

Inspection report for STAPLEFORD (Bramcote, Stapleford N, E, W) Sure Start Children's Centre

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Linked school if applicable	Albany Infants' and Nursery School
Linked early years and childcare, if applicable	N/A

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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 maintained infants and nursery school was carried out at the same time as the inspection of the centre under Section 5 of the Education Act 2005. The report of this inspection is available on our website www.ofsted.gov.uk.

This inspection was carried out by an additional inspector and an early years inspector. The inspectors held meetings with the centre manager, the community health's co-ordinator for children's centres, members of the advisory group, a range of providers, parents and carers, volunteers and a representative from the local authority. Inspectors observed the centre's work and looked at sessions at the centre and other sites. They looked at relevant documentation including the centre's operational plans, self-evaluations, key policies and safeguarding procedures.

Information about the centre

Stapleford (Bramcote, Stapleford N, E & W) Sure Start Children's Centre is a Phase 2 centre designated in 2006 that serves an extensive semi-rural residential area to the west of Nottingham. The centre's reach area spans communities that live in Stapleford and Bramcote. The centre works in partnership with two other centres in the district to maximise provision for families in the wider area and so families from further afield attend activities at the centre regularly. The area served by the centre is socially mixed and highly populated. A relatively low number of properties are council-owned. An average proportion of families claim benefits as the incidence of worklessness is about average. The vast majority of families, at around 85%, are of White British heritage. Other families represent a wide range of minority ethnic backgrounds with no significant groups prevalent. A high proportion of children from the reach area enter the Nursery with skills, knowledge and abilities that are below those expected for their age. Within the area the centre serves, there are pockets of extreme poverty, unemployment, poor health and low levels of literacy and numeracy.

The local authority has commissioned Nottinghamshire Community Health services to provide governance of the centre on its behalf. The centre manager and most other staff are directly employed by the National Health Service (NHS). The centre offers a range of health, social care and family support services. There is no registered childcare at the centre but crèche facilities are arranged to support activities on site.

Education for children aged between three and four years in the Early Years Foundation Stage is provided in Albany Infants and Nursery School on the same site as the centre or through other schools and private providers in the area.

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 families

3

Capacity for sustained improvement

The centre's capacity for sustained improvement, including the quality of its leadership and management

3

Main findings

Stapleford Children's Centre provides a calm, friendly environment for children and families. The mutual trust and regard that exists between staff, children and families ensures everyone feels a sense of belonging when they attend. Children are cared for well and safeguarding arrangements are satisfactory. Children are eager to attend and settle quickly to enjoy themselves. Parents and carers value the centre's support and guidance, and the positive impact this has on their lives. A typical view expressed by one user is: 'The centre has shown me how to play and relate to my child more effectively. I am a better parent as a result'.

Centre staff encourage an ethos of care and support. Those who use its services gain in confidence and self-esteem and a number explain how this has helped them take greater responsibility for themselves and their families, for example, in adopting healthier lifestyles. Those who have faced specific challenges and issues speak highly of how sensitively staff helped them to improve their lives through well-planned activities and individual support and guidance. Activities are well attended and provision through outreach and in community settings effectively address the needs of families identified by, for example, health, social care, schools and nurseries.

The outcomes for users are satisfactory because overall provision is satisfactory. It is strongest when the centre uses the expertise of professionals, for example, health workers and early years' staff to support children and families as they prepare for

school. The centre is successful in supporting children's learning and development and, as a consequence, children make good progress in their early years at school. Partnership with local primary schools is good; this is helping to raise the aspirations of families who participate in the centre's provision. Young parents are supported well, and effective partnership working with health visitors ensures good levels of health care and early childhood development. However, opportunities for adults to extend their learning, through for example, basic skills courses in order to promote their future economic well-being, are limited.

While the care, guidance and support the centre provides are good and have a positive impact on those who use the services, the centre is not doing enough to assess the needs of those who do not use the services, such as fathers, lone parents and families facing unemployment so that they more can move towards independence and self-reliance. The numbers taking up provision from these target groups remain low and staff have insufficient data, for example from adult education and job centre plus, to help them set targets for future provision. The extent to which evaluation is used to shape and improve services and activities while effective for children, is satisfactory overall. Activities are evaluated through discussions with participants and providers but the centre does not gather the views of the wider community to inform developments. The multi-agency advisory group, community health and the local authority support the work of the centre satisfactorily but have not challenged the staff enough to enhance outcomes for the identified target groups.

The local authority is rightly keen to improve provision by setting challenging targets and monitoring the centre's impact on outcomes for families in the area. Centre staff form a committed team that wants to develop provision. The centre is successful in training volunteers who play a key role in supporting developments. The leadership team is over generous in its self assessment and acknowledges that it does not do enough to reach the wider community. The centre has satisfactory capacity to further improve outcomes for families and children.

What does the centre need to do to improve further?

Recommendations for further improvement

- Widen the opportunities for parents to develop the skills they need to secure future economic stability.
- Raise participation levels of the target groups by assessing their needs and providing the necessary support to improve outcomes for their families.
- As part of strategic development planning, set clear and measurable targets against which the centre can evaluate its effectiveness accurately and monitor the quality of provision rigorously so that action can be taken to improve the outcomes for all groups in the community.

How good are outcomes for families?

3

Families benefit from the centre's good provision to promote healthy lifestyles. In effective partnership with health visitors, volunteers and others, they learn effectively about for example, the benefits of breastfeeding (BiBs group). Those who attend regularly see this group both as an educational facility and a social event where friendships are forged. As a result, breastfeeding rates have improved. Weaning and healthy-cooking sessions are well attended; these help children have a healthy start in life. Childhood obesity rates by the age of six are relatively stable in the reach area. Families who use the centre are made aware of the importance of balanced diets and exercise regimes, such as the 'Buggy Babes' to maintain family fitness.

Through home visits and attendance at baby clinics, centre staff identify health and safety concerns promptly. As a consequence, through good guidance and regular first-aid courses for parents and carers, emergency hospital admissions among children under five have fallen in the last year. The early identification of children's needs, for example any speech and language or weight issues enables professionals act quickly to support families in addressing these areas so more children start school at an advantage. Mothers experiencing depression are supported well by health services and other providers, and centre staff provide additional support to help mothers gain confidence and access services. While the high rate of teenage conception in the locality remains a concern, the centre directs teenage parents to nearby provision where a good number benefit from support and guidance to help them take care of their babies and themselves. Activities to promote smoking cessation are less evident.

Child protection is given high priority. Children and their families feel safe at the centre. Incidents of accidents on site are rare because the centre follows the local authority's guidance and ensures that all agencies and volunteers act accordingly to safeguard children's safety and well-being. As all partnership providers use the Common Assessment Framework to monitor cases and share information, families and children benefit as a result. Families in crisis and seeking urgent assistance are protected quickly with multi-agency support where necessary. Fire safety procedures are clearly displayed and the fire service notified of target families that need advice regarding fire safety equipment for the home. Courses for parents who experience difficulties in managing their children's behaviour help them to cope and modify their approaches effectively to ensure children's well-being at home. Procedures to conduct site risk assessments are in place but occasionally checks lack rigour, for example ensuring all staff and visitors sign in and out appropriately.

Children enjoy the activities the centre offers and have fun playing with a good range of toys and equipment. Providers such as the speech and language therapy service record children's progress and involve parents in supporting their children's learning and development. Initiatives such as 'Home Talk' have successfully raised children's speaking and listening skills and given parents valuable advice on how to listen to their children and to reduce the time children spend watching television. Good-quality information and practical advice are provided to families, for example, to improve their parenting skills so that they can support their children's learning more effectively. Parents and carers develop a good understanding of early years'

education by watching how staff interact with their children and adopting this practice at home. One parent said, 'My child loves painting and water play– he has so much fun.' Through the 'Big Books', records reflect that children make good progress in their learning and social development. Children with disabilities are supported well and specialists work with centre staff to ensure positive outcomes for parents and children. However, the extent to which all families enjoy and achieve educationally and in their personal social development is satisfactory overall because the outcomes for adults are not as strong as for children and too few of the target groups participate. While the centre effectively signposts adults to educational provision through other providers, it is not clear how many adults take up courses and training to improve their literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology skills, and thus improve their prospects to secure long-term economic well-being. The centre does not keep records of the achievements of adults that it refers to other providers, such as adult learning. Case studies of those receiving individual support from Jobcentre Plus indicate that a few users have improved their prospects.

The centre addresses parents' feelings of isolation effectively and several said, 'I really enjoy coming here – it gets me and my children out of the house and we make friends who we can turn to away from the centre'. Many report that their confidence and self-esteem have improved as a result; they feel they can tackle problems more easily and have somewhere to go if problems arise. Sessions such as 'Monday lunch' gives families an opportunity to learn more about their community and the needs of others. The good social mix, with target families being encouraged to attend, generates a healthy community spirit that all enjoy.

Behaviour among all those who use the centre is good and everyone works and plays together harmoniously. As a result, all parties enjoy being there. Play sessions engage families by involving them effectively in supporting newcomers when they first start. Childminders meet at the centre regularly to share good practice and to give children quality time to make new friends and socialise. Volunteers support the work of the centre well. Parents and partner providers provide feedback regarding provision, and parents are encouraged to voice their views through the advisory board and governors. They have good opportunities to comment on sessions, so that staff modify provision. Even so, with limited involvement of target groups such as fathers, lone parents and families facing unemployment, these groups do not influence service development further.

These are the grades for the outcomes for families

The extent to which children, including those from target 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	3
The extent to which all children and parents, including those from target groups, enjoy and achieve educationally and in their personal	3

and social development	
The extent to which children engage in positive behaviour and develop positive relationships and parents, including those from target groups, contribute to decision-making and governance of the centre	2
The extent to which children are developing skills for the future and parents, including those from target groups, are developing economic stability and independence including access to training and employment	3

How good is the provision?

3

The centre has good partnerships with a range of providers particularly, early years' settings, schools and health services. These providers contribute effectively to good outcomes for the children and families who participate. The centre's outreach arrangements to follow up referrals from these services and the occasional self-referral are good. Home visits to these target families are high priority and outcomes following these visits are monitored well to safeguard children and adults. These contacts are recorded and where necessary other agencies involved to achieve positive outcomes. However, the provision does not always reach those families who are reluctant to access services because the centre's profile in target areas is still limited. Partnerships with social care are good. As a consequence, staff co-ordinate with care workers to support families in crisis effectively. Those who require multi-agency interventions are followed up sensitively. When emergencies arise, centre staff act as necessary to meet individual needs. Parents speak highly of this personalised support but with too many target families not participating, outreach provision overall is satisfactory.

Although the range and numbers of families from target areas are low and not enough people from these areas benefit, the sessions and courses are of good quality and informative. For example, 'Toddler talk', the toy library, and crèche facilities, provide stimulating opportunities for parents and children to enjoy quality time together. The babies and toddlers who attend explore in a safe, nurturing environment, parents receive useful advice and support from professionals and volunteers, and have valuable time to share experiences with each other. While overall achievement and enjoyment is satisfactory, mainly because, provision for adult learning is limited and participation levels from target families is low, headteachers from partner schools report that children who attend centre activities are well prepared for school and this has a positive impact on the good progress they make in the Early Years Foundation Stage. Parents benefit by learning how to support their children's learning at home. Close partnership with the adjacent primary school allows staff to support children as they move into the nursery. Activities, such as 'Stay and Play', reflect how the centre is working hard to raise aspirations in children and their families. Parents needing childcare are signposted to local providers and through the 'Achieve and Enjoy' group led by the centre, all these providers are kept informed of new developments to improve services. Children with additional needs and disabilities are identified quickly, and early intervention from speech therapists, for example, ensures that these children also make a good start at school. Less evident is the support the centre offers to parents who have a disability

or additional learning needs or to fathers to ensure that they are fully involved in supporting their children's learning and development. The local community has few families of ethnic minority origin but the staff signpost them to appropriate services; for example, for welfare benefits and, if appropriate, courses in English as an additional language.

Parents understand the relevance of training and attendance at sessions in improving their lives. While not all are ready to take up formal education courses, a significant number engage in activities that help them support their children's learning and development. The families using the centre value the services offered, but a few say that they would like more activities, particularly adult learning, closer to where they live as travel is barrier that limits participation.

The quality of care, guidance and support for those who use the centre are good overall. Support for the well-being of families is high priority. Families report that their lives are better for having had the help they need, particularly at low points in their lives. The centre assesses and reviews children's needs' well. In partnership with many early years' providers, the centre is making in-roads to reach more children from target families; however, participation levels from this group remain low. The centre provides good social care and support for the adults they see but not enough is done to provide them with the guidance they need to secure long-term economic well-being for themselves and their families. Referral to adult learning providers is satisfactory, but little is done to assess uptake, impact and long-term benefits for those who participate.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The extent to which the range of services, activities and opportunities meet the needs of families, including those in target groups	3
The extent to which the centre promotes purposeful learning, development and enjoyment for all families, including those in target groups	3
The quality of care, guidance and support offered to families, including those in target groups	2

How effective are the leadership and management?

3

Some aspects of the centre's work are good and families who take up the opportunities offered appreciate the positive impact this has on their lives. This is because staff carry out their roles with care, sensitivity and dedication and use well-trained volunteers to enhance provision. The centre encourages families who attend activities and partner providers to express their views regarding provision and this influences changes, particularly in supporting children. The leadership team, while keen to serve the community well, has an over-optimistic view of the quality of provision and outcomes, particularly for adults in the target groups. This is because the needs of these groups are not identified clearly enough to help the centre modify provision to increase participation.

The centre's development plan ensures that key work is covered satisfactorily. However, without data regarding the community profile or a needs analysis, particularly regarding adult education and training, target setting lacks focus. This means that the centre has no way of measuring long-term benefits for families. Leaders regularly review the early years' and health and social care provision and these aspects of the centre's work are good. However, this analysis does not extend to adult learning and training. For example, without systems to record participation levels on basic skills and other courses or to track progress, it is hard for staff to assess the effectiveness of provision on improving economic well-being.

Safeguarding and child protection procedures are satisfactory. All staff have undertaken the required training to ensure children and their families are safe. Staff are supervised satisfactorily and effectively supported through sound performance management procedures and professional development opportunities. Equality and diversity are promoted satisfactorily. Everyone who attends the centre is integrated well, every referral is followed up promptly and every affordable support given to families in urgent need. However, the centre recognises that it does not serve the many families in the target areas who do not use the centre.

The advisory body, the local authority and Nottinghamshire Community Health services who all manage and govern the centre's work agree that raising the profile of the centre's work in the target areas is a priority. It also rightly recognises that the centre does not assess the needs of those not using the services or other provision. The centre offers satisfactory value for money.

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	3
The effectiveness of evaluation and its use in setting ambitious targets which secure improvement in outcomes	3
The extent to which resources are used and managed efficiently and effectively to meet the needs of families, including those in target groups	3
The extent to which equality is promoted and diversity celebrated, illegal or unlawful discrimination is tackled and the centre fulfils its statutory duties	3
The effectiveness of the centre's policy, procedures and work with key agencies in safeguarding children and, where applicable, vulnerable adults	3
The extent to which partnerships with other agencies ensure the integrated delivery of the range of services provided by the centre to meet its core purpose	2
The extent to which the centre supports and encourages families in the reach area to engage with services and uses their views to develop the	3

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

The inspectors took into account the inspection findings for the linked provision at Albany Infants' and Nursery School, which took place at the same time as the children's centre inspection. The inspection judged the school's overall effectiveness as good.

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Summary for centre users

We inspected STAPLEFORD (Bramcote, Strapleford N, E & W) Sure Start Children's Centre on 13–14 September 2011. We judged the centre as satisfactory overall.

We visited a number of activities, looked at the centre's plans and documents and had discussions with some of you and the staff. Thank you to everyone who took the time to come and speak with us, particularly those of you who came at Tuesday lunchtime; we did appreciate it. Following this visit, we have judged that while some aspects of the centre's work are good, overall, it provides satisfactory support to you and your families.

The centre provides a satisfactory range of services to help you to improve your lives. You spoke highly of the staff at the centre and the positive approach they adopt when handling sensitive and complex issues in you and your families' lives. It was good to hear that you regard the centre as a safe and welcoming place to be, and where you make good friends. Inspectors agree that the centre keeps you and your families safe. The number of families that the centre works with is satisfactory but it does not encourage enough families to participate, particularly in areas where families face difficulties.

The centre works well with partners such as social care, early years' education and the health service. It provides effective support for your children so that they get a good start in life. 'Stay and Play', 'Cook 4 Life' and 'Toddler Talk' are popular and provide good opportunities for parents, carers and children to play and learn together. Through such activities, your families benefit by forming good relationships and gaining a better understanding how to stay safe, fit and healthy. It was encouraging to speak some of you who volunteer support at the centre in order to benefit others. While some families benefit from various parenting sessions, the

centre is not doing enough to encourage adults to undertake education and training courses so that they can improve their employment prospects.

The centre manager and staff work well as a team. The local authority and the advisory board maintain a satisfactory overview of the centre's work. Centre staff are supported by these groups to ensure they strive to improve outcomes for all families. However, the centre does not have enough information to help it judge accurately how well its services meet the needs of the community or to plan more sharply to meet those needs.

We have asked the centre to provide more opportunities for parents to develop their skills to secure future economic stability. We have also asked staff to increase participation levels of the target groups by assessing their needs and providing the necessary support to improve outcomes for their families. As part of its development planning, we have asked the centre to set targets against which it can evaluate its effectiveness accurately and monitor provision rigorously so that action is taken to improve outcomes for all groups in the community.

We wish you every success for the future.

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