

# Inspection report for Stockingford Early Years Centre Nuneaton

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| <b>Local authority</b>     | Warwickshire      |
| <b>Inspection number</b>   | 383724            |
| <b>Inspection dates</b>    | 6–7 December 2011 |
| <b>Reporting inspector</b> | Mary Dudley       |

|                                    |   |
|------------------------------------|---|
| <b>Centre leader</b>               | Ann Clay  |
| <b>Date of previous inspection</b> | Not applicable  |
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| <b>Linked school if applicable</b>                     | Stockingford Early Years Centre Nursery School           |
| <b>Linked early years and childcare, if applicable</b> | Stockingford Early Years Centre Day Care<br>URN EY301049 |

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.

This inspection was carried out by an additional inspector and an early years inspector. The inspectors held meetings with the centre leader and the senior leadership team, members of staff and professionals from other partner agencies. Discussions were held with members of the governing body, parents, carers and representatives from the local authority. The inspectors observed the centre's work, and looked at a range of relevant documentation.

## Information about the centre

Stockingford Early Years Centre is situated in the north of Warwickshire near to the town of Nuneaton. It is a phase one children's centre, which was designated in February 2005 and serves a community living in one of the 10% most disadvantaged areas in the country. The children's centre operates on an extended school site shared with Stockingford Nursery, a public library and 'Warwickshire Direct', which delivers information on borough and county services. The centre provides a range of integrated services that include health, family support and outreach services, adult training, early years childcare provision, advice and guidance. Children's skills, knowledge and abilities are below those expected for their age on entry to the Early Years Foundation Stage.

Governance of the centre is the responsibility of the governing body which also has responsibility for the nursery school. There is an advisory board which also supports Camp Hill and Park Lane Children's Centres. The centre leader is also the headteacher of Stockingford Nursery School and also manages Atherstone Early Years Centre for part of the week day-to-day management of the children's centre is shared by two acting managers.

The children's centre is situated in a community typified by small Victorian terraced houses with some later estates of mainly public housing. Most of the families in the area are White British with a very small minority of Asian and Polish families. Thirty-nine per cent of children under five in the area live in workless households. Almost

40% of adults in the area have no qualifications, and only 33.8% of pupils achieve five or more A-C grades at GCSE. There are 1146 children under five in the centre's reach area.

## 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**

**1**

### Capacity for sustained improvement

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

**1**

## Main findings

Stockingford Early Years Centre Nuneaton provides an outstanding quality of service for children and families. This popular, well-led centre is an integral part of cohesive provision for children and families in the area. Outstanding care, guidance and support are particular strengths as a result of strong leadership, highly effective team-working and excellent partnerships. The centre's inclusive approach ensures that families from different backgrounds feel welcome and able to enjoy the wide range of provision on offer. Many centre users went out of their way to tell the inspectors how much they enjoy activities and about the excellent practical and emotional support they have received. 'I am actually listening to my children now and its amazing, I was missing so much' The high-quality provision, together with effective family support, ensure that families whose circumstances have made them vulnerable and who are disadvantaged by economic and social circumstances benefit from an excellent range of services that are carefully tailored to meet their particular needs.

A real strength of the centre is the way in which users are involved in decision-making and governance. The governing body, a third of whom are parents, is effective and highly ambitious in its desire to ensure the centre delivers high-quality provision. Members of the parent's forum are very active on the advisory board which acts as a critical friend to three children's centres. A large majority of the forum volunteer to help with various activities and are an integral part of the day-to-day life of the centre.

Senior leaders monitor and evaluate the work of the centre rigorously. They ask challenging questions and demand high standards. A very small minority of the reach area data provided to the centre by the local authority is insufficiently detailed to ensure the highest levels of accuracy, although the centre is working with its partners to improve this. Processes for managing the performance of staff and for

their professional development are used exceptionally well. As a result of their approaches and the good outcomes, the centre's capacity for sustained improvement is excellent. The outstanding range and quality of its provision mean that its services are extremely popular and frequently oversubscribed, and that staff make a marked difference to the lives of those in the local community.

The outcomes for children and adults within the centre's reach are good with some outstanding features. Families are learning to lead healthier lifestyles. Parents participate enthusiastically in activities and courses. These build their confidence and develop their academic skills, contributing well to their future economic security. The centre does not yet provide enough opportunities for all parents to undertake accredited training. A minority of staff in the centre began as centre users, took part in activities and training, became volunteers and then successfully applied for a job. Other former centre users now work in the nearby infant school. The high-quality crèche provision supports parents in being able to access these courses extremely well. Children who attend the centre's 'Nurture-Nursery' sessions, 'Forest School' and crèche facilities benefit particularly from focused support and an excellent range of play opportunities that help develop their communication and social skills

Children and users report that they feel safe in the centre. This reflects the high priority given to the promotion of safety and welfare, and excellent safeguarding arrangements. Children are well behaved and confidently explore their environment and interact with one another. Children and families grow in confidence because their contributions are valued and encouraged by staff. Staff morale is high; they have a 'can do' approach and are tenacious in seeking appropriate support for families. Parents know that they will be supported by centre staff, as one parent said: 'I know you can come in and talk to someone if you've got a problem. There's always someone to listen'.

## What does the centre need to do to improve further?

### Recommendations for further improvement

- Develop the range of accredited, vocational and academic courses offered to enable even greater numbers of parents to secure better employment and economic stability.
- For the local authority to improve the amount and detail of data for the area so that the centre can further ensure that most of families in its target groups are engaging with services.

## How good are outcomes for families?

2

Outcomes for families using the centre are good, and in some cases outstanding. The health of families, particularly their emotional health, has improved significantly as a direct result of engagement with the centre. Parents on the 'Parenting Puzzle' course speak readily of the difference the course has made to them and their families. One parent said, 'I come out of here and feel ten feet tall and can take on

the world'. Parents and children are developing an excellent awareness of healthy lifestyles.

Regular drop-in sessions by speech and language therapists, the identification of a 'talking champion' and the introduction of 'Time to Talk' and 'Chatter Matter' sessions are improving children's speech. As one mother said, 'It has brought my child out of himself and his speech is improving every day'. Healthy cooking and eating sessions have given parents a better understanding of the value of healthy eating and have led to parent volunteers growing food on two allotments on site. The excellent partnership working between health visitors and family support workers result in positive outcomes for new mothers who are considered to be the most vulnerable. Weaning talks and 'Baby Nosh' sessions give parents practical and theoretical advice which is followed up at 'Cot Gossip' sessions where mothers have the time to chat and learn from each other's experiences. However, the lack of timely information on new births means that often new mothers have not initiated or have stopped breastfeeding by the time the centre makes contact with them and, as a result, breastfeeding rates have remained static.

Users feel safe at the centre. Excellent procedures ensure that children are safeguarded very well. Relationships between staff, children and families are trusting and staff know them very well. Consequently, early identification and prevention of potential risks play a key role in reducing harm to children. Families with children on child protection plans are extremely well supported. Well-trained and skilled staff make excellent use of the Common Assessment Framework to target resources effectively. There is clear evidence of improved outcomes for children identified as potentially vulnerable and on child protection plans. Very strong partnership working with health visitors to support vulnerable families has increased parents' confidence in their ability to care for their children. Children learn how to keep themselves safe and have regard for others. Well-structured parenting programmes have a marked impact on outcomes for users experiencing difficulties with children's behaviour. The lives of a number of women and children have been significantly improved by the support given by the centre to address issues of domestic violence. Safeguarding is actively promoted through posters on display and there is constant reinforcement of safety policies.

The centre plays a significant role in the life of the community, bringing together families who might not otherwise meet and mix with one another. Those who use the centre show respect for other users and show interest in their different and shared experiences. Children engage in positive behaviour and show high levels of respect, care and concern for others. Parents of all backgrounds play a very active part in the life of the centre and are well represented on the governing body and the advisory board. As members of the governing body they take part in governor focus visits to assess the quality of activities the centre delivers and are fully engaged in driving improvements. There is a very active well attended parent's forum which meets weekly. It is consulted on matters relating to the centre. It also organises regular charitable and fun-filled events to involve the wider community, such as the summer fete, and campaigns on issues of wider concern, such as the planned closure

of the local hospital. Parents say they feel they can make a difference and have become much more confident through being involved in the group.

There are many opportunities for parents and children to play and learn together and a range of high-quality information and advice is given on all aspects of child development. Evaluations of the success of courses and activities are very positive. Parents make outstanding progress in their personal and social development and, as a result, benefit from increased enjoyment of activities at the centre. These range from socialising with other parents to participating confidently in group activities. One parent said, 'I recognise that the changes I have made to myself impact on my children'. Highly effective systems to record and track children's attainments demonstrate the good progress they are making. A recent refocusing of resources to target children most in need has resulted in a dip in the Early Years Foundation Stage profile data. However, the work of the highly skilled staff is already beginning to show results in narrowing the gap between the outcomes for the most vulnerable and others.

Children develop good skills for their future, evidenced by their improving levels of literacy, numeracy and social skills. Parents value the opportunities to improve their education; some have gone on to further training and others have become volunteers in the centre. Parents attending the Work Club have completed curriculum vitae and identified their training needs. A small minority have also been successful in obtaining voluntary and paid employment. Referrals to, and joint working with, Welfare Rights, regarding benefits and tax credits, has resulted in improved economic stability for the majority of families referred.

These are the grades for the outcomes for families

|  |          |
|--|----------|
| <b>The extent to which children, including those from target groups, are physically, mentally and emotionally healthy and families have healthy lifestyles</b>   | <b>2</b> |
| <b>The extent to which children are safe and protected, their welfare concerns are identified and appropriate steps taken to address them</b>  | <b>1</b> |
| <b>The extent to which all children and parents, including those from target groups, enjoy and achieve educationally and in their personal and social development</b>  | <b>2</b> |
| <b>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</b>          | <b>1</b> |
| <b>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</b> | <b>2</b> |

## How good is the provision?

**1**

Centre staff use their own expertise and skills and those of their partners to make well informed and accurate assessments of the individual needs of users. For families facing complex difficulties, the assessment of need is effective, and supported

through good inter-agency working and communication. Good use of existing data means that the centre is able to target services against a wide range of need. However, data for some target groups is not available at a sufficiently local level to enable highly accurate tailoring of services.

Services are diverse, of a high quality and are reviewed with users on a regular basis. Programmes such as the 'Forest School' - an opportunity for children to enjoy outdoor activities with parents - 'Tribes;' - a group for fathers and grandfathers - and the parents' allotment which teaches children and adults how to grow their own food are some of the more innovative opportunities provided by the centre. The small minority of children with special educational needs and/or disabilities are supported well and their parents are given excellent practical and emotional support. The centre is highly successful in meeting the needs of the wider community. Staff are effectively reaching most groups and are fully aware there is scope to extend this further to engage with more families.

Learning opportunities for children and their parents are excellent. The centre's early years practitioners demonstrate exceptional specialist skills and an excellent understanding of the requirements for the Early Years Foundation Stage. This helps them to promote children's learning and development extremely well. Adult learners are assessed at the beginning of their courses to identify individual needs and prior achievements to inform their individual learning plan. Adults identified as dyslexic, identified they could read better when words were on pink paper, so consequently, all course material was printed on pink paper to aid learning. Adult learners make excellent progress from their starting points. As one mother said: 'I don't think I'll stop learning now. This has shown me I can do anything'. All users' achievements are acknowledged and celebrated well.

The quality of care, guidance and support offered by the centre is outstanding. There is a strong emphasis on providing effective emotional support to boost users' confidence and raise their self-esteem. This has a significant impact on improving the lives of families, particularly those whose circumstances have made them vulnerable. Sensitive, individualised support is provided to help promote outcomes and in times of crisis families feel extremely well supported. One parent said, 'This has been a life saver for me, it's the best thing ever'.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

|  |          |
|--|----------|
| <b>The extent to which the range of services, activities and opportunities meet the needs of families, including those in target groups</b>      | <b>2</b> |
| <b>The extent to which the centre promotes purposeful learning, development and enjoyment for all families, including those in target groups</b> | <b>1</b> |
| <b>The quality of care, guidance and support offered to families, including those in target groups</b>   | <b>1</b> |

**How effective are the leadership and management?**

**1**



Leadership and management of the centre are exceptionally strong. The senior leadership team set high expectations and demonstrate effective leadership. Staff at all levels share a common vision for improvement and success. There are excellent arrangements for supervision, and staff are full of enthusiasm for their work and praise for the centre. Clear structures for performance management and an emphasis on well-targeted professional development mean that staff feel confident about doing their jobs. Governance and accountability arrangements are well established and understood. There are strong links between strategic planning and operational planning. Financial oversight is excellent. The centre's service improvement plan sets out clear targets for improvement based on good self-evaluation.

The centre makes good use of the data available from the local authority, although in a small minority of areas this is insufficiently detailed, and its service development plan is grounded in the analysis of the needs of the area. Priorities for improvement are quantifiable, so that the centre's success in reaching them can be clearly measured and outcomes for the majority of families are very positive. Good self-evaluation and prioritising have led to the centre's successes in improving outcomes for both children and adults. It has also led to increasing opportunities to make services more widely used, especially by target groups. Regular evaluation of provision ensures that funding is well spent, and staff knowledge and expertise is deployed to ensure high-quality provision. Consequently, the centre offers outstanding value for money.

Procedures for safeguarding are excellent. Recruitment checks have been carried out on all adults who have contact with children and these are renewed every three years in accordance with the local authority's requirements. All staff have undergone training on safeguarding, and have a very clear understanding of the steps they must take if they have a concern. Records show that these procedures are followed rigorously. Senior leaders and staff are highly effective in ensuring children and families are safe. They have a sensitive approach to the variety of needs the centre's users present, which ensures that families feel comfortable with staff and are protected. Risk assessments are robust and liaison with other agencies to protect children is close and swift. Security procedures and the attentiveness of staff mean that children are kept very safe on site.

The inclusion of all children and their families is central to the work of the centre. Staff ensure that all children and adults, regardless of background, aptitudes or other differences, have access to the full range of experiences on offer. All information displayed promotes equality and diversity well. A small number of fathers participate in activities such as the parent's forum. Diversity is actively celebrated and the centre is a highly cohesive community where positive relationships flourish. The centre is currently seeking ways to involve more of the very small minority of Polish and Asian families in its activities.

The centre has excellent partnership arrangements. Staff report that relationships with key agencies are excellent, morale is very high and everyone pulls together to

improve outcomes for users. Sharing accommodation with the public library, health visitors and 'Warwickshire Direct' enables users to access information, advice and guidance on a wide range of issues. The centre is very proactive in seeking new partnerships to meet changing needs. Partner agencies have identified the effectiveness of joint working on outcomes for children and families. Families whose circumstances make them most vulnerable are supported well by a wide range of agencies through a coordinated approach.

Users express high levels of satisfaction and confidence in the centre and this is reflected in good attendance at sessions. There are excellent opportunities for users to be involved in the work of the centre through representation on the governing body, the advisory board and parents' forum. Users are asked regularly for their views and these are used to inform decisions. They are fully engaged in the centre's annual review and planning processes, and play a proactive role in the centre.

These are the grades for leadership and management

|   |          |
|---|----------|
| <b>The extent to which governance, accountability, professional supervision and day-to-day management arrangements are clear and understood</b>                         | <b>1</b> |
| <b>The effectiveness of evaluation and its use in setting ambitious targets which secure improvement in outcomes</b>  | <b>2</b> |
| <b>The extent to which resources are used and managed efficiently and effectively to meet the needs of families, including those in target groups</b>                   | <b>1</b> |
| <b>The extent to which equality is promoted and diversity celebrated, illegal or unlawful discrimination is tackled and the centre fulfils its statutory duties</b>     | <b>2</b> |
| <b>The effectiveness of the centre's policy, procedures and work with key agencies in safeguarding children and, where applicable, vulnerable adults</b>                | <b>1</b> |
| <b>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</b>     | <b>1</b> |
| <b>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</b> | <b>1</b> |

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

Inspectors took into account the January 2011 findings of the last inspection for the nursery school based at Stockingford Early Years Centre. The overall effectiveness of this school was judged to be outstanding.

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## Summary for centre users

We inspected the Stockingford Early Years Centre Nuneaton on 6–7 December 2011. We judged the centre as outstanding overall.

Many thanks to those of you who met with us during the inspection, agreed to let us sit in on your groups, or spoke to us about the centre. We were very grateful for your help with the inspection and interested to hear your views.

Many of you went out of your way to tell us how important the centre is to you, what a difference it has made to you and how much you enjoy the activities provided. You told us that the staff are friendly, good listeners and give you excellent support. We found the centre to be welcoming to all families and buzzing with activity. The staff have a high level of expertise and offer excellent practical and emotional support to families who need it.

We judge that the extent to which the centre keeps you and your children safe is excellent. It is very effective in its support of you, especially at times of crisis. We know that you are asked frequently for your views on the activities and that many of you have already made suggestions about what you would like. We were very impressed by the parents involved with the parent's forum and their representation of you on the governing body and the advisory board.

A large majority of you who spoke to us were able to tell us what you had learned in the centre and how you are well informed about the needs of your children. You also told us that you know about healthy lifestyles and have improved your self-confidence so that you feel more able to join in activities with your children. We have asked the centre staff to develop even more courses and training so that more of you will be able to gain qualifications and find employment.

We also asked the local authority to provide the centre with more information about the different groups in the community so that staff can plan to meet everyone's needs even more efficiently.

The senior staff team do an outstanding job in the way they run the centre. They have created a bright, clean, well-resourced environment where all are welcome. They are particularly skilled in monitoring the work of the centre to see how it can be improved further.

Thank you very much for your welcome and willingness to speak to the inspectors. We thoroughly enjoyed talking with you and sampling the centre's work. We wish you every success in the future.

The full report is available from your centre or on our website: [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk).