

Inspection report for Mickleover/Littleover Children's Centre

Local authority	Derby
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Linked school if applicable	N/A
Linked early years and childcare, if applicable	N/A

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

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361

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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 one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and an early years inspector.

The inspectors held meetings with staff, parents and held meetings with partner agencies.

They observed the centre's work, and looked at a range of relevant documentation.

Information about the centre

Mickleover/Littleover Children's Centre is a phase two centre providing services to a diverse community on the western edge of Derby. The centre is situated on the site of Brookfield Primary School. The staff team is part of a wider locality children's centre team managed by a service manager. An early intervention coordinator has operational day-to-day responsibility for the centre. The locality team is part of, and accountable to, the local authority. Currently, the advisory board is under review in order to reflect the locality model.

The population in the reach area of the centre is predominantly White British. There are small proportions of other minority ethnic groups across the locality. A significant number of families live in owner-occupied housing. There is also some social housing in Mickleover and Littleover. The proportion of children living in workless households and families living on benefits is lower than in other parts of Derby.

Children enter early years provision with skills, knowledge and abilities below those expected for their age. The centre offers a range of education, health and social services. The centre also provides home visiting and outreach services through its family visitor and partner support workers. The centre manager also has oversight of five other children's centres. The centre opens two full and three half days each week.

Inspection judgements

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

Overall effectiveness

The effectiveness of the children's centre in meeting the needs of and improving outcomes for families

3

Capacity for sustained improvement

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

3

Main findings

This is a satisfactory children's centre which has many good features including its safeguarding procedures, its work with partner agencies and partnerships with parents to promote their children's early education. As part of the city's restructuring in April 2012, the centre has a new leadership team which is providing clear leadership and has quickly created a cohesive team of staff. The diligent work of staff has helped to minimise the disruption that the reorganisation has had on the families that use the centre. Since the centre opened four years ago, the makeup of families in the area has been changing. There is now more social housing and a greater number of families have recently moved to Britain. The centre works very effectively with individual families to support them and signpost them to other agencies. However, there are insufficient data to enable the centre to evaluate clearly the overall impact of its work. The most vulnerable families in the reach area are not identified and therefore the impact on key target groups is not sufficiently evidenced. Moreover there is insufficient information to enable the centre to plan strategically. The impact of the centre is limited because of its part-time opening hours.

Partnership work with other agencies including health, social services, Jobcentre Plus and local schools continues to build well upon work started when the centre opened. In particular, the weekly, vulnerable children's meeting ensures that different agencies working with families share their information well and hold each other to account.

The advisory board does not provide support and challenge because it has stopped meeting and there is insufficient opportunity for parents and carers to contribute to the development of the centre. Nevertheless senior team leadership and staff training are good. The high quality of professionalism and expertise of the staff, coupled with clear lines of responsibility, well-matched training and the effective day-to-day running of the centre, ensure that the centre is focused on improving areas of weakness and gaps in its provision.

What does the centre need to do to improve further?

Recommendations for further improvement

- Re-establish a fully functioning advisory board to include parents, especially those from target groups, so that they have an active voice in determining the use of the centre and its development.
- Ensure there is greater clarity in establishing who the centre's vulnerable groups are within its reach area to ensure that resources are appropriately targeted and meet users' needs.
- Ensure that senior leaders have robust data which are used to evaluate the effectiveness of the centre in meeting the needs of its vulnerable groups.

How good are outcomes for families?

3

Families are encouraged to make healthy choices. Regular health reviews help to establish the needs of families, and parents are signposted to a wide range of services to help improve their health and wellbeing. Most families show they are developing a satisfactory understanding of healthy eating because of the range of activities provided by the centre. For example, the 'Health Road Show' provides individual support to families to help them make healthy food choices and extend their knowledge of cooking. The regular, and increasingly popular, 'buggy walks' encourage mothers to exercise and meet others. This is particularly helpful for families new to the area as it introduces them both to the centre and the locality. Take-up rates for families, who are supported effectively by family visitors, are improving. In addition, breastfeeding rates are also increasing.

The centre works effectively to support families involved in the Common Assessment Framework and teams around the family processes. Looked after children and their carers are well supported.

Practices to help keep children and vulnerable adults safe are robust, and staff are trained to recognise a wide range of developmental and social issues. These include developmental checks on babies and toddlers, identifying speech and language problems, domestic violence and girls at risk of female genital mutilation (FGM). For example the early identification of a child at risk of being taken abroad for FGM ensured that the mother understood the legal consequences and this prevented the procedure from taking place. Staff at the centre take part in weekly vulnerable children meetings and this ensures that families about whom there are concerns are tracked across the city and speedy referrals are made to help them stay safe. Children at the centre behave in ways that help keep them and others safe. All parents said they feel safe when using the centre. An increasing number of families are more confident in their parenting skills as a result of support from the centre. Parents provided a good range of examples including installation of stair gates and smoke alarms which evidenced the impact of safety advice from the centre. Family

visitor case studies and those written by other staff members evidence how their input has improved outcomes for safety.

There are rapidly improving outcomes for children's achievement, including the achievement of those from vulnerable groups. The centre has identified children and families to take part in a pilot scheme for two-year-olds which is aimed at improving their start in education. Families commented on how well their children were developing as a result of participation in this scheme. Parenting skills have improved too following their involvement in the parents' early education programme. Parents reported that their children were speaking more clearly and had fewer behaviour tantrums and better social skills. The local primary school commented that children were now better prepared to start school and their progress and attendance had improved. This was particularly true for children known to be eligible for free school meals and for disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs.

All staff are positive role models, and children's behaviour in the 'Stay and Play' sessions is exemplary. Children take turns and share well. Parents commented on how the centre's support has helped to increase their own self-confidence. This has enabled some parents to become volunteers and lead some activities such as the 'buggy walks' and the Friday club. However, the lack of an advisory board and a parents' forum limits the opportunities for parents and carers to be involved in the decision making and governance of the centre.

The centre provides signposting to services to support families with money management issues and their understanding of financial matters. Jobcentre Plus works regularly at the centre, but is limited in its provision there because there is no internet access to their database, so families travel to a nearby centre or into their main office. An increasing number of families are going into education, training and employment. In part, this is because parents are accessing the free childcare for two-year-olds.

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	3

How good is the provision?

3

Currently services provided by the centre include work with lone parents and fathers; child minders and the centre has a 'teen champion' to encourage teenage mums to engage with services. The centre's outreach is extended through partnerships with a range of organisations including those supporting disabled children and their parents. The centres signposts vulnerable groups to other specialist services. All families complete an initial assessment of their needs and a closure assessment which explains how good they have found the services to be and additional thoughts about any extra support they would like. The centre does not analyse this information to make an evaluation of impact. The centre knows all its families well who attend. This knowledge supports good partnership working and staff are quickly getting up to speed in knowing their new 'patch'. The centre has good evidence of how it makes effective contact with all families in order to ensure that they have full access their services. For example, all families who have new born babies are initially contacted with follow-up support to help both mother and baby thrive. New families to Britain have a dedicated member of staff to ensure that their health and welfare are being met effectively. Bilingual support is provided to ensure that these families are fully integrated and settle in well to their new lives.

The centre supports the development of children's literacy and numeracy skills well through the toy and book library, as well as developing parents' skills. Staff model good reading and play behaviours and parents are encouraged to share books and to play with their children appropriately. Parents say this has raised their confidence and self-esteem. Parents embark on opportunities for training and education such as NVQ level 2 course which improve their literacy and numeracy skills.

Care, guidance and support for families are good. Carefully tailored support ensures families develop their well-being across a range of outcomes. Families reported that they are confident with the advice and guidance they have received from the centre, and how it has helped them improve their lives and their confidence as parents. In times of crisis, families feel confident in the quality of support they receive from the centre. The centre has an open-door policy and all parents who spoke to inspectors were very positive about the centre's work.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The extent to which the range of services, activities and opportunities meet the needs of families, including those in target groups	3
The extent to which the centre promotes purposeful learning, development and enjoyment for all families, including those in target groups	3
The quality of care, guidance and support offered to families, including those in target groups	2

How effective are the leadership and management?

3

The day-to-day management of the centre is good. Clear lines of responsibility ensure that staff are held to account appropriately, and their training needs are well matched to the centre's, as well as their own needs. Appropriate recruitment checks are made, and staff and volunteers are checked to ensure they are able to work with children. There is currently no advisory board to oversee the management of the centre and this, together with a lack of data, limits the centre's strategic planning. Well-established partnership working, together with highly professional and expert staff, ensures that the service provision is developing well. All partners understand their roles, and work flexibly to meet local needs. Partnership working is well supported by the good relationships with the local authority.

The centre is aspirational in what it wants to achieve but, without robust data, it is difficult to set challenging targets. The centre listens to parents well, and takes account of their views in its daily planning. Families' feedback assessments enable the centre to demonstrate how it is meeting their particular needs. These assessments help the centre to have an understanding of its strengths and areas for development and these link well to the development plan.

Resources are well matched to the needs of local families, particularly those who have more complex needs. The centre provides satisfactory value for money. The centre ensures it works inclusively with all families, including those with children with disabilities and parents with disabilities. Outreach work to target groups and families most in need of intervention and support is developing as staff improve their knowledge of the area. The centre provides a welcoming and safe environment.

Evidence from case studies and course evaluations indicates that the centre is helping to narrow the achievement gap and that it promotes equality and diversity and tackles discrimination satisfactorily. Safeguarding follows recommended good practice across all areas of the centre's work. Staff training, particularly in relation to child protection, for those working with children and adults with learning difficulties and those new to Britain, is good. All agencies working at the centre understand the implications of the wider safeguarding agenda.

The integration of services is well-thought through and is supportive of families. Involvement of multiple agencies is well established and clear relationships exist which effectively support strong partnership working.

The centre regularly takes account of the views of families to help it identify important issues for the centre's development. Plans are in place to initiate a parents' forum.

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

3

understood	
The effectiveness of evaluation and its use in setting ambitious targets which secure improvement in outcomes	3
The extent to which resources are used and managed efficiently and effectively to meet the needs of families, including those in target groups	3
The extent to which equality is promoted and diversity celebrated, illegal or unlawful discrimination is tackled and the centre fulfils its statutory duties	3
The effectiveness of the centre's policy, procedures and work with key agencies in safeguarding children and, where applicable, vulnerable adults	2
The extent to which partnerships with other agencies ensure the integrated delivery of the range of services provided by the centre to meet its core purpose	2
The extent to which the centre supports and encourages families in the reach area to engage with services and uses their views to develop the range of provision	3

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

None

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Summary for centre users

We inspected the Mickleover/Littleover Children's Centre on 23–24 May 2012. We judged the centre as satisfactory overall.

Thank you for your help in this inspection. We spoke to many of you about the centre's work. We noted how well you and your children are catered for by the centre and were interested in hearing your views. This information was very helpful.

Mickleover/Littleover Children's Centre is appropriately warm, welcoming and inclusive. Staff work hard to provide a helpful service. Since the reorganisation in April 2012, new staff teams are in place. Staff are beginning to know the area and the families with whom they are working. Partnership working is good, and effective signposting ensures families' needs are met. This ensures that the quality of care, guidance and support for families is good. You told us that the centre is helpful in supporting you and ensuring you know where to go for other services.

Activities such as the 'Stay and Play' and the parents' early education programme promote healthy lifestyles and children's early development. Individual parents are listened to well, but the lack of an advisory board and a parents' forum limits parents' involvement in determining the development of the centre.

Safeguarding procedures are robust and this ensures that families and children know how to stay safe.

The centre is well used by local families. But it is not clear whether the centre knows and works with all families in the area. You said that centre staff carefully listen to your views. However we judged that the centre needed more information on the needs of families in the wider community to make best use of its resources. You all spoke positively about the quality of work and support you receive from the staff.

The centre is well led on a day-to-day basis. Staff receive good training and are held to account satisfactorily.

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