

Inspection report for Six Ways Children's Centre

Local authority	Birmingham
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Date of previous inspection	21 September 2010
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Linked school if applicable	Mansfield Green Primary School
Linked early years and childcare, if applicable	Mansfield Green Nursery

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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.

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

The inspectors held meetings with the centre's interim manager and staff, representatives from the local authority, the Chair of the Governing Body and a parent governor, the headteacher of Mansfield Green School, the senior leadership team, parents and users of the centre. They observed the centre's work, and looked at a range of relevant documentation.

Information about the centre

The centre was established as a phase 1 children's centre in March 2007. It is located in a self-contained wing in the same building as Mansfield Green Primary School and is on the same site as Mansfield Green Nursery. It is managed by the school's governing body, which receives the support of a local advisory board. The centre is currently being managed by a new interim centre manager who was appointed following the previous inspection where the centre was judged inadequate. It is also supported by the local authority's monitoring and intervention team and the headteacher of Mansfield Green Primary School. The centre currently provides two, two-hour stay-and-play sessions for parents and children. Day-care facilities are provided at the Mansfield Green Nursery.

The centre serves a community which experiences very high levels of social and economic disadvantage. Nine out of ten of the centre's super output areas are in the most deprived 10% of wards in the country. Ninety percent of the families within the centre's reach area are from minority ethnic backgrounds, the largest groups being of Indian, Bangladeshi, Pakistani and Black Caribbean heritage. Levels of unemployment are high, and a significant proportion of families are on benefits. Evidence indicates that the skills, knowledge and abilities with which children enter the local Early Years Foundation Stage settings are well below those expected for their age.

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

Six Ways Children's Centre offers children and adult users a satisfactory and improving level of service. Over the last year, the centre has been through a period of considerable change. The new centre manager, with the help of the headteacher of Mansfield Green Primary School and the local authority, has developed a wide range of provision which serves the reach area. Staff morale is high and they are committed to developing the centre.

Improvements to provision and outcomes are satisfactory. They include the successful establishment of sessions to promote parenting skills where users learn about how to develop their children's communication skills in the 'Stay and Play' sessions. Some partner arrangements are effectively managed to ensure services are delivered which support users of target groups. For example, benefit advice is of good quality and has had a significant impact on improving poverty. A significant strength is the good-quality care and guidance that staff give children and adult users. As a result, users respect each other and say that they can discuss their worries with staff whenever they need to. One carer said, 'There is always someone available to talk to at the centre or on the end of the phone.' Parents and carers say they feel safe at the centre. The centre meets the emotional needs of users well because staff regularly give them highly individualised support. One user summed up their thoughts when they commented, 'Without these people I'd be lost.' Baby massage sessions are much appreciated and help users develop strong bonds with their children. Adult users value the centre's guidance which helps them to develop healthy lifestyles. The health worker provides a wide range of activities to promote health. For example the 'Baby Group' provides advice and support to new mums on child development, sleep and routines over five sessions. There have also been 24 referrals to local dentists which has helped to promote oral health. The centre provides encouragement to help parents, carers and children keep fit, for example through dance classes.

Children make satisfactory progress in their learning because staff plan interesting sessions. The various themed 'Stay and Play' sessions allow children to develop their senses thoughtfully because resources stimulate them to touch and explore

materials. Children learn to communicate successfully at the centre because staff place a high priority on developing language skills. This is as a result of staff being effectively trained in this area of learning. Children's starting points are well below average on entry to nursery. Assessments for children at the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage for 2010 in the local area show that progress is good but attainment is still just below expected levels for their age.

The centre manager and the senior management team work well together. They are beginning to drive change effectively. A thorough improvement plan sets specific targets for improvement and so leaders can easily measure developments. An advisory board has recently been established within the centre. Its membership includes representatives from partner agencies. The advisory board report to the governing body, some members do not fully understand the governance and accountability arrangements of the centre and therefore do not robustly challenge its work. The centre does not always provide completely for the needs of all users in the reach area and for some target groups, for example, parents and children with disabilities and teenage parents. The new outreach venue will help users to engage more fully with the centre. Consequently, the equality of opportunity for users in the reach area is satisfactory. The centre promotes community cohesion well within the multi-cultural society that it serves. Self-evaluation is systematic, and the centre is beginning to gather evidence of its impact on users. The centre has a satisfactory capacity to continue to improve in the future and build on the significant improvements made since the last inspection.

What does the centre need to do to improve further?

Recommendations for further improvement

- Take concerted action to rapidly increase the proportion of centre users from all the target groups represented in the reach area and increase the range of services for all target groups.
- Further develop the governance of the centre by clarifying and strengthening the role of the local advisory board to ensure it provides challenge.

How good are outcomes for families?

3

Outcomes for users are satisfactory. Practitioners at the centre work effectively together to promote positive outcomes for users. Families benefit from sessions such as 'Yum Yum', 'Weaning' and 'Breast Feeding' that promote healthy living. One parent who attends 'yum yum' sessions with her child said: 'I've learnt how to make smoothies and have found all sorts of hints and tips on how to encourage my child to eat a healthier diet.'

New-birth visits are carried out by Family Support Workers to some potential users and as a result registrations have increased. Care, guidance and support are good. Users from different ethnic and religious backgrounds express satisfaction with the way the centre and partners engage with them. Users say they feel safe at the

centre. Access to the centre and to rooms is rigorously controlled. Risk assessments are carried out for the premises and all activities. Practitioners are trained to carry out assessments using the Common Assessment Framework and these are effective in identifying the most appropriate interventions for families. Families with children on child protection plans are supported effectively by the centre. Families are signposted to other services that are provided by partners.

There has been improvement in children's progress in communication, language and literacy as a result of the implementation of effective strategies to support children's learning in groups such as 'Stay and Play'. Children's behaviour has also improved as a result of parents' and carers' participation in parenting programmes. Parents and carers enjoy and benefit from the adult learning sessions offered at the centre. Courses such as 'English for speakers of other languages' and adult literacy are very well attended and focus on promoting the home as a learning environment. Parents and carers are therefore increasingly able to contribute to their children's school readiness.

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	3
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 and social development	3
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	3
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

Children's individual needs are assessed suitably and so they learn to cooperate and develop positive attitudes to learning. A small minority of children with special educational needs and/or disabilities are supported well and their parents are given practical help for example to enable them to access health appointments. The staff use their local knowledge along with data supplied by the local authority to provide satisfactory assessment of the needs of users in the local area.

The children's achievements are celebrated through good use of displays. Effective use of questioning by staff helps children of all abilities to develop basic skills adequately. Children's literacy skills are promoted effectively through the use of the toy and the book library. Parents and carers value the centre and its resources. For

example, on a recent trip to the sea-side, the centre linked up with 'Book Start' who donated hundreds of books including dual language books for the families to read together on the coach journey and then to take home. This allowed staff an opportunity to talk to parents and carers about the importance of daily reading in the home to promote their children's development.

A satisfactory range of services includes breastfeeding drop-in sessions, which have encouraged parents to continue breastfeeding. Services are integrated well, and good quality Early Years Foundation Stage education and day care are available locally to the centre's users. The services offered improve children's life chances because key skills are enhanced carefully by staff.

Outreach services are effective in supporting different groups of users. These are tailored to meet their needs effectively by the family support and health workers. A variety of services are taken out to the home such as breastfeeding support, home safety checks and support to families who have children on child protection plans. Information about users' satisfaction is collected which shows that generally users are happy with the services that the centre provides. However, the views of the wider community not accessing services are not systematically gathered. Children transfer to the next stage of education smoothly because transition arrangements are carefully supported and good links exist. The centre provides effective support for families in crisis.

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

Leadership and management are satisfactory. Leaders, managers and staff are motivated to seek further improvements and are increasing their effectiveness in focusing the centre's efforts on its priorities. The leaders have faced significant challenges over the last twelve months and have steadily increased the number of users accessing services; however this needs to continue to ensure all target groups have the opportunity of accessing children's centre activities. There are appropriate performance-monitoring systems in place to assure the work of the commissioned services. The centre staff have a 'can do' attitude and are focused on improving outcomes for all children and families, they are a highly motivated team. However, the members of the governing body, parent forum and advisory board are not sufficiently informed to challenge the work of the centre. In this respect, the centre provides satisfactory value for money. The centre deploys its staff effectively and

makes best use of their expertise and knowledge; there has been an extensive training programme which has helped staff to support families.

The local authority provides data for all of the national indicators which are supported by the local knowledge of staff and partners. This is used to help to target services which are then prioritised for the most vulnerable. Staff, partner agencies, and parents and carers make contributions to the evaluation process which helps to influence future planning.

Positive steps taken to include children and families are helping the centre to begin to engage with those from the wider community, including those from the wider community. The centre signposts to specific activities to address children's specific needs. The centre's policies and procedures underpin its focus to promote the understanding and the importance of inclusion for all. The centre removes barriers to allow users to access services, for example, by providing crèche facilities.

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	3
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 range of provision	3

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

Mansfield Green Primary School Early Years Foundation Stage was inspected on 20—21 September 2010 and was judged satisfactory.

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Summary for centre users

We inspected the Six Ways Children's Centre on 14–15 September 2011. We judged the centre as satisfactory overall.

We would like to thank those of you who spoke to us. Your views were very helpful to the inspection. We agree with you when you told us how helpful the good quality care, advice and support you receive from the centre is to you. We think that the range of services and activities on offer is helping you to improve your parenting skills and enabling some of you to train to develop your English in order to improve your lives. We think that those of you who are experiencing difficulty in your lives are effectively supported to make your families and children safe and healthy. We also know that the centre has helped some of you who have experienced real difficulties in the past to be much more confident and able to look forward to a brighter future. We watched you thoroughly enjoying the activities, such as 'Stay and Play', where you talked to each other and played with your children. A small number of you have volunteered to help in the centre, but we think that more of you could be encouraged to do so. One parent told us that the services available are good, but it is a pity that not enough people in the area are taking advantage of them.

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 and we agree. They try their best to help you to make improvements to your lives. For example, the family support workers are doing well. They expertly help you to decide on the services and activities that you need in order to make improvements to family life. They then work well with other agencies like the health service and social services to make sure that the help is just right for you and your family. Some of you were keen to tell us that if you had not received help from the centre that you would not have been able to train or access activities. Some of you reported about how grateful you were that the staff had helped you to gain the correct benefits, to help you get a house and to manage debt problems. The health services run from the centre, such as the weaning sessions, are good at helping you give your baby a healthy start.

The local authority is improving the way it governs the children's centre. The newly formed advisory board links with the governing body to ensure the services that the centre provides are needed and provide satisfactory value for money. However, the board does not always challenge the work of the centre.

The centre leaders have been successful in safeguarding the families that use the centre. They show that they know well the different groups in the community that could benefit from the centre's help.

We have asked the centre to make some improvements by:

- quickly increasing the proportion of centre users from all the target groups represented in the reach area.
- further developing the governance of the centre by strengthening the role of the local advisory board to ensure it provides challenge.

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