

Inspection report for Hart Hill Nursery & Children's Centre

Local authority	Luton
Inspection number	383506
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Date of previous inspection	N/A
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Linked school if applicable	Hart Hill Nursery School 109418
Linked early years and childcare, if applicable	n/a

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.

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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 nursery 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 children's centre leader, the deputy headteacher of Hart Hill Nursery School, the special educational needs coordinator for Hart Hill Nursery School who supports the children's centre, one outreach worker, two family workers, several groups of parents and carers, one member of the advisory board and two representatives from the local authority. The inspectors observed the centre's work, and looked at a range of relevant documentation.

Information about the centre

Hart Hill Children's Centre is situated in a mixed neighbourhood with some significant areas of disadvantage. This centre covers urban areas, attracting a diverse range of families to the centre. Half of the families who live in the surrounding area are from White British backgrounds and half are from minority ethnic groups. A significant number of families are from Asian and African families or from Western and Eastern European groups. A few are at the early stages of learning to speak English. The area around the centre has considerable levels of unemployment, families in receipt of benefits and workless households.

The centre was designated and opened in November 2008. Since then, it has operated as an integrated centre. In partnership with Hart Hill Nursery School, it is able to provide the full 'core' offer because it provides health services, early education and childcare. Most children enter early education with skills that are much lower than those expected for their age. The children's centre operates from one room in Hart Hill Nursery School.

The centre leader is the headteacher of Hart Hill Nursery School and she is supported by the deputy headteacher of the nursery school. Governance arrangements mean that the centre is managed by the nursery school governing body on behalf of Luton Local Authority. It includes representatives from the lead agency, parents and staff from the centre. The centre has faced a few challenges in recent years with staff being absent on maternity leave.

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

Hart Hill Children's Centre offers children and families a satisfactory range of services. Users and their children enjoy coming to the centre and taking part in many practical activities such as 'Messy Play' sessions. One parent summed up their thoughts about centre by saying, 'This centre is a life-line to me.'

A considerable strength is the way users' independence is promoted. Many parents and carers say that the centre thoughtfully develops their self-confidence as well as their children's. This is because staff guide them optimistically. Parents and carers really appreciate the way that their personal needs are met due to the good level of care offered by all staff. For example, one parent typically commented, 'The centre is wonderful, staff are friendly and helpful.' In a recent survey, 100% of users valued the helpful information, advice and support given by the centre.

Healthy lifestyles are adopted successfully and users' well-being is supported thoughtfully because of staff expertise. Evidence from case studies shows that families have received astute support in times of crisis because of referrals made by staff. Parenting courses mean that many parents and carers learn about the best ways to deal with the challenges their families may encounter. Good partnerships between staff and other agencies mean that users receive effective levels of guidance. Parents and carers are effectively kept safe at the centre and say it is a secure environment for their child. This is because safeguarding is given a high level of significance.

The centre places a great deal of emphasis on learning through practical activities. Parents, carers and children take part effectively in 'Little Tots Time' sessions where they learn to communicate and write successfully; for example, children investigate how to make marks in shaving foam on a dish due to the sound use of staff demonstrations. Good behaviour is clearly visible from all users at the centre. Children are assessed suitably by staff. However, the recording of children's and adult users' achievements are not always celebrated or recorded in detail. This means that it is not easy to track the amount of progress that they make while attending the centre.

The centre leader and the governing body are clear about the strengths and areas of development for the centre's provision. Senior leaders and staff work well as team and use self-evaluation satisfactorily to drive improvements. Recent developments include the provision of baby massage sessions where parents and carers learn to exercise with their children in a relaxing way. The centre has created a satisfactory development plan but it does not use data well enough to make sure that the plan contains specific targets for improvement, and so it is not easy to measure its impact in detail. The centre meets its statutory responsibilities for the promotion of equality and diversity satisfactorily. Occasionally, a few users from one or two target groups are not encouraged to use the centre successfully. This means that not all users' needs in the local area are met fully. The centre is effective in supporting children with additional needs and their parents and carers. Satisfactory provision and outcomes, together with sound developments demonstrate the centre's satisfactory capacity for continued improvement.

What does the centre need to do to improve further?

Recommendations for further improvement

- Ensure that data is used well to create a centre development plan which sets specific targets so that its impact can be evaluated more thoroughly.
- Make sure that adult users' and children's achievements are celebrated and tracked in detail so that the centre measures their progress more effectively.
- Improve the centre's engagement with users from the target groups so that their needs are met more fully.

How good are outcomes for families?

3

Children are keen to come to the centre and so they achieve satisfactorily. They form positive relationships with staff and enjoy learning because they are involved suitably by interesting activities. For instance, they explore making leaf crowns because of the sound use of staff expertise. Children's basic skills are promoted satisfactorily by staff. This means that they are prepared adequately for the future.

Parents and carers develop their skills satisfactorily. This means that some have

gained employment after completing work experience at the centre. Knowledgeable staff enable parents and carers to receive the extra benefits to which they are entitled. The centre does not collect information rigorously about how many users have gained extra qualifications, for example, in literacy and numeracy.

Healthy lifestyles are promoted well through a variety of methods; for example, users learn successfully about the importance of brushing their teeth and visiting the dentist because of specialist input and staff awareness. This means that, in this area, the proportion of young children with tooth decay is reducing. However, the proportion of mothers who continue to breastfeed for over six weeks is below national proportions.

The centre leader and all staff place a high emphasis on users' safety, including those who are most vulnerable. As a result of dedicated staff, users' welfare inside and outside the centre is well established. One parent said, 'The centre gives you information about how to keep medicines and electrical equipment out of children's reach.' Users are not regularly involved in discussing risk assessments before they go out to special areas such as woodlands. Very small numbers of children are supported through the Common Assessment Framework or are on child protection plans because the centre works in partnership with other agencies effectively to support all children and their families. This ensures that few cases move on to this higher level of support.

Adult users contribute their views suitably and are regularly encouraged to evaluate the sessions that they have attended. The centre uses this feedback appropriately to improve its services. For example, the group for families with multiple births was set up because users asked for it. The parent forum does not often support the centre to evaluate whether it has met any of its improvement targets.

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	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

The centre understands its users' needs satisfactorily due to staff's local knowledge. It provides a sound range of in-house and outreach services and activities, matched appropriately to the needs of users in the local area. It is satisfactorily engaging with its target groups. Users, including those from minority ethnic backgrounds, engage effectively with the centre because it runs toddler sessions for all several times a week. Information about the target groups with the greatest needs is not always used methodically.

A few parents have completed first aid courses due to effective staff levels of knowledge and understanding. The toy library allows users to borrow suitable equipment and so learning activities are promoted thoughtfully. 'Little Tots Time' sessions allow children to explore a wide variety of materials in well-equipped inside areas. 'Baby Fun Time' sessions allow younger children to learn to socialise successfully with others. Occasionally, staff do not use national guidance of children's developmental stages to record how successfully they are developing.

All parents who spoke to the inspectors were very positive about the centre and the effect that it is having on their families. They value highly the care from all staff and the impact it is having on them. For example, one parent explained: 'Staff give their time freely and welcome you in. They bring out the best in all our children because they treat them as individuals.' The centre's provision ensures users' pastoral needs are supported well.

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

Thoughtful leadership is provided by senior leaders and at all levels. Staff are keen to improve the centre. Resources and staff absences are managed satisfactorily. Sound leadership and management with satisfactory provision and outcomes for users mean value for money is satisfactory.

Governance and accountability arrangements are satisfactory. They are committed to improving outcomes for children and their families in the local area. Self-evaluation is used appropriately by the centre to create an improvement plan but its targets for development are rather broad. Users' views are regularly sought and are beginning

to influence services. The centre has already identified that it does not always gather evidence fully to show what impact it has on users. This is due to the fact that it does not record individual children's and adult users' achievements rigorously.

Partnership working is a significant strength of the centre's work and is good. For example, many members of staff and adult users have completed training from specialist partners in how to support people who speak English as an additional language and so the number of users who do not speak basic English is reducing. Inter-agency working is productive and partners carefully identify those families and children who are at considerable risk. Parents and carers can find out about all the different opportunities for early education and schools because of strong partnerships with providers in the area.

The centre's child protection policy and safeguarding arrangements are good. All staff have been recently trained at the appropriate level in child protection procedures. Many staff have first aid qualifications to assist children the early years. The centre is well maintained and health and safety issues are dealt with promptly. It keeps detailed records about staff which contain valuable information on, for example, their references from previous employers. Records indicate that all staff working at the centre have been subject to an enhanced Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) check.

The centre promotes equality and diversity and tackles discrimination soundly. Staff are committed to encouraging the inclusion of all families from the surrounding areas. The centre gathers information about the different groups and encourages their engagement suitably. The 'Special Harts' group supports adult users with children who have special educational needs and/or disabilities because the centre offers good quality professional guidance. The centre thoughtfully develops children's and parents' awareness of our diverse community. This means that adult and younger users learn effectively to respect each others beliefs.

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	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	3

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

The inspectors took into account the inspection findings for linked provisions which took place at the same time as the children's centre inspection. The Hart Hill Nursery School inspection judged its overall effectiveness as outstanding.

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Summary for centre users

We inspected Hart Hill Nursery & Children's Centre on 5–6 October 2011. We judged the centre as satisfactory overall.

Thank you for helping us to find out about your children's centre. We enjoyed having the opportunity of talking to some of you.

You told us that you and your children value the centre. You said the staff are approachable and that they raise your self-esteem successfully. We heard that you like 'Messy Play' sessions where your children can explore all sorts of materials and resources, as well as learn how to socialise effectively. You all like trying healthy activities, such a baby massage because staff are well trained.

Your children make satisfactory progress in their learning and behave well at the centre. It helps to prepare your children successfully for the next stage of their education. 'Little Tots Time' is well resourced and so, for example, your children learn to make wonderful crowns incorporating leaves effectively. You and your children learn to look after your teeth and so fewer of your children have tooth decay.

You told us that you and your children are cared for thoughtfully by staff and the inspection evidence confirms your view. You really value the parenting courses, which develop your skills in promoting cooperation and self-discipline in children. Several of you told us how well staff guide you when you ask for advice on a wide range of topics such as language development. The staff work closely with other agencies to make sure that you are put in contact with others who can give you the

right help and support. The centre works well with other health and educational providers in the area and so you receive good levels of guidance for your personal and family lives.

The centre welcomes people from all backgrounds and treats everyone equally and fairly. Your centre leader and staff have thoughtful ideas about ways to improve the centre. They carry out regular surveys to find out what you are happy with and where you are less pleased. The centre responds appropriately to your requests and has given you, for example, access to a weekly session for families who have multiple births.

We have asked the centre manager and senior staff to look at how they can make things even better. One of our recommendations is for staff to celebrate and record your achievements and those of your children even more carefully than they do now. In this way, the centre can show how effective it has been in supporting you and your families. Also, the centre has been asked to set more specific development targets so that it can measure its impact more easily. We have asked the centre to engage with even more users from the hard to reach target groups so that they can benefit from the centre successfully.

It was a pleasure to meet you and your children. We hope that you continue to flourish and enjoy your time at the Hart Hill Children's Centre.

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