

Inspection report for North Chaddesden Children's Centre

Local authority	Derby
Inspection number	384029
Inspection dates	20–21 June 2012
Reporting inspector	Marian Pearson HMI

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Date of previous inspection	Not applicable
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Linked school if applicable	None
Linked early years and childcare, if applicable	First Friends Private Day Nursery (206106)

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

The inspectors held meetings with the centre managers and some members of the staff team, members of the advisory board, representatives of the local authority, and statutory and voluntary organisations working in partnership with the centre. They also talked to children and parents.

Inspectors observed the centre's work and visited the designated day-care provision. They also looked at a range of relevant documentation, including evaluations, key policies and safeguarding procedures.

Information about the centre

North Chaddesden Children's Centre was designated as a phase two centre in March 2008. This purpose-built centre is sited adjacent to Cavendish Close Infants School but has no formal links with the school. The centre is managed directly by Derby City Council and serves a large suburb to the east of the city. Following a recent reconfiguration of children's centres into locality teams, the children's centre services manager, who oversees the centre, is responsible for seven children's centres in the locality. An early intervention coordinator and an operational coordinator have day-to-day responsibility for the centre. The early intervention coordinator also works with two neighbouring centres, while the operational coordinator works across the locality. The staff team works across several children's centres in the locality. The centre shares an advisory board with South Chaddesden Children's Centre.

There are 848 children under five years of age in the centre's reach area. Although families in the reach area live predominantly in the 70% most advantaged areas nationally, there are small pockets of deprivation across the area. When children enter early years provision many have skills, knowledge and abilities similar to or

slightly below those expected for their age. Few children live in workless households, although unemployment across the city has started to rise recently with the closure of some large local firms. Although there are several concentrations of social housing, a large majority of homes are owner-occupied. A very large majority of the population in the reach area are of White British heritage, with Black Caribbean, Asian, Chinese and Eastern European families making up the rest of the community. The proportion of residents in the reach area who believe that people from different backgrounds get on well is low compared with other areas of the city.

The centre offers on-site health provision, information services, play and learning sessions and targeted support for families whose circumstances make them vulnerable. Family visitors provide outreach services for individual families in their own homes. The centre commissions childcare for two-year-olds and crèche provision from First Friends Private Day Nursery. This nursery was separately inspected in April 2010 and a report for this inspection can be found at www.ofsted.gov.uk.

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

Following the recent restructure of the local authority's children's centres into locality teams, the centre's service delivery and resources, including the appointment of a large number of the new staff team, are still being finalised. To maintain services for individual families, two members of staff have been loaned by other localities. Despite this lengthy period of change, the staff team's motivation and commitment to improving outcomes for children and families have not diminished.

The centre currently provides an adequate range of services as the constraints of a depleted staff team have led to a reduction in activities and delayed plans to extend sessions into other parts of the area. Correct priority has been focused on ensuring the protection and safety of children, effective provision for individual families identified as most in need, and maintaining productive partnerships with parents and partner agencies. These aspects of the centre's work are its present strengths.

The centre provides an attractive, welcoming and inclusive environment at all times. Parents appreciate the good-quality care, guidance and support which are consistently offered, recognising the difference the centre makes to their lives. One parent expressed the view shared by many who spoke to inspectors, saying, 'It has been a lifeline to me. I don't know what I would have done without it.' Staff build trusting relationships with users who are confident to ask when they need additional help.

Successful strategies ensure that children and families are kept safe. The centre, in collaboration with partner agencies, effectively identifies and responds to the needs of families through the weekly locality meetings. The centre's high regard for safety is shared effectively with families at every opportunity, both at the centre and in their homes.

Some users take responsibility for running their own activities, such as the parent and toddler group and the childminder drop-in, and parents are asked to comment on the activities they have attended, demonstrating high satisfaction with provision. However, formal ways of channelling parents' views and using these to shape future planning are underdeveloped and some parents expressed an interest in becoming more involved in the centre's work.

Families benefit from provision of universal health services, such as antenatal appointments and baby-health clinics at the centre, which are well attended. Those who do not visit the centre receive a home visit; consequently, almost all babies are registered with the centre within a few weeks of birth. However, it is unclear how many families continue their engagement in the longer term.

Family visitors' records provide clear evidence of improving outcomes for some individual families, particularly those with complex needs. However, this represents a very small number of families in the area. Outcomes are satisfactory overall because the centre has limited statistical evidence to demonstrate precisely the take-up and impact of the services offered. Consequently, centre leaders lack sufficient reliable information to conduct rigorous evaluation of the centre's work and set challenging targets for improvement.

Governance of the centre is sound. Support and challenge are provided by the advisory board with increasing effect. Revised local authority processes to monitor the centre's performance more robustly, including provision of comprehensive data, are at an advanced stage of development. Staff contribute to the centre's self-evaluation and future planning but, because of the many changes, not all are familiar with the centre's current priorities.

Centre leaders are realistic about what is required to improve the satisfactory overall effectiveness of the centre and are keen to progress their plans. Building on the strength of its partnership working and the quality of local leadership and management, together with the revised processes designed by the local authority, the centre has satisfactory capacity for sustained further improvement.

What does the centre need to do to improve further?

Recommendations for further improvement

- Work with the local authority to ensure that relevant and reliable data are available to allow regular monitoring of service use and impact on outcomes, particularly for children and families in target groups.
- Improve self-evaluation and improvement planning by:
 - sharpening the centre's approach to collecting, collating, and analysing data to demonstrate more accurately the impact of provision
 - setting specific, well-focused targets for improvement based on assessed need, against which to measure the centre's success
 - ensuring all staff are clear about how their individual performance objectives link to the centre's vision and development plan.
- Ensure parents are provided with opportunities to be involved in strategic decision making and governance of the centre.

How good are outcomes for families?

3

All parents say they feel safe at the centre. Safety messages displayed throughout the centre remind users of small steps they can take to keep themselves and their children safe at home and outdoors. Parents are alert to their responsibility for their own and other children's safety during activity sessions. Early intervention, good involvement of parents in action planning and skilful use of Common Assessment Framework procedures by centre staff have led to a positive impact on outcomes for children, including children deemed to be 'in need' and those subject to a child protection plan.

Breastfeeding at six to eight weeks, although still low, is increasing slowly as mothers persist for longer with the help of peer-support sessions and advice from well-trained staff. 'Bumps and Babies' and 'Movers and Makers' sessions frequently include physical activities, such as park visits and creative dance, encouraging parents to engage in regular exercise with their children. Provision of nutritious snacks, specialist advice on weaning and cooking sessions for parents and children have promoted healthier-eating habits. Improved well-being in families is aided by baby massage sessions and appointments with specialist family counsellors.

Parents and children enjoy the structured play and learning sessions. They participate well in singing activities and take turns to choose the next song. Staff provide good role models, enhancing parents' knowledge of child development and increasing their understanding of how to play with their children at home. Some two-year-olds, who have been identified as most likely to be disadvantaged in their educational development, have been offered places at the local nursery. The vast majority of these continue to access their early education entitlement and some

parents have used the opportunity of childcare to gain employment.

The 'Incredible Years' course has helped parents to manage their children's behaviour better by establishing routines and setting boundaries. Children generally behave well and develop positive relationships with other children and adults. As a result of these improved social networking skills, children are more ready to learn when they start school. There is some evidence of increased attainment when children are assessed at the end of Reception Year. Two parents currently volunteer to support the centre as they want to give something back for the help they have received, but the centre does not routinely recruit volunteers.

Staff support individual families to improve their budgeting skills and access grants for essential household items which have a positive, material impact for the family. The centre signposts users to a local agency to improve key skills and prepare for employment. Case studies indicate that a few parents have successfully gained qualifications and employment as a result.

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	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 'vulnerable child meeting' provides opportunity for comprehensive information-sharing. This enables swift provision of well-targeted support from a range of agencies and regular monitoring of the effectiveness of agreed actions to safeguard children and improve their well-being. Good liaison with the family nurse partnership ensures young parents are integrated well in a range of activities. Some parents receiving individual support are successfully encouraged to attend activities at the centre, which extends their social networks and reduces their isolation. Grandparents and some male carers are regular users of centre services; however, the centre has not yet assessed the needs of fathers or working parents specifically.

Despite many children still entering school with low communication skills,

headteachers note a pleasing increase in those who already receive speech and language support following early identification of their needs. Transition into the school nursery is managed effectively. Parents participate more readily in their children's learning as their own self-confidence and understanding of the importance of their role in their children's education have increased.

A high percentage of participants take qualifications linked to a structured play and learning programme. Children's achievements are celebrated in the group and attractively recorded in a portfolio, while adults' successes are rewarded with a city-wide celebration event. Information, advice and guidance about potential next steps are discussed with each learner individually. Although about half continue to another course with their children, few learners take up opportunities for further study to improve future employability.

The centre is a popular venue for meetings with looked-after children as its child-friendly and supportive environment increases the potential for these to be positive experiences for all involved. Parents who access 'Freedom' courses, following an experience of domestic violence, are empowered to make considered choices about their lives.

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

Governance and accountability arrangements are satisfactory overall. Roles and responsibilities are clear and well understood. Day-to-day management of the centre is effective with staff appropriately supervised and casework regularly monitored. The local authority's revised process for the annual conversation has been designed to provide robust challenge and assess accountability more rigorously.

Managers have made concerted efforts to develop systems to monitor and evaluate provision. However, lack of consistency in collection and limited collation and analysis reduce their usefulness in evaluating the centre's effectiveness, particularly its engagement of families from all targeted groups. Leaders have a broadly accurate view of the centre's strengths and areas for development as the advisory board's collective knowledge of the reach area helps inform the self-evaluation and development planning; members recognise this process lacks rigour and focus in target setting.

Equality and diversity are promoted satisfactorily, although the centre cannot be certain of how equitable its service delivery is until it is able to accurately monitor participation levels and its impact on outcomes, particularly for those in the targeted groups. Resources and activities are carefully chosen to raise awareness and enhance users' understanding of the wider cultural diversity which exists within the city. The centre uses feedback from users satisfactorily to develop its provision and adapt activities. Parents are keen to make suggestions for improvement which are acted upon, such as the introduction of a 'for sale and wanted' board in the foyer.

Child protection procedures are well understood and implemented by staff and partner agencies. Recruitment processes are thorough and staff receive training appropriate to their role on wider safeguarding issues. Regular health and safety checks and review of detailed procedures for identifying and minimising risks demonstrate that the safety of all those using the centre is well managed.

The introduction of locality working and effective partnership working with the local health team prevents the duplication of services and promotes the sharing of human resources and provision, helping to secure satisfactory value for money.

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	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

Ofsted reports relating to other settings and schools in the reach area were

scrutinised to provide additional contextual information.

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Summary for centre users

We inspected the North Chaddesden Children's Centre on 20–21 June 2012. We judged the centre as satisfactory overall.

We were pleased to spend time at the centre looking at its work and talking to some of you, members of the centre staff team and other professionals who work with you.

We understand that the centre has been through an unsettling time over the last year or so and that this has led to the reduction of some activities. However, staff have continued to do their work well and have prioritised the services which will make most difference for children and families in the area.

The centre is successful in providing a friendly and welcoming place for all parents where you feel safe to share your concerns or seek help. It provides you with good care, guidance and support which you recognise have made a difference to your lives.

Staff work effectively together and with a wide range of other agencies to find out about those of you who might be in difficulties. They act quickly to assess with you what will help you cope and make things better for you and your families. This helps to keep children safe. We particularly noted the key messages displayed around the centre which provide you with reminders of the small steps you can take to make sure you and your children are kept safe at home and when outdoors.

Courses and activity sessions at the centre have helped you to understand your children's development better and improved the way you manage their behaviour by establishing routines and setting boundaries. Both you and your children have made new friends by coming to the centre and this helps your children when they start school as they are more ready to learn. Those of you we spoke to also told us that your confidence has improved as a result of coming out to meet other people at the centre.

The centre regularly asks you for feedback on the sessions you attend, but does not yet have a parents' forum or any parents on the advisory board which some of you said you would be keen to be involved in. We have asked the centre to look at ways of developing your interest.

Many of you use the centre for your antenatal checks and bring your babies to the health clinic at the centre. A large number of babies are registered with the centre at this time. However, it is not clear from the information the centre has, how many of you continue to come to the centre to use the other services. The centre also does not have the information it needs about how well it is helping to make a difference in some key areas of your families' lives.

Although we know that it offers a range of activities to help you lead increasingly healthy lifestyles, we could not tell from the information the centre has how many of you are now eating more healthily and doing more physical exercise. This lack of information reduces the centre's ability to set the right targets for its future work and assess whether the services it offers are the ones that will make the most difference for you and your children. We have asked the local authority and the agencies the centre works with to improve the information provided to the centre to help with this evaluation of its work.

We have also asked the centre to make better use of the information it already collects so that it can see more easily the difference it is making and then provide the most appropriate services to further improve your lives and those of your children.

Thank you very much for your welcome and for taking the time to talk with inspectors. We thoroughly enjoyed meeting you and sharing your experiences. We wish you every success in the future.

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