

Inspection report for Manor Farm Children's Centre

Local authority	North Lincolnshire
Inspection number	383777
Inspection dates	2-3 May 2012
Reporting inspector	Sue Pepper HMI

Centre leader	Miss Faye Baker
Date of previous inspection	Not applicable
Centre address	Priory Lane Junior School Priory Lane Scunthorpe North Lincolnshire DN17 1HE
Telephone number	01724 850247
Fax number	Not applicable
Email address	Faye.baker@northlincs.gov.uk

Linked school if applicable	Not applicable
Linked early years and childcare, if applicable	Not applicable

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.

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, work-based learning and skills training, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for looked after children, safeguarding and child protection.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may reuse this information (not including logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence. To view this licence, visit www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/, write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk.

This publication is available at www.ofsted.gov.uk/publications/100080.

To receive regular email alerts about new publications, including survey reports and school inspection reports, please visit our website and go to 'Subscribe'.

Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
www.ofsted.gov.uk

No.100080

© Crown copyright 2012



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, partner agencies and local authority senior managers. They observed the centre's work, and looked at a range of relevant documentation.

Information about the centre

Manor Farm Children's Centre is a phase two centre, it was designated in 2008. It operates from the Priory Lane Junior School site in Scunthorpe. The centre offers universal and targeted services with the support of key partners on site, through outreach work or at other centres.

The area the centre serves is mainly White British with a recent increase of Eastern European communities, particularly of Polish heritage. The proportion of disabled children and disabled people and those with special educational needs is low. The centre serves a relatively small community towards the south west of Scunthorpe. The reach area is characterised by a mix of private and social housing. Recent figures show that the population of children aged under five years is 369. Over half of these families are living in the lowest ranked 30% most disadvantaged areas in the country. A growing number of families are living in workless households that are dependent on benefits. There are some pockets of domestic violence and substance misuse in the area.

Children generally enter childcare and early education with skills and knowledge below those expected for their age. The Early Years Foundation Stage is delivered through activities and groups that operate in the centre.

The centre manager is responsible for three centres. Manor Farm is one of five centres in the Scunthorpe South locality in the unitary authority of North Lincolnshire. Governance of the centre is provided by the local authority in conjunction with an advisory board which consists of a range of professionals and partners. The centre is open from 9am until 5pm,

Monday to Friday, 52 weeks of the year. The centre is also open on occasional evenings and weekends to meet users' needs.

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

Manor Farm Children's Centre staff have developed good knowledge of local children and families who live in their compact reach area. Provision is good. Services, activities and opportunities are well targeted to meet the needs of those who most need their help. The centre has engaged with a large majority of local children and families from their target groups. As a result, their work with individual families with circumstances that make them vulnerable is good. Some families who live outside of the reach area choose to come to Manor Farm as they state that they prefer attending a smaller, quieter setting where the staff provide a big welcome.

Manor Farm is an inclusive centre which has a high regard for diversity. Staff address any inequalities well. Outreach work is a real strength of the centre. Good partnerships are in place which promote integrated working well. As a consequence, the centre is well known in the area and users demonstrate high levels of satisfaction. Many users described services as simply 'brilliant'. Typical comments from parents regarding the centre workers include, 'staff are fantastic, friendly and easy to get on with' and 'amazingly helpful, nothing is too much trouble for them'.

A result of the good leadership and management of the centre is that most outcomes for children and their families are good. Promoting safeguarding is given high priority. Good safeguarding arrangements ensure that children are well protected in times of crisis. All parents spoken to said that they feel safe at the centre.

Health outcomes are variable and satisfactory overall. The proportion of mothers smoking during pregnancy remains above the national average. The numbers of mothers initiating breastfeeding has greatly increased but data suggest that the proportion of mothers who

sustain breastfeeding is below national expectations. Despite several strategies in place to encourage healthier lifestyles, the number of children entering school obese is also above national average.

Families thoroughly enjoy the activities offered by the centre, especially the opportunities to play, learn and have fun together. Children are encouraged to develop their speech and language and so enable them to start school well prepared. Partnerships with schools are good and procedures to aid children's transition to their next stage of learning are well established and continually improving.

Users of the centre are encouraged to develop positive relationships and families are regularly involved in decision-making. The re-structure of the local authority and changes in the centre staff and their partners have resulted in a loss of momentum in the previously well-established advisory board and parent forum meetings.

The local authority and centre leaders are enthusiastic about striving for excellence. They use local knowledge and data well to measure the impact of the centre's work and identify areas they need to improve further. The centre has good capacity to sustain improvement.

What does the centre need to do to improve further?

Recommendations for further improvement

- Improve health outcomes by working with partners to:
 - increase the percentage of women sustaining breastfeeding
 - reduce the number of children in reception year who are obese
 - decrease the percentage of mothers who smoke in pregnancy.
- Re-establish the advisory board and elect an independent chairperson so that members of the board act as a critical friend in challenging the centre and holding it to account for improving its work.

How good are outcomes for families?

2

During the inspection, a few mothers were observed to breastfeed their children in the centre's relaxed environment. The numbers of mothers who continue to breastfeed, however, is low. Parents said health trainers help them to understand what foods to eat or avoid. They learn about the importance of good food hygiene and how to make economical and healthy meals. This has a positive impact on some family eating habits. For example, a mother said 'I now give my children fruit instead of crisps'. However, the number of children who are obese in schools remains an on-going issue.

Some parents stated that attending 'Baby Massage' has helped their babies sleep and even reduced colic. They enjoy this good opportunity which encourages skin-to-skin contact and enhances their engagement and relationship with their baby saying, 'It encourages bonding'.

The Common Assessment Framework is used well to support those families who are experiencing a range of difficulties, including domestic violence, substance misuse and poverty. The impact of this tailored early intervention work with specialist services is good and it prevents many difficult and complex situations reaching a crisis point. Parents develop a good understanding of how to keep their children and themselves safe. They are confident to come into the centre for help because they trust the centre workers. In a crisis the support provided for parents is swift and staff ensure they act in the best interest of the whole family. Typical comments from parents were: 'It is really good to be able to offload problems here'; and, 'I am able to open up and speak about things'.

The CWAN (children with additional needs) procedures ensure good support is in place for any parents who have a disabled child. Parents are confident to express their views and they treat each other with great respect and develop positive relationships. One remarked that her child was 'not judged, but welcomed' and her child was 'helped to develop social skills and an awareness of difference.' Parents are supported to make appropriate choices and express their opinions informally but insufficient meetings more recently have hampered formal opportunities to contribute to the governance of the centre. This has impacted on users having satisfactory rather than good occasions to contribute to decision-making.

Children behave well and make the most of their time at the centre. Parents said: 'singing time is really good when children have opportunities to mix with others'; and, 'they have lots of fun activities which change and attract children's attention'. Children's achievements have improved but due to some low starting points they remain overall just below national expectations. Some children have poor communication, language and literacy skills. A range of appropriate strategies are in place to tackle this and early indications of impact are positive. Data show that the achievement gap between the lowest 20% in the Early Years Foundation Stage Profile outcomes and the rest is slowly closing year on year.

Adults have access to a good range of courses to develop their basic knowledge and skills such as basic numeracy, literacy and first aid. 'Sex and Relationship Education' courses run regularly. As a result, there are very few young parents in the area. Good opportunities are available to work as a volunteer or gain an apprenticeship. Effective support is in place for those who are willing to follow routes which can lead to further training and employment.

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	3
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	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.	2

How good is the provision?

2

The purpose-built accommodation is light and airy. Information is well displayed and helpful. Services are constantly under review to ensure they meet the needs of the target families in the area. Activities at the centre are mostly geared at smaller groups which meet the needs of many of their families well and this suits the space available. However, the popular weekly baby clinic which is combined with a 'Stay and Play' session is very well attended by a large number of families. The centre has achieved a basic award in recognition of their support of breastfeeding. Health colleagues regularly discuss dental health, the impact of smoking and they encourage later weaning of babies. The take-up of immunisation is generally good. The numbers of mothers smoking fluctuates and those willing to stop smoking are signposted to where they can access suitable smoking cessation advice. A welfare rights and debt advisor provides good support for families who need help to understand benefit entitlements and budget management.

Care, advice and support are good. Effective work with multi-agency partners ensures that centre staff and key partners together assess well those who are most in need of intervention. The centre check all the children they have not seen to ensure they are not missing out on any intervention, support and services from which they would benefit. The centre is used frequently for supervised family contact meetings. The centre recognises the important role fathers play in their child's development. A few fathers attend and they are welcome at all groups.

A rolling programme of training courses and sessions are in place, for example, 'Baby Massage', 'Baby Yoga' and 'Cook and Eat'. Parents are provided with vouchers which facilitate more active lifestyles, such as introductions to a gym and opportunities to enjoy swimming. Specific groups such as 'Move and Groove' are aimed at encouraging children to enjoy at least three hours physical activity a day. Childminders and parents are taught fun ways of keeping their children and themselves more physically fit. Achievements are recognised and celebrated well.

The 'Strengthening Families' and 'Nurturing' programmes work well to address low self-esteem by developing parents' understanding of the importance of routines and positive behaviour management of children. Parents learn the value of play in children's development. Comprehensive evaluations record increased levels in parents' confidence and all suggest parents are highly satisfied. One parent commented: 'I have made a huge step forward. I now encourage my children to share, have good manners and we now take it in turns to speak.'

The centre has good relationships with local childcare providers and schools. It works in close partnership with a social enterprise agency in the voluntary sector to provide very effective support for adults, which can lead to employment and financial independence. There are good opportunities for parents to undertake training and gain the qualifications and skills they need to enter the workforce through volunteering roles in the centre or apprenticeship schemes.

These are the grades for the quality of provision:

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

How effective are the leadership and management?

2

The local authority re-structure has driven enormous change. There are clear links between strategic planning and the centre's individual action plans. Self-evaluation is mostly accurate; the centre manager knows the strengths of the centre and what needs to be done to secure improvement. As a result, priorities for development are appropriate, challenging and realistic. A new performance management team collate data and provide the centre with standard reports which enables them to monitor its progress well. Cluster arrangements prevent the duplication of services and promote the sharing of human resources and provision, helping to secure good value for money.

Governance and accountability arrangements are clear and understood. Whilst governance is strong, accountability is less so as the advisory board has not functioned for a while. The centre manager has occasionally acted as the chairperson on the advisory board and she acknowledges this is not ideal. The strong, highly skilled leadership team and experienced workers have embraced changes positively. Good partnership working with other agencies promotes integrated provision which is further strengthened by joint training.

A comprehensive staff training package is in place to ensure that the staff continually develop their knowledge and skills. Day-to-day management and professional supervision systems are effective. Consequently, staff morale is high. Staff are committed to improving the life chances of families, especially families with circumstances that make them vulnerable.

The inclusion of all children and families is prioritised very well. Extension of the centre's remit means support and services are now inclusive of children and young people. Parents confidently express their views when attending the centre and their ideas are regularly sought through evaluations and used to shape services to meet their needs. Staff ensure that all children and parents, regardless of background, aptitudes or other differences have

equal access to the provision. Information is appropriately available in dual languages and crèche facilities enable those with young children to attend training. The small but growing number of families from Poland and Lithuania in the area are positive about the centre's warm welcome and effective support. Staff and parents are eager to learn more about families' differing cultures.

Recruitment and vetting procedures are robust. Good safeguarding practice is adopted across all areas of the centre's work and robust procedures, protocols and effective partnership working secure swift support for individual families. Case studies evidence sensitive multi-agency work. The engagement of families, especially those identified as most in need, is good. The centre manager works frequently on the 'Children and Family Support Services' duty team which hones her safeguarding knowledge through her regular involvement in decision making. This work also keeps the centre manager up-to-date with local issues which is beneficial when planning the right services for families.

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 in setting ambitious targets which secures 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

Ofsted reports relating to the childcare setting and schools in the reach area were scrutinised to provide additional contextual information.

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 Manor Farm Children's Centre on 2 and 3 May 2012. We judged the centre as good overall.

All of you that we spoke to were very positive about the centre. You told us that you find the staff friendly, very helpful and welcoming. You particularly enjoy the weekly baby weighing clinic which runs at the same time as the 'Stay and Play'. We understand some of you enjoy 'Baby Massage.' You were extremely positive about the benefits of using massage and some of you said it even helped your babies sleep and also eased their colic problems.

The centre leadership team are fully committed to helping you provide your children with the best possible start to life. They ensure good safeguard systems are in place for you. Partnerships with other agencies are good and together they provide a range of opportunities for you to develop your parenting skills or specific knowledge which can enable you to gain employment. We understand a few of you are interested in working as a volunteer or completing an apprenticeship. We know the centre recognises that volunteers further strengthen their work so we hope you will approach staff if you feel this is something you could do.

We know a minority of mothers successfully breastfeed their babies for several months. We have asked the centre to work closely with their health partners to make sure more of you are given sufficient support to enable you to continue to breastfeed once you have decided to do this. We know some of you are keen to adopt healthier lifestyles which will have a positive impact on your families. We have asked the centre to work with their health partners to consider what more they can do to work with you to reduce the number of children who are obese when they start school. We know many of you understand the importance of smoke-free homes. However, there are a number of mothers who smoke during pregnancy. Therefore, we have also asked the centre to look at ways they can work with their health partners to support you if you wish to cease smoking.

Changes at local authority level have led to changes of staff who work at the centre. Although there has been a temporary halt to some meetings, the centre has firm plans in

place to resume the advisory board meetings again. We have asked the centre to appoint an independent chairperson and to consider how members of the board can challenge the centre's work to ensure the centre continues to progress. The centre also intends to start the parents' forum again so that they make it easier for you to be involved in decision-making. We hope some of you will be interested in joining the few parents who are already members of the advisory board or that you will attend the less formal meetings so that you can influence the governance of your centre.

We would like to thank everyone who was willing to speak with us. We are very grateful for your help and wish you every success in the future.

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