

Inspection report for Catton Grove, Fiddlewood and Mile Cross Children's Centre

Local authority	Norfolk
Inspection number	367771
Inspection dates	24–25 August 2011
Reporting inspector	Susan Smith HMI

Centre governance	Action for Children on behalf of the local authority
Centre leader	Kate Parkin
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected
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Linked school if applicable	Catton Grove Primary School
Linked early years and childcare, if applicable	Milestone Day Nursery EY 350255

The inspection of this Sure Start Children's Centre was carried out under Part 3A of the Childcare Act 2006 as inserted by section 199 of the Apprenticeships, Skills, Children and Learning Act 2009.

Introduction

The inspection addresses the centre's contribution to:

- facilitating access to early childhood services by parents, prospective parents and young children
- maximising the benefit of those services to parents, prospective parents and young children
- improving the well-being of young children.

The report is made to the local authority and a copy is sent to the children's centre. The local authority may send the report to such persons it considers appropriate and must arrange for an action plan to be produced in relation to the findings in this report.

An inspection of the registered early years/childcare provision was carried out at the same time as the inspection of the centre under Section 3 of the Childcare Act 2006. The report of this inspection is available on our website www.ofsted.gov.uk.

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

The inspectors held meetings with parents and carers, the headteacher of Catton Grove Primary School and the centre's senior management and leadership teams. They also consulted agencies working in partnership with the centre, members of the staff and users of the centre. They observed the centre's work, and looked at a range of relevant documentation.

Information about the centre

Catton Grove, Fiddlewood and Mile Cross Children's Centre covers an area of North West Norwich that divides up into three distinct communities. It was designated in October 2005 and developed from a Sure Start local programme. It is managed by Action for Children on behalf of Norfolk County Council. The centre operates from its main base on the site of Catton Grove Primary School and provides additional services from two outreach sites in Fiddlewood and Mile Cross with direct work taking place in families' homes. The centre delivers the full core offer of services.

Two thirds of all children within the centre's reach area live within the 10% most deprived areas in Norfolk. The reach area has high levels of lone parents, teenage pregnancies and children in families dependant on very low incomes or workless benefits. Although the area has traditionally comprised mainly White British families, an increasingly diverse range of ethnic groups has moved into the area in recent years.

The centre's full day-care provision is delivered by Milestones Day Nursery. The centre's premises are used to provide a range of activities for children and families and also to provide a venue for meetings, consultations and community activities. Children enter early years provision with skills and knowledge generally below those expected for their age, especially in communication, language and literacy.

Inspection judgements

Grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Overall effectiveness

The effectiveness of the children's centre in meeting the needs of and improving outcomes for users and the wider community

2

Capacity for sustained improvement

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

2

Main findings

Catton Grove, Fiddlewood and Mile Cross is a good children's centre. It has some outstanding features. The centre manager is tenacious, methodical and sets realistic, achievable targets. Staff invest considerable time in gradually building the trust of children, parents and carers and the community. Together, they have gradually transformed a centre from one which was failing to engage with the community, to a centre which is highly valued. Consequently, a strength of this children's centre is the role it plays within the community. Staff form positive relationships with families and reach out effectively to individuals and groups that have not traditionally taken up services. Parents and carers develop new interests, and their health and well-being improve. Some adults grow in confidence, volunteer to help run activities and help shape services by attending the parents' group.

Children and users feel extremely safe at the centre, and procedures for safeguarding them are outstanding and permeate through the centre. The way the centre works in partnership with others is good. Most families, including many who are hard to engage, are fully engaged with health services. As a result, they are developing a good understanding of how to keep themselves and their children healthy.

All outcomes are good, apart from the extent to which users develop their economic well-being, which is satisfactory. Some users are engaged in education programmes to develop their learning and skills. Some families have improved their use of English through attendance at a suitable language course; a few parents and carers are using the local college to further their qualifications. The centre recognises the need

to provide more opportunities for users to engage in adult education to gain qualifications to improve their economic well-being and that of their families.

Centre staff work closely with the linked day-care provision which has successfully piloted the programme for funded places for the most vulnerable two-year-old children. This early intervention meets the needs of some of the most potentially vulnerable children in the community. Arrangements for transition to the Nursery or Reception classes of local schools are exceptionally good.

Provision at the centre is good and is matched to the needs of the users through a broad range of universal and targeted services. Through their prenatal visits, health visitors ensure that every family in the reach area is registered at the centre. Needs are assessed very carefully and contact is developed sensitively to ensure that those requiring services are drawn in. The care, guidance and support provided for families are outstanding. The work and support that the centre gives to the most vulnerable families are often exceptional, especially when these families find themselves in times of crisis.

The leaders of the centre demonstrate a clear vision and have a good understanding of the strengths and areas to improve. The advisory board is developing its role well. It has recently been re-established and, so, much of its focus has rightly been on ensuring that new term of references and operating procedures are robust. However, many professionals involved in the area have yet to take up their invitation to attend meetings and there is no representation on this board for centre users, parents and carers. Despite this, there are good systems in place for gathering the views of users, and many positive changes are brought about as a result of users' suggestions.

Given the good leadership and accurate self-evaluation, the centre has good capacity to build on its good provision and further improve outcomes.

What does the centre need to do to improve further?

Recommendations for further improvement

- Increase the membership of the advisory board to include more partners and users of the centre, and develop its role in providing advice and support to the centre.
- Develop more opportunities for users to engage in adult education to gain skills and qualifications to improve their economic well-being and monitor their effectiveness over the longer term.

How good are outcomes for users?

2

Users' understanding of how to promote their good health and that of their families is developing well as a result of the range of opportunities provided for them to learn about healthy lifestyles. Rates of breastfeeding are increasing in the reach area, and

those who choose to breastfeed are very well supported by the centre, for example, through home visits, support groups, leaflets, telephone calls and the supply of maternity bras. A broad range of programmes is offered to families to help improve their physical and emotional health. Every new mother is signposted to the services available to her through the centre by the health visitors who are located at the centre. Staff receive information on all new births and families moving into the area; this enables the centre to contact families at the earliest opportunity. Baby massage and baby yoga sessions prove very popular and help mother and child to bond and support their babies' emotional development well.

Parents and carers are developing a good level of understanding of how to keep their children and themselves safe. They are able to access a range of free home-safety equipment to help them prevent accidents within the home. Front-line workers put keeping children and families safe at the heart of their work. Family support workers work very effectively with groups of parents and carers and provide very good targeted support for individual families. Users trust staff and are confident to share their personal circumstances and concerns to gain help and support. Women who have been subject to domestic abuse receive sensitive and kind professional support, which they value greatly, as it enables them to improve circumstances for themselves and their families. The centre staff and partners support those on child protection plans very well and their intervention makes a positive impact. The centre uses the Common Assessment Framework process well to establish the level of need for some children. Detailed assessment leads to meticulous action planning and delivery to improve individual outcomes.

Both adults and children enjoy their involvement in the centre. Children and their parents and carers play and learn together when they visit activity groups at the centre, such as 'Stay and Play' and 'Play and Learn'. The centre has been proactive in its response to data which indicate that communication skills are particularly low for children in the area. Speech and language therapists based at the centre offer effective support for children. The 'Every Child a Talker' programme has been introduced into the linked day nursery and is showing some positive impact with the numbers of referrals being made to the speech and language therapists increasing. Users who have attended the parenting support group comment on how beneficial it was to them in improving their understanding of their children's needs. A volunteer programme offers opportunities to a few users to help run activities at the centre. The volunteers report enhanced confidence and self-esteem as a result of the encouragement and support provided by staff.

Opportunities for users to develop their literacy and numeracy skills are provided by local providers, and staff signpost users to these opportunities. However, they do not monitor how many users have been referred and whether or not they attend a course. Therefore, the centre can only provide limited evidence that it is having any success in providing users with access to opportunities to develop their basic skills and progress to obtain further qualifications that will improve their employability.

Adults and children develop sound relationships through participation; users treat

each other with respect. Those who attend the parents' group say they know that their views are going to be listened to and that things are changed as a result. Consequently, provision is often adapted to suit the needs and interests of users accurately. This leads to relevant provision which promotes outcomes well. One parent summed up the impact of the centre on her life, saying, 'I cannot think of a better place to bring up my child because of the children's centre.'

These are the grades for the outcomes for users

The extent to which children, including those from vulnerable groups, are physically, mentally and emotionally healthy and families have healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which children are safe and protected, their welfare concerns are identified and appropriate steps taken to address them	2
The extent to which all users enjoy and achieve educationally and in their personal and social development	2
The extent to which children engage in positive behaviour and develop positive relationships and users contribute to decision-making and governance of the centre	2
The extent to which children are developing skills for the future and parents are developing economic stability and independence including access to training	3

How good is the provision?

2

The care, guidance and support provided for families are exceptional. Information sharing and signposting to relevant services are first class and result in swift referrals between all agencies to improve family welfare. Parents and carers could not speak highly enough of the support and guidance provided by the children's centre. Families reported that staff are caring, kind and go the extra mile to support them no matter what the difficulty. All centre staff, partner agencies and the local authority have an exceptional understanding of the issues facing the families living in the centre's area.

The needs of families are assessed well to ensure services are tailored to suit their individual needs. The range of services is good and increasing. Parents and carers are becoming confident to ask for additional services or to access services which are targeted at their specific needs. Participation rates are good and increasing. The reach area is divided into three distinct communities which are divided by main roads. The centre ensures that universal services and activities are available within each of these communities, providing most families with access to groups within only a short distance of their home. By enlisting partners to give specific advice and guidance, families find that they can access advice swiftly. Staff have extensive knowledge of what services are available locally. One parent said, 'There's nothing that the staff here don't know.'

Outreach services are good and are reaching those identified as most vulnerable. The senior family support worker undertakes an initial assessment before agreeing with the parents or carers on a programme of support, which is tailored to the family's individual needs. Regular reviews are undertaken by the family support workers. Case studies demonstrate the positive effect of the outreach service on improving outcomes for families.

The centre has a strong commitment to providing an inclusive environment and removing barriers. Resources are used well to meet the specific needs of individuals and the wider community. Parents and carers of children with a disability feel very well supported through the support group held at the centre. One user reported, 'It's great to be able to meet with other parents in a similar situation.' Activities are offered on a Saturday for fathers who may not be able to attend during the week. Well-publicised activities are flexible and changed in line with term-time and holiday needs.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The effectiveness of the assessment of the needs of children, parents and other users	2
The extent to which the centre promotes purposeful learning, development and enjoyment for all users	2
The extent to which the range of services, activities and opportunities meet the needs of users and the wider community	2
The quality of care, guidance and support offered to users within the centre and the wider community	1

How effective are the leadership and management?

2

Governance and accountability arrangements provide effective supervision of the centre's activities. A notable improvement in provision and outcomes is evident since the governance of the centre was awarded to Action for Children. Line management arrangements are clear and understood, and staff value the regular supervision and professional development they receive. The centre's self-evaluation provides the centre with an accurate appraisal of its effectiveness and what it needs to do in order to secure continuous improvement. All staff and agencies working within the centre expressed confidence in the centre manager's leadership. Morale is high, and belief in the centre's success is evident at all levels. Despite the efforts of the centre, the recently re-established advisory board does not currently have an appropriate representation from professionals working in the area or any parental representation. This limits its role in supporting and challenging the work of the centre.

The centre has well-established systems for evaluating the impact of individual services and activities, and in-depth case studies of work with individual families provide valuable information which is used well to plan for future development. The centre is beginning to develop systems to collect and analyse data about the long-term impact of its services.

Highly effective prioritisation of safeguarding ensures all users are safe. Everyone working at the centre, including volunteers, is checked to verify their suitability to work with children. Similarly, procedures are in place to make sure that all partners, both statutory and voluntary, are also checked. Very effective multi-agency working ensures children and adults are fully protected and safeguarded. All staff are fully trained in child protection to levels that are appropriate to their responsibilities. They are well aware of a range of procedures relating to child protection issues. They have excellent knowledge and understanding of their roles and responsibilities. Risk assessments of the premises and all activities are extremely rigorous and regular. The centre ensures that issues of safety and safeguarding are reinforced through all its activities.

The centre has built strong and effective links with other agencies and providers in order to provide a broad range of good-quality services which are matched well to users' needs. All centre staff and partner agencies are aware of the wide range of services available. Centre staff work particularly well with health visitors to provide substantial support packages for identified families. There is an effective partnership with the host school, which is evident in the shared use of resources and expertise.

The inclusion of all children and families, including children with special educational needs and/or disabilities, is promoted very effectively and the centre is breaking down barriers to access and developing community cohesion. This has resulted in the centre successfully engaging with many of its most vulnerable and hard-to-reach groups.

Resources are managed well across all sites, and staff work flexibly to deliver a full programme with good outcomes. The services provided by the centre are accessed by an increasing range of users. The environment is welcoming and safe. Hence, the centre is providing good 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	2
The extent to which ambitious targets drive improvement, provision is integrated and there are high expectations for users and the wider community	2
The extent to which resources are used and managed efficiently and effectively to meet the needs of users and the wider community	2
The extent to which equality is promoted and diversity celebrated, illegal or unlawful discrimination is tackled and the centre fulfils its statutory duties	2
The effectiveness of the centre's policy, procedures and work with key agencies in safeguarding children and, where applicable, vulnerable adults	1

The extent to which evaluation is used to shape and improve services and activities	2
The extent to which partnerships with other agencies ensure the integrated delivery of the range of services the centre has been commissioned to provide	2
The extent to which the centre supports and encourages the wider community to engage with services and uses their views to develop the range of provision	2

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

The inspection judgements from the early years inspection carried out at the same time as the children's centre inspection were used to inform judgements. The overall outcome for the inspection at Milestones Day Nursery was judged as outstanding.

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaining about inspections', which is available from our website: www.ofsted.gov.uk. If you would like us to send you a copy of the guidance, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

Summary for centre users

We inspected the Catton Grove, Fiddlewood and Mile Cross Children's Centre on 24 and 25 August 2011. We judged the centre as good overall.

I would like to thank all of you who took the time to talk to my colleague and me and who told us your views about the centre. It is obvious that you are very proud of your centre and many of you told us what a good job it is doing for you and your families.

You told inspectors that your children's centre provides you and your children with a warm and welcoming environment where you feel safe and secure. You told inspectors that you fully appreciate the way you feel valued and included at the centre. You feel the activities and support which you access are helping to improve the outcomes for your families.

We found the level of care, guidance and support to be outstanding. Many of you told us what a support the centre has been to you and your families in times of difficulties. Others told us how it has helped you to become more confident and better parents and carers as a result. The centre does a great deal to bring the community together and it is a very harmonious place where everybody is respected.

The arrangements for making sure that everybody is properly safeguarded are exemplary. All the staff and volunteers have been checked to make sure they are suitable to be working with children and all are trained regularly on child protection. The centre makes sure that it works very effectively with other agencies such as health and social services to target the right support in time of need and to make sure that children are protected.

The centre is good at working in partnership with a wide range of partners to provide a range of services that are helping you and your children. Many more of you are benefiting from these services every year. We found that the centre takes your views very seriously and acts on them to improve the services it provides. As parents and carers, you also told us that your views are valued and expressed very clearly through the parents' forum. However, we have asked the centre to ensure that there is greater representation of users on the advisory board than there is at present, so that you can become involved in the decision-making processes for the centre.

You told us how much services such as 'Baby Massage', 'Baby Yoga' and 'Stay and Play' are helping you to become more confident parents and carers and to bond more easily with your children. In addition, these sessions are providing you with many ideas for playing with your children in more constructive ways. You also told us how you value easy access to the speech therapist who is helping you to support your children's communication skills.

A few of you shared with inspectors that you had been able to develop your skills such as, literacy and numeracy, through attending courses to which the centre staff had signposted you. We have asked the centre to strengthen links with adult education providers so that it can provide further support to help you gain qualifications and employment. We have also asked the centre to improve further the system for collecting data with regard to adults who successfully gain or undertake further training and employment. The leadership team has appropriate plans in place to address these issues.

We would like to thank everyone who came to speak with us. It was a privilege to be able to talk with you. Your honesty and openness helped us immensely during the inspection. We are very grateful for your help and we wish each of you every success for the future.

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