

Inspection report for St. Ann's North Children's Centre

Local authority	Nottingham
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Date of previous inspection	Not applicable
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Linked school if applicable	Walter Halls Primary School
Linked early years and childcare, if applicable	Ark Day Nursery, Mapperley Park (URN 254587)

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 one additional inspector and one early years inspector.

The inspectors held meetings with leaders and managers, staff, members of the advisory board, parents, health professionals, representatives from the local authority, Jobcentre plus and Relate, and the Early Years Foundation Stage coordinator from the adjacent school.

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

Information about the centre

St Ann's North Children's Centre was established as a Sure Start centre in 2006. It shares its site and part of its accommodation with Walter Halls Primary School. It has links with a further two schools in the area it serves. In line with Nottingham City's strategy, it provides services for 0-19 year olds and fulfils the core purpose of children's centres. Its services are delivered at the centre, a local library, and in churches and community centres in the reach area. Support for families is provided also as outreach, in partnership with St Ann's South Children's Centre and a range of agencies.

In the area served by the centre, there are high levels of deprivation and worklessness, with a high proportion of families in receipt of benefits. Parts of the reach have a high incidence of teenage pregnancy, crime, anti-social behaviour and domestic violence. The centre serves a diverse community, where 13 different languages are spoken, although the large majority of families are of White British heritage. There is a significant minority of refugees and asylum seekers. When children enter Early Years Foundation Stage provision their skills, knowledge and abilities are generally lower than expected for their age.

The local authority provides governance for the centre. In the last two years, the centre has experienced a lack of continuity in leadership and staffing, including a

period when there was no manager. The present manager was appointed in January 2011 and her line manager took up her post in June 2011. There has also been significant re-structuring in services with which the centre works.

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

The overall effectiveness of the centre is satisfactory. Leaders and staff know the nature of the reach area well and the centre's provision meets users' needs appropriately. As a result, the outcomes for users are satisfactory and improving.

Families are adequately supported in being healthy so that most aspects of their health are improving. Immunisation rates are excellent. The centre has rightly identified the need to strengthen partnerships with health professionals, as these have been disrupted by re-structuring in the primary care trust. Currently, health professionals coordinate breastfeeding support in the home. The centre recognises that it needs to identify all who start breastfeeding and make them aware of the support it offers too. The percentage of mothers who sustain breastfeeding has dropped slightly this year.

Most referrals for family support are for assistance in managing children's behaviour. Centre staff ensure that those who need help receive this and relationships within families improve as a result. Staff draw effectively on many partners to provide support. However, not all files of such cases show a clear trail of what has been done and this makes it difficult for new staff or those who may step in temporarily, to quickly see what needs to be done next. Where activities are provided by centre staff, these are evaluated by users and the impact of each activity is identified. However, when activities and services are provided by partners, impact and outcomes are not always known to centre staff.

Adult users benefit from services commissioned by the centre such as relationship counselling and advice on work, benefits and training. Staff cannot be sure of the impact of this as data from these services is not currently available. The centre can demonstrate its success in preparing children to start nursery, but it does not record in sufficient detail children's progress in activities they regularly attend at the centre.

Parental views are regularly sought through evaluations and a parents' forum and this is a strength of the centre's work. The advisory board has good parental representation and is chaired by a parent. Some adult users have been trained as volunteers but the centre has not followed them up to find out how many are engaged in voluntary work.

The centre's capacity to improve is satisfactory. The engagement of families and individuals from different groups has increased significantly from low levels a year ago and is now satisfactory. However, leaders recognise that there is more to be done to increase the involvement of teenage parents, disabled adults and children, workless families and fathers and has identified a series of actions that the centre will take to achieve this. These are currently being developed into action plans and staff are involved in this process. Staff at the centre occasionally miss opportunities to ensure that those who use the centre for one activity are fully aware of what other services are available.

What does the centre need to do to improve further?

Recommendations for further improvement

- Increase the engagement of target groups, particularly teenage parents, workless families, disabled children and adults, and fathers by
 - completing and implementing action plans already started
 - ensuring that users of the centre know the full range of services on offer.
- Improve leadership and management by ensuring that:
 - partnerships secure regular support for all who start breastfeeding
 - there are clear records showing the progress made by children who regularly attend activities provided by the centre
 - all services provided by partners are evaluated to capture their impact on outcomes
 - there is robust monitoring of records so that they are always correctly and fully completed.

How good are outcomes for families?

3

Young children enjoy their sessions at the centre. The 'Pride Vine' and photographs taken during activities show their achievements in a good range of activities. However, opportunities are missed to combine these two sources of information into a record showing individual children's progress over time. Records show that 'Getting ready for nursery' sessions have a good impact. Attendance helps children make clear gains in their personal, social and emotional development and parents who attend learn about their children's development and how to support their learning at home and when they go on to nursery. The centre is successfully increasing the proportion of children who reach a good level of development at the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage. However, the gap between the lowest scoring 20% and the rest has widened slightly in the last year.

Adult learning is mainly through signposting adults who attend Jobcentre Plus interviews at the centre to other providers. Most are referred to training courses or voluntary work, including courses leading to basic skills qualifications and vocational courses. Although the centre has data on the numbers who are referred to different partners, it does not have information on success rates or how many have gone on to work as volunteers. In response to local needs, the centre has provided an information technology course which was successfully completed by a women's group and a group of refugees who were at an early stage of learning English completed successfully an English language course.

Those visiting the Jobcentre Plus interviews are shown how work can make them better off than staying on benefits. At the centre, children learn to save; they contribute a small sum each week at the 'book club' and when they have the required amount they select a book to buy. Adults are helped to deal with financial difficulties, such as debt or understanding the benefits system. In their evaluations, many parents identify the great social benefits of coming to activities at the centre, where they make friends and reduce their isolation.

About one in five of adults were helped to stop smoking, and the centre has recently established a support group for women who are striving to reduce their dependency on drugs and alcohol. Obesity among children is below the city average, although this figure increased slightly last year. Healthy eating and physical activity are encouraged through 'Stay and Play' activities, and adults have opportunities to learn to cook healthy meals and follow courses leading to a food hygiene certificate. However, the centre does not collect information from partners on how many successfully complete courses. Mothers-to-be benefit from ante-natal clinics at the centre, and an above average proportion choose to breastfeed their babies.

There is sufficient emphasis on prevention and early intervention in order to ensure that users and staff are safe. The centre provides a safe and welcoming environment for families. Adults feel safe when attending the centre and children show through their interactions with others that they feel secure too. Most adults take responsibility for their children's behaviour and safety during visits to the centre, although a few do not respect rules such as keeping lids on cups of hot drinks, so that this facility has had to be withdrawn from some groups. Children behave well at the centre.

Parents' views are sought and parental representation is strong. There is a well-established advisory board through which parents contribute ideas and make requests. Adults also contribute by taking part in fund raising activities.

Three quarters of referrals to the centre are for help in managing children's behaviour. The centre makes use of a wide range of different agencies to support families in encouraging better behaviour, and this is successful in enabling parents to develop better relationships with children. A small number of parents have completed courses in 'positive parenting'. Through the Common Assessment Framework (CAF) process, teams work together and families' progress and needs are regularly

reviewed

There is a suitable range of safety information available in the centre. Safety checks are carried out and safety equipment distributed during home visits. Non-accidental injuries to children under five are below the city average. Sun safety is raised at appropriate times and in a way that is enjoyable, so that children learn the importance of this.

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	3
The extent to which all children and parents, including those from target groups, enjoy and achieve educationally and in their personal and social development	3
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

The centre analyses needs well enough and provides a satisfactory range of services to meet the needs of those in the reach and in target groups. As a result, the participation of most groups has increased in the last year, and 60% of families engage with the centre. Leaders recognise a need to increase further the involvement of target groups. A breakfast club held at a community venue has increased participation of those who belong to minority ethnic groups as well as lone parents. The centre is responsive to needs identified through its case work. For instance, there is a weekly evening group for 9-18 year-olds with learning disabilities, run as a youth club.

Families' needs are addressed successfully by working with partners. For instance, adults who suffer domestic violence access counselling and support in the community and the centre works closely with the police and youth workers to reduce the likelihood of older children becoming involved in gang activities.

Sessions at the centre are planned around the Early Years Foundation Stage areas of learning, and the accommodation is used effectively to allow for activities inside and out. However, activities vary in their quality and impact. This was evident in a 'Rattle and Roll' session, where children were enthusiastically engaged, learning new songs and thoroughly enjoying themselves, but adults who accompanied them did not

interact sufficiently with children and staff did not model good practice to encourage interaction.

Staff and partners provide satisfactory care, guidance and support. Staff target those most in need and as a result centre workers spend almost two thirds of their time on outreach work. This exploits a wide range of different agencies to ensure that families have the right help. In general, files documenting cases are well maintained, but a few are not completed in such a way that make it possible to see quickly what the original referral was for and what needs to be done next. This does not support continuity of care and support. Families show confidence in the staff at the centre and turn to them in times of crisis, while staff take advantage of their access to a range of charities and voluntary agencies to provide immediate support.

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	3

How effective are the leadership and management?

3

The centre meets its duties in relation to safeguarding and equality and diversity. Users are kept safe, all have their needs met and there is no discrimination evident in the centre. Staff are well trained in matters such as child protection, first aid, health, hygiene, prevention of domestic violence and the use of the CAF. Needs are regularly reviewed and successfully met through a multi-agency approach. There is a shared view of the centre's future. However, there are some inconsistencies in the application of policies, such as recording minor accidents and ensuring that parents always adhere to the centre's rules about use of mobile telephones on the premises. Safeguarding is a priority for the centre, particularly when cases are allocated to children's centre workers.

The centre strives to be inclusive and monitors participation of different ethnic groups. Where necessary, interpreters are provided for those who speak little English and there is information available in different languages. Additional staff training has been undertaken to strengthen the centre's ability to meet needs, such as in the Portage programme, which provides support for parents in supporting the development of children with special educational needs.

Partnership working has been effective in improving some services for families in the area. Until recently there was no dental care in the reach area but a mobile dental surgery has now been established through joint working.

The local authority holds leaders to account for the centre's performance through a robust annual conversation. Challenging targets are set for improvement and data are provided to the centre to enable leaders to monitor progress towards these. The centre provides satisfactory value for money. The accommodation is of good quality, well managed and effectively used. Leaders have given careful consideration to how to make services more sustainable in the future, such as making increasing use of volunteers. Formal agreements with services commissioned by the centre make expectations clear. Staff are held accountable through regular reviews and supervisions; the latter are linked to family support cases. However, there is a lack of rigour in monitoring the record-keeping of staff.

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	3
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	3
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	3
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 St. Ann's North Children's Centre on 30–31 May 2012. We judged the centre as satisfactory overall.

We are grateful to those of you who spoke to us during our visit and told us about your experiences at the centre and how this has affected you and your children or grandchildren. We also found it useful to read some of your evaluations of sessions provided by centre staff. Most of you said that you find services enjoyable and helpful. Several mentioned that coming to the centre has helped you to feel less isolated and to make friends. It is a shame that services led by those who are not staff at the centre are not evaluated, as the centre has no way of knowing whether these are of benefit to you.

The centre can show how it is improving most aspects of your families' health and safety. The proportion of mothers who breastfeed for six to eight weeks has fallen this year, even though there has been a rise in the proportion deciding to breastfeed from the birth of their babies. We have asked the centre to work with others to make sure that support is available for all breastfeeding mothers in future.

We were pleased to see that children who come to the centre behave well and most adults respect the rules that are made to ensure that all are safe at the centre. A small number of parents do not always keep strictly to the rules about hot drinks always being covered.

There are satisfactory opportunities for adults and children who use the centre to contribute to its running. However, some adults have been trained as volunteers and the centre does not know how many have gone on to voluntary work. We have asked staff to collect this information in future.

Children and adults have a range of opportunities to learn, both at the centre and beyond, such as on training courses. However, the centre does not know how well adults do because it does not always find out how many are successful, on basic skills courses, for example. We have asked them to collect this information in the future. When children complete the 'Getting ready for nursery' course the centre knows exactly how much they improve their skills. However, although children attend some sessions regularly, and photographs are displayed celebrating their achievements, this information is not recorded in enough detail to show the progress they make over a number of sessions. We have asked staff to do this.

When sessions at the centre are led by children's centre staff, you are asked to complete an evaluation, but when other agencies lead sessions this is not always done. We have asked staff to make sure that all sessions are evaluated so that they can find out how successful they are and improve them if they are not considered suitable in some way.

The centre publicises their programme in several ways, but staff sometimes miss opportunities to make sure that those who come to the centre for one activity are aware of other sessions that might be of interest to them. For example, those who attend the ante-natal clinic are not automatically made aware of the breastfeeding support group. We have asked them to make sure they take advantage of all opportunities such as this.

The staff at the centre involve parents well in making decisions about the sort of services that are provided. There is a parents' forum where views are collected and the chair of the advisory board is a parent.

We were pleased to find that families turn to the centre for help when they experience difficulties. Users and partners find the centre welcoming and the staff supportive.

The most important thing we have asked the centre to do is to increase the proportion of people who take advantage of its services that come from certain groups. These include teenage parents, fathers, those who have no work and children and adults with disabilities. The centre has recognised that it needs to do this and has started to plan how it will do so.

The local authority keeps an eye on how well the centre is doing, and the work of staff is regularly checked. However, checks do not always find gaps in records, and we have asked leaders to make sure they are more careful when checking in future.

The leaders of the centre know how well they are doing and what they need to do to improve. There have been some significant improvements in the last 18 months. In order to keep these improvements going leaders need to make sure they evaluate all aspects of the centre's work. We judge that they have satisfactory capacity to do this.

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