

Inspection report for Dinnington Children's Centre

Local authority	Rotherham
Inspection number	383581
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Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected
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Linked early years and childcare, if applicable	EY378555 Dinnington Children's Centre

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Introduction

The inspection covers 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 additional inspector and one early years inspector.

The inspectors held meetings with representatives of the local authority, with the centre leader and with members of staff and partner professionals from other agencies. Discussions were held with parents and carers.

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

Information about the centre

Dinnington Children's Centre opened as a Phase One centre in 2006. The centre offers on-site day care, family support, parental involvement and links with Jobcentre Plus, schools, health and other services. The centre is located on the same site as Dinnington Primary School. The governance of the centre is provided by the school's governing body commissioned by the local authority. It works in conjunction with an advisory board made up of centre users and service providers. The centre leader is the headteacher of the primary school.

Many children enter early education with knowledge and skills which are well below those typical for their age, particularly in relation to communication and language skills. The centre serves a community which experiences high levels of social deprivation and economic disadvantage. The percentage of children who live in workless households without paid employment or with low incomes is high as is the number of families in receipt of benefits. The area has a mix of social, privately-rented or privately-owned housing. The majority of families are of White British heritage, with a small number from other ethnic groups.

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

2

Capacity for sustained improvement

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

2

Main findings

Dinnington's Children's Centre provides good services for young children and their families. Since its opening, the centre has made good progress in developing the quality of provision. Outcomes for children and their families are good. There are good partnership arrangements with other services and the centre receives good support from its local advisory group. The centre has a positive impact on the lives of its users. 'The staff really listen - you can talk to them and they are always there. I have a life again and my family can look to the future,' is a comment from a parent, reflecting the views of many.

The centre has a good impact on the health of its families. Breastfeeding and immunisation rates for babies are good. The centre is also successful in helping mothers to give up smoking during pregnancy. Many activities, such as baby massage and weaning courses, contribute well to children's well-being, although activities to promote some aspects of adult fitness are less well-established. Staff take good care of children and their families both in the centre and through the advice and support they provide during home visits. Children and adults develop a good understanding of how to keep themselves and others safe through for example, the very well-received training on first aid and the well-planned guidance given to families at home. The passion and commitment of all staff, particularly that of the family support worker and the outreach worker, make a significant contribution to the centre's success in this aspect of the centre's service.

There is a sense of enjoyment in all the centre's activities. Families, including those who have been hard to engage, enjoy coming to the centre. The good tracking of children's progress in the day care centre, stay-and-play sessions and other activities ensure children's skills in the Early Years Foundation Stage are improving well. Projects such as 'Every Child a Talker' and good partnerships with services such as speech therapy have a good impact on children's communication skills. The centre promotes equality well and its support for young children is starting to close the achievement gap between the most disadvantaged and the rest. Adult learners, particularly those in vulnerable circumstances, are increasingly progressing in developing their literacy and numeracy skills. The centre supports parents and carers well in improving their budgeting skills. However, take-up of all adult training is less well established than other aspects of economic well-being. The centre provides well-planned opportunities for adults to become volunteers and prepares them for future

employment. Parents contribute well to decision-making for the centre, especially through their roles on the advisory board.

The centre knows the families it serves well and the assessment of individual needs is good. Good partnerships with other agencies including health and social care services also ensure the early identification and support for those who are vulnerable and for children with special educational needs and/or disabilities. The centre uses information well to develop a good range of targeted outreach services and activities to meet the needs of users.

Self-evaluation is good. However, the centre recognises the need to collate and analyse feedback and information from its activities more effectively, to give a sharper focus to future priorities for development and measure the impact of its work. The close partnership with health and local authority safeguarding groups contributes to the extremely rigorous procedures to keep children and their families safe.

The centre is led and governed well and staff have a clear knowledge of the centre's strengths and weaknesses. Identified priorities for improvement have been tackled well. These factors give the centre a good capacity for further improvement.

What does the centre need to do to improve further?

Recommendations for further improvement

- In partnership with the local authority, make full use of all available data, including information from centre and partnership activities, to target priorities for development and measure the impact of the centre's work even more sharply.
- Increase participation rates on adult learning programmes and progression into further education and employment and further develop procedures to measure the centre's effectiveness in this area.

How good are outcomes for families?

2

Outcomes for children and their parents and carers are good. The staff are passionate about their work and constantly seeking ways to improve outcomes further. The good relationship with health visitors and midwifery services all make a strong contribution to the health and well-being of families in crisis both through specific projects and by carefully-planned individual programmes of support. As a result of specific training and sensitive interventions by the family support worker and outreach worker, the centre has contributed to a reduction in rates of smoking during pregnancy. Centre staff are exploring ways to improve the data they receive on community health so that they can target their support even more effectively.

The healthy food training offered at the centre gives parents and carers a good insight into how different food groups affect emotion and well-being. Children and adults enjoy eating healthy snacks and fresh fruit because the centre promotes this aspect of learning well. Initiatives such as weaning groups and children-and-parent sessions such as 'Stay and Play' and 'Baby Massage' promote healthy lifestyles among almost all groups of users. Such activities also contribute to the reducing rates of obesity among children.

An improving trend in breastfeeding rates at above local rates for new mothers is a result of good links with health professionals, inter-agency working and carefully-targeted individual support. Activities such as 'Tummy Time' are as much enjoyed by parents and carers as they are by babies and contribute to families' health and well-being.

Outcomes for staying safe are good. Staff are well-trained to identify safety and child protection concerns and take swift and appropriate action. They work closely with other professionals such as social services in several aspects such as using the Common Assessment Framework. The individual support the centre provides for its most vulnerable families and the work with children effectively contributes to their future economic well-being. 'The centre has given me my life back,' is a comment from a parent that reflects the views of many adults who have been supported by the centre. Children's behaviour is good because of the calm and purposeful environment. Accurate and well-managed risk assessments contribute effectively to this.

Children attending day care, 'Stay and Play' and accessing other services settle quickly and respond positively to the good care provided by their key workers and other adults. Children make good progress towards early learning goals as a result of the centre's activities and support and liaison with other providers of Early Years services. There is a positive trend of rising standards narrowing the gap between lowest achievers and other children. Children play well and build good relationships with others in all aspects of provision.

Parents make new friends through attending centre-based sessions, and enjoy activities. A strong feature of the centre's work is the wide range of activities, particularly led by the family support and outreach workers, aimed at increasing adults' self-confidence and preparing them for the future. This has had a positive impact in supporting adults with post-natal depression and other mental health conditions. 'I felt like I was thrown overboard from a boat, trying my best to keep me and my child afloat. Now I feel as though someone has thrown me a life-preserver,' was the comment of one parent which reflects the view of others.

The day care provision and stay-and-play activities promote children's skills for their future learning well. The centre receives regular feedback on how well children are settling into school life. There are good quality programmes to encourage parents to progress into volunteering at the centre and beyond. In particular, a significant proportion of mothers act as peer supports for breastfeeding. This has led to further involvement in health care and midwifery. A recent development is the centre's involvement in the local authority's 'extended learning programme'. This local project, which provides guidance for adults about local adult and community learning opportunities, has led to an increase in the number of parents from the centre participating in training. However, despite some success in parents participating in literacy and numeracy training at Levels 1 and 2 and achieving GCSE levels, adult learning is a less well-established aspect in the promotion of the users' future economic well-being. The centre is exploring further ways to increase take up of the adult learning opportunities and further develop assessment procedures to measure their success. The regular links and good relationship with Jobcentre Plus also contribute to helping adults back into employment and to reducing dependency on benefits.

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	2
The extent to which all children and parents, including those from target groups, 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 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.	2

How good is the provision?

2

The centre provides a good quality of care, guidance and support through its centre-based activities, family and outreach support and home visits. Constructive relationships with staff help parents and carers to feel confident to seek advice and support. This is a harmonious and welcoming centre where adults and children from a variety of social and economic backgrounds support and care for each other. All staff who work for and with the centre, are passionate about their roles and have a good level of expertise and professional knowledge to help families improve their health, well-being and achievement successfully. Well-established multi-agency partnerships make certain that the individual needs of children and their parents and carers who are referred to the centre are assessed quickly so that interventions and support can be targeted appropriately. Staff are well-informed to make accurate and appropriate referrals to other agencies. They act quickly and thoroughly on referrals from health and social professionals. Assessment of individual cases is rigorous and good use of the Common Assessment Framework ensures that teams can be gathered quickly to support children and families identified as in need. Where a child protection plan is in place, the centre works effectively with social services and the child protection team to meet the needs of families.

Parents and carers report that the timeliness and quality of individual support is good and available for as long as needed. Staff know the community well and are aware of the needs and demands for services and activities. The centre is proactive in taking services out to groups who are hard to reach and who they know to be vulnerable. Effective training helps parents develop a greater understanding of their own capabilities and supports their success. 'I learned that we should think about the way we listen to people and the way we make them feel. This has made me realise a few things I need to change about myself,' was the comment from one parent which demonstrates the effectiveness of the type of support available at the centre. The range of data available to the centre on the levels of vulnerability and need within the community is increasing and generally used effectively. However, the centre recognises that the data it collects from involvement in all its activities are not always analysed and focused as sharply as they could be.

The centre makes a good contribution to children's lives through the training and support for child minders. Courses such as 'Treasure Baskets', 'Story and song boxes' and 'Heuristic Play' develop child minders' skills to stimulate children's curiosity and promote early communication skills. Children's speech and language skills are encouraged in the day care provision through the effective 'Every Child a Talker' project. These and other services are supported by good partnership working and the centre's persistence in establishing links with hard-to-reach groups through effective links with schools and other partner agencies. For example, the outreach worker and school's learning mentor regularly knock on doors in the area to introduce themselves and to share toys and books with children. This has increased participation in the 'Stay and play' sessions and other activities. The centre is particularly successful in meeting the needs of the few minority ethnic families and young mothers within its reach. Fathers also increasingly feel the centre caters for their needs.

Assessment is used skilfully to record children's progress and to inform teaching and learning in the Early Years Foundation Stage. The centre receives good and valued support from the local authority lead teacher and school's Early Years Foundation Stage staff. The lead teacher is a member of the senior leadership team. Several groups of parents and carers contribute to the effectiveness of the centre through their representation on the local advisory board and other opportunities to provide feedback. For example, parents and child minders were very involved in the designs for the new community rooms and organisation of free flow play activities.

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	2
The extent to which the centre promotes purposeful learning, development and enjoyment for all families, including those in target groups	2
The quality of care, guidance and support offered to families, including those in target groups.	2

How effective are the leadership and management?

2

Leadership and management are good at all levels. The centre leader and senior leadership team work closely together to establish a clear vision for the good of all the community. This sense of purpose is shared by all those who work in partnership with the centre and guides their work. Staff share high aspirations and are well-motivated to provide a wide range of good-quality and effective services to the community, particularly to those who are hard to reach and potentially vulnerable. As a result, the centre has a good understanding of its strengths and areas for development and sets ambitious targets based on good self-evaluation. This leads to good-quality action planning which is supported by good partnerships.

The local authority provides clear guidance through its strategic planning and steering committees. Evaluation of the impact of the work with individual families takes place within team and multi-agency meetings, case studies and through regular supervision of staff. Very challenging targets have been set for further improvement and the centre is making good progress in meeting them. For example, it is increasingly meeting the needs of teen age mothers and lone fathers by providing appropriate support and guidance. The centre leader,

staff and partnership professionals have a good understanding of the priorities and needs of the centre and the community it serves. The success of group activities is generally monitored well, although the feedback from participants is not always collated and analysed effectively enough to ensure maximum impact and development. There has recently been an improvement in the accuracy of information from health and other services which enables the centre to identify accurately areas of potential risk. However, systems to evaluate the success of the centre do not consistently make full use of all available data and provide a sharp enough focus to ensure that the very best rates of improvement are achieved.

Resources are used well to provide a welcoming environment and recent dynamic development of the use of community rooms has generated more effective use by health care and other professionals in attracting more families to use the centre. Financial management systems are used effectively to monitor day-to-day expenditure. The delegation of responsibility for resources is at an appropriate level to ensure timely and effective packages of support to families. This ensures good value for money. Safeguarding arrangements are good and supported by the clear lines of communication and collaboration between agencies to ensure children are safeguarded. All checks, vetting and recruitment processes meet current guidelines and all staff have up-to-date and high levels of training in safeguarding, child protection and first aid. The centre places a strong focus on developing the skills of all staff through good training. The impact of this is well-recorded and presented in detailed case studies.

Equality and diversity are promoted well. All services are designed to engage users from the range of backgrounds in the local area, including the promotion of inclusive practice for children and adults with special educational needs and/or disabilities. The representation of minority ethnic groups on courses and activities offered at the centre is good. The manager and partner agencies have a reflective approach to working and continually look for new ways to reach the local community and include new groups of users. Governance arrangements are good and there are robust systems of accountability at all levels of leadership and management.

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 effectiveness of evaluation and its use of ambitious targets which secure improvement in outcomes	2
The extent to which resources are used and managed efficiently and effectively to meet the needs of families, including those in target groups	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 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 range of provision.	2

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

None

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Summary for centre users

We inspected the Dinnington Children's Centre on 14 –15 September 2011. We judged the centre as good overall.

Thank you for being so open with us and friendly when we visited the centre. Many of you told us how much you enjoy the activities provided through the centre. You told us that staff listen to you and make sure that you get the right advice and support. We found that the centre is good at helping people at times in their lives when they most need it. The centre staff provide good care for you and keep you and your children extremely safe. Action is taken quickly and different people and organisations work well as a team to support both children and families. We found the centre to be a warm and welcoming place and busy with activity. The staff have high levels of expertise and offer good practical and emotional support to families who need it.

The centre works well with a range of partners and organisations. Professionals from these organisations work well together as a team to give help and support to families whose children have physical or emotional difficulties. Your centre provides good support for children to make sure they get a good start in life. Several of you have enjoyed attending courses in English, mathematics and computers. Some of you work as volunteers in the centre and other partner agencies and this work is well-organised. However, we found there was still scope for more adults to be involved in the training courses the centre and its partners offer.

The childminder, breastfeeding and other groups provide good opportunities for you to meet together. The whole family is at the heart of what everyone is doing at the centre and this is seen in the wide variety of activities on offer. You told us that you love the baby massage and 'Tummy Time' sessions. The centre also does well in offering guidance about how you can play with your children at home and involve them in 'Treasure Basket' and storytelling activities. The centre has good systems to assess the progress children make in all their activities and the usefulness of the support they give you. We found that the centre could do more to measure its impact on your lives in other areas.

Children are well-behaved at the centre and they explore the learning environment confidently. The 'Stay and Play' programme helps children to be adventurous in safe ways

and enables you to take good care of them. They make very good use of the exciting outdoor areas. You play an important role too. We were impressed by the positive and supportive relationships you have with one another and with your children. The people in charge of running the centre are doing a good job. The centre manager and staff work hard to make sure that everything they do for you will make a positive difference to your lives. They make sure that everyone who works with the centre share this commitment.

Thank you for all the support you gave the inspection team and continue to give to the children's centre. We would like to wish you all the best for the future.

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