaders have developed a concentrated and valuable understanding of the needs of the families in the local area. The centre has secure systems to make sure that staff are doing a good job. An effective use of evaluations and consultations ensures that services on offer are making a positive difference to people's lives.

We have asked the centre to improve your access to information about benefits and tax credits to improve your economic stability. We have also asked the centre to improve the extent to which you contribute to its self-evaluation and to make sure that the self-evaluation fully reflects its achievements.

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