

Inspection report for Frodingham Children's Centre

Local authority	North Lincolnshire
Inspection number	383936
Inspection dates	16–17 November 2011
Reporting inspector	Alison Veall HMI

Centre leader	Mrs Helen Keneally
Date of previous inspection	Not applicable
Centre address	Rowland Road Scunthorpe North Lincolnshire DN16 1ST
Telephone number	01724 850737
Fax number	Not applicable
Email address	helen.keneally@northlincs.gov.uk

Linked school if applicable	117748 Frodingham Infant School
Linked early years and childcare, if applicable	EY372768 The Ark Family Centre

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Picadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
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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 one early years inspector. The inspectors held meetings with centre staff, parents and carers, partner agencies and local authority senior managers. They observed the centre's work and looked at a range of relevant documentation. They observed the centre's work, and looked at a range of relevant documentation.

Information about the centre

The Frodingham Children's Centre is a Phase One centre. It was designated in 2005 and was developed from a Sure Start local programme. The centre is located on the Frodingham Infant School site. Services are also delivered from Frodingham Community Centre. The centre's office base is located in the Baptist Church on Ashby Road in Scunthorpe. Integrated day care and education are provided in a purpose-built building on the Frodingham Infant School site, which is run by Scunthorpe Baptist Church. Children's centre services are also delivered from the local community centre. Frodingham ward is part of the Scunthorpe South locality and falls within the top 30% of disadvantaged wards in the country. Three hundred and twenty children under five years old live in the area and of these 55% live within its most disadvantaged wards.

Governance of the centre is the responsibility of North Lincolnshire Council. The centre has recently been part of a local authority restructure. An advisory board made up of community representatives, partner agencies, staff and parents and carers, and, a parents' forum support the work of the centre. Approximately 33% of children under five years old live in households dependent on workless benefits. Most families are of White British heritage with a small minority of Eastern European families. Most children enter childcare and early education with a much narrower range of experiences and skills than those usually 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

2

Capacity for sustained improvement

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

2

Main findings

The strength of this family centre lies in the commitment of centre staff, led by a manager whose tenacious determination has ensured that this centre is at the heart of the community. Despite the office base and the centre being located separately it is an accessible place in times of crisis. The outstanding care, guidance and support are empowering families to deal with circumstances that are extremely testing. A large majority of families within the reach area access services at the centre. However, engagement of, and regular participation by, a few of the centre's hardest to reach families continues to be a challenge.

Outcomes for children and families using the centre are good overall. As a result, they are making significant improvements to their lives. 'I could not have turned my life around without the support of the centre'. 'I was lacking in confidence and very lonely, the centre has helped me make friends, I feel part of this community now,' are typical of the comments made by users. The views of users are routinely gathered through evaluations and the families forum. These views are used very effectively to develop provision and tailor services according to need. Families confidently challenge the centre when they are unhappy about an element of service provision.

Services are delivered in an inclusive environment where inequalities are swiftly and effectively removed. Activities are well established and delivered in partnership with a range of agencies. As a result of the centre's effective partnerships with health service providers, families within its reach area are benefiting from a wide range of pre and postnatal services. Similarly, relationships with child care and education providers are consistently improving children's learning and development. As a result, the achievement gap is narrowing year on year. Adult learning and development is enabling parents and carers to become more confident in their communication and interaction with their children

High priority is given to safeguarding children and vulnerable adults by all staff and partners. As a result outcomes for this aspect are good. The use of the Common Assessment Framework is firmly embedded. Case files and discussions with staff provide

evidence of their sound understanding and effective implementation of assessments using this framework. Referrals of vulnerable families are swiftly addressed through early intervention. A recent reorganisation within the local authority has established a single point of contact and multi-agency locality assessments in order to ensure an effective 'team around the child' approach. The centre forms part of a preventative team that is very much at the heart of multi-agency working in order to afford better protection to children and families.

The centre is managed well and governance arrangements are good. In the recent reorganisation, arrangements were managed exceptionally well. This resulted in a seamless transition for families and ongoing service delivery. Staff are fully aware of their roles and responsibilities and report that they support one another well. Evaluation of the impact of the work with individual families takes place within the team, through case studies and through regular supervision of staff. The success of group activities is closely monitored. The manager, staff and partners have a good understanding of the priorities and needs of the centre and the community it serves. There has recently been an improvement in the accuracy of information from health. This combined with the detailed information supplied by the local authority is enabling the centre to pinpoint accurately areas of likely vulnerability. However, the centre is still embedding its procedures for evaluating this increasing range of data to even more closely meet the needs of the area. As a result of the centre's effective partnerships, the dogged commitment of managers and staff, and the good quality of its work and resources, there is good capacity for further improvement.

What does the centre need to do to improve further?

Recommendations for further improvement

- Improve engagement and the participation of the remaining few families within its most hard-to-reach groups.
- Ensure that self-evaluation procedures incorporate the most recent and accurate information and data from all sources in order to sharpen the evaluation and analysis of the long-term impact of the centre's services.

How good are outcomes for families?

2

The attention paid to ensuring that the most basic care needs of families are met is exceptional. The provision of furniture, clothing and food made available as a result of effective partnerships has a profound effect on the well-being of families in crisis. They are provided with a range of information on debt management and benefits advice. Timely referrals, effective signposting and ongoing support empower parents and carers to bring about genuine and sustained improvements. 'I had a box with nothing, the centre have helped me build a home.' 'I felt like ending it all, I was young and scared, the centre have helped me I am doing training now'. These comments are typical and provide evidence of how much the centre has improved the lives of families.

The centre knows and engages with a large majority of its pregnant teenagers and information from midwives to ensure that family support workers engage with prospective families prior to the birth of their children. A health clinic delivered from the centre is ensuring that families are informed about healthy lifestyles, the effects of drug and alcohol abuse on children and smoking cessation. Breastfeeding rates are above and obesity levels are below the local levels generally. Families are making good improvement in relation to their health and well-being.

Home safety checks are supporting most parents' and carers' understanding of providing a safe environment for their families. Comments from the evaluations from parenting courses demonstrate that activities are enabling parents and carers to understand and develop safe practices. 'I now know I should talk to my children to keep them safe'. 'They need to be aware of safety'. 'Keeping them safe is my responsibility.' Case studies show that parents and carers are developing an understanding of safe and appropriate relationships and its impact on children wherever domestic abuse occurs.

Targeted interventions, such as the 'Every Child a Talker,' project are producing improved outcomes in children's communication, language and literacy and personal, social and emotional development. Parents, carers and children play, have fun and learn together during a wide range of activities, including 'Stay and Play', holiday play-schemes and health and fitness activities. A range of good-quality information and advice to parents and carers helps them to understand how they can help their children and be actively involved in the next steps in their children's learning. Adults are developing confidence and the skills necessary for them to support their children's learning, be part of the wider community and to engage with learning and development opportunities. Parents and carers who talked with inspectors were very enthusiastic and wanted to discuss their progress. Case studies also illustrate the progress and the improvements they make in their economic stability by accessing further training or finding employment.

Parents and carers state that their contributions are valued and they feel that their opinions really count. They are positive about their engagement with the centre which is evidenced in the centre's evaluations. 'It is really good to be able to put our views across'. Parents and carers are members of the advisory board and the minutes of the board's meetings give evidence of their contribution to the planning and delivery of services. A large majority are involved in the 'Family forum' and enjoy being part of it. Comments made by them illustrate this. 'Informative, I feel I have a voice now'. 'It is nice to know that parents' views count'. 'Great parent participation, lots of good ideas'.

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 has worked successfully to engage and work over sustained periods of time with a large majority of its reach population and particularly those whose circumstances make them most vulnerable. The range of services offered including outreach is well matched to users' needs. While the centre has established a good track record for driving up participation rates and improving engagement there are still parts of the area in which a minority of families remain stubbornly hard to reach.

The sensitive and highly individualised care, guidance and support provided to families are outstanding. The quality of support for families in crisis is excellent and much preventative work is done to minimise crisis events. The sound commitment to meeting the holistic needs of families is evident in the centre's provision during school holidays. Best use is made of safe space within the community to provide events for children under five and their older siblings. The centre recognises that certain times throughout the year, such as Christmas, circumstances make families potentially more vulnerable and, as a result of effective partnerships, the centre is able to signpost parents and carers to statutory and community agencies who offer support. For example, the centre's partnerships with The Forge Centre and Scunthorpe Baptist Church ensure that families have food and supplies if in crisis. 'Thank you very much for helping me. I really appreciate it. I don't know what I would have done without you,' are the views of two parents but reflect the views of many.

The shared actions taken to involve and improve outcomes for children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are good. Family outreach work supports families when attending appointments and when challenging the decisions of professionals that they do not consider would not be in their child's best interest. The local authority's consultant in early years has established good links between a range of childcare and early education providers including childminders. Agreed strategies are implemented and members of staff from all provisions attend a range of joint events. This approach ensures consistency and has been one of the factors that have brought about good, and in some instances outstanding, levels of improvement in the progress children make.

Through a range of information including feedback from the families forum and case studies, suitable activities are set up and are carefully tailored to meet the needs of the community. Purposeful and relevant adult education, such as literacy and numeracy and confidence building, are provided. The centre also provides first aid and health and beauty.

Parenting programmes, including the 'Sex and Relationship' course, enable parents and carers to develop the confidence needed to discuss sexual health matters with their children. 'It is important to be open and honest with your children, they can be in danger if they do not know the consequences.' 'Being aware helps them to say no', are typical statements made by parents and carers during their course evaluation. The celebration of personal successes and achievements is a consistent feature of this provision. Parents and carers proudly shared their achievements and plans for their future training with inspectors.

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.	1

How effective are the leadership and management?

2

Leaders at all levels contribute to the success of the centre and the improving outcomes for children and their families. They understand that achieving successful outcomes is an on-going process and are motivated to develop the centre further. As a result of the local authority's re-structure, there have been several staff changes and many of the staff are settling in to their new roles. However, they shared with inspectors the confidence they have in the centre manager and how they had been made to feel part of a team. They, along with families and partners praised her knowledge of and commitment to the families within the centre's reach area. Parents and carers told inspectors that they trust her and the staff completely. Staff receive regular supervision to ensure they are meeting the requirements of their role. Their safety is ensured when working alone and home visiting through the effective implementation of lone-working policies and procedures. As a result of the vision, commitment and practice, outcomes are good and the Frodingham Children's Centre provides good value for money.

Throughout the restructuring process a strong commitment was made to ensuring that safeguarding remained a high priority. Good partnership working between staff and effective liaison with families and partners resulted in a seamless transition for families particularly those most vulnerable. The Common Assessment Framework and the referral process are very well embedded and lead to a swift exchange of information which results in better protection for all. Recently implemented systems within the local authority now record all interventions giving a much more accurate picture of agency interventions with families. Risk assessments are detailed and ensure that all venues, activities and equipment are suitable and safe. Recruitment procedures are managed and recorded effectively.

Inclusion and the accessibility of services provided by the centre are good. Diversity is celebrated through its wide range of resources and activities. Children with special

educational needs and/or disabilities are provided with outstanding support and good quality resources. In assessing the impact and quality of the services provided, the centre routinely explores the views of users. The centre's self-evaluation diligently includes all aspects of provision and is accurate. The improvement plan identifies appropriate targets and priorities for improvement. Currently, the centre makes insufficient use of all available information to sharpen the evaluation and analysis of activities to better demonstrate the long-term impact of its work.

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

The inspectors considered the judgements made for the Early Years Foundation Stage for Frodingham Infant School, Bushfield Infant School and The Ark Family Centre.

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Summary for centre users

We inspected the Frodingham Children's Centre on 16 and 17 November 2011. We judged the centre as good overall. A significant strength of the centre is the care, guidance and support given to you and your families. We judged this aspect as outstanding. As part of the inspection, we visited a number of activities, looked at the centre's documentation and talked with the children, users of the centre, staff, community representatives and partnership workers.

We would like to thank all the people who spoke with us when we visited the centre. Many of you told us what you thought about the centre and its activities. Your views were very helpful. Everyone we spoke to was full of praise for the centre. It is clear that you are delighted with what the centre has to offer and many of you view it as a 'lifeline'. 'Thank you very much for all your hard work, help and support during the most difficult time of my life, without you I'm not sure I'd have got through it.' 'I would not be here if it wasn't for the centre,' are typical of the comments you made. So that more families can benefit from the types of service you are receiving, we have asked the centre to make contact with and provide for families who do not currently attend. We have also asked the centre to use the range of information they have to analyse and evaluate how effective its services are for you and your families over time.

Led by a manager who knows the community extremely well and is passionate about helping you to improve your circumstances, all staff members work very effectively to safeguard children and families. They provide a 'team around the child' approach which supports the improvements you are trying to make to your lives. We know from the information supplied by the centre that, for a large majority, the safety of your children at home and in the community is good. Your centre has helped you make your homes safer and children are having fewer accidents. Intervention work is ensuring that you get tailored services that meet your needs and those of your families well. You told us that during a recent re-organisation there was no change to the services offered and you were kept informed by the centre manager.

The care, guidance and support offered by the centre are exceptional. We know that when your circumstances make you extremely vulnerable centre staff go that extra mile. Many of you told us about 'Helen's lock up' and how it has provided you with basic equipment to improve your living conditions. You also told us that as a result of the partnership with Scunthorpe Baptist Church and The Forge you receive food vouchers and food parcels. The centre works well with a range of partners such as health, education and community groups. The links with the health professionals are good and these are making it much easier for you to attend baby clinics and to gain useful information about how to keep your children healthy.

You and your children are learning and developing well as a result of the wide range of activities available. Your children have good opportunities to learn and develop. They are confident, are developing independence and are ready for school. They are making good

progress in developing their skills for the future. We know that at least a third of you have been involved in training, adult learning and personal development courses. These courses are enabling you to develop confidence in your communication and interaction with your children. Accredited courses such as level one and two literacy and numeracy are preparing you for further training and are enabling you to develop employability skills.

Thank you once again for coming to talk to us. We thoroughly enjoyed spending time at your centre and we wish you and your families our best wishes for the future.

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