

Inspection report for Belgrave and Rushey Mead Sure Start Children's Centre

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

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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

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

Information about the centre

This phase one Sure Start children's centre is located off the 'Golden Mile', in a densely populated area, close to the centre of Leicester city. The centre meets its core purpose and provides a range of services that include health, family support and outreach services, parent and child sessions, adult training, and advice and guidance. The centre is networked with St Matthew's and Woodbridge Children's Centres as part of the North Leicester neighbourhood team. A neighbourhood advisory board provides advice and support to the three centres. The board is made up of representatives from the local authority, private and voluntary sectors, other statutory agencies and parents.

The centre serves a diverse community living in one of the 30% most disadvantaged areas in the country. Accommodation in the area is a mixture of mostly private rented and social housing. Most of the families are from minority ethnic backgrounds, the highest proportion being of Asian origin. There are 1263 children under the age of five in the area, 20.6% are living in households dependent on workless benefits. Children's skills, knowledge and abilities are below those expected for their age on entry to early years provision.

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

Belgrave and Rushey Mead Children's Centre is satisfactory. The centre is steadily challenging the low aspirations and educational achievement of local families. Outcomes for families are all improving and some are good.

The centre gives safeguarding a high priority: clear policies, procedures and staff training contribute to the safety and protection of families and children. Particularly strong partnerships with health professionals and well-coordinated care, guidance and support are having a good impact on the health and staying safe outcomes of families. The centre's well-planned and highly effective range of strategies to support maternal and family health has had a positive impact on reducing infant mortality.

Tracking of targeted children who access the centre's early intervention pathway for children from birth to three years indicates that their progress and achievement are good. However, the centre has limited contact with children once they reach the age of three years and has not sufficiently established support to aid children's transition to school. Children's achievements, as demonstrated by their results in the Early Years Foundation Stage Profile, although steadily improving, are below national and Leicester averages with 53.5% of children in the Reception Year achieving at least 78 scale points including personal, social and emotional development and communication, language and literacy. This has improved from 35.9% in 2008. The gap between the 20% lowest achieving children and the rest is narrowing overall, but is still wider than local and national rates.

Partnership working enables some adults to access courses either on or off site including such courses as English for speakers of other languages, literacy and numeracy. However, case studies indicate that only a small minority of adults gain qualifications and progress to employment or further training. The limitations of local authority funding for crèche provision and recent staff reductions restrict adults' ability to attend courses and the parents' forum or to train to become volunteers. As a result, opportunities to improve the economic well-being of families and for them to make a positive contribution are limited.

The manager and centre staff are committed to improving its services. The use of data in monitoring the centre's performance contributes well to the improving provision. Specific targeted actions have led to improvements but some systems of evaluation are not fully embedded. Strategic priorities are clearly linked to those of the local authority. However, the advisory board, although well supported by

partners, is not sufficiently involved in setting the strategic direction of the centre or monitoring its performance.

The centre meets the duties that apply to it for equality and diversity. The inclusion of all families and children is central to the vision of the centre and is promoted in all aspects of its work. The centre has a good understanding of its key target groups and engages well with the majority of these families.

Satisfactory provision, leadership and management, together with satisfactory and improving outcomes for users, demonstrate the centre's satisfactory capacity for sustained improvement.

What does the centre need to do to improve further?

Recommendations for further improvement

- The local authority should:
 - strengthen the role of the advisory board in the governance of the centre, by increasing its role in steering and monitoring the work of the centre
 - help the centre to improve outcomes for families' economic well-being and positive contribution by ensuring the centre has sufficient funding for crèche provision and volunteer training.
- Improve provision and outcomes for children to narrow the achievement gap by:
 - increasing support and engagement with children aged three to five years by working more closely with schools and childcare settings
 - supporting children from target groups in their transition to school.

How good are outcomes for families?

3

The centre promotes health and well-being well through its range of activities and effective partnerships with health services, the co-located sports centre and other local partners. Families using the centre are developing a good knowledge of healthy lifestyles because of advice and the highly successful community events which promote healthy living. Rates for breastfeeding, sustained at six to eight weeks, are high and above the national average at 68.3%. Obesity rates of children in Reception Year are just below national averages at nine per cent.

Effective communication between agencies is critical to the timely sharing of information and well-coordinated support. As a result, the safety and progress of children identified as in need or those subject to a child protection plan are good. Hospital admissions caused by unintentional and deliberate injuries to children aged from birth to five years have reduced

Children and parents enjoy the fun sessions such as 'Stay and Play' and 'Baby

Massage'. Typical comments from parents include: 'Baby massage has helped me build my relationship with my child. I really enjoy it and it makes us both relaxed.' Careful tracking of targeted children accessing early intervention programmes such as 'Babbling Babies' demonstrates the positive impact it has on their achievement and in narrowing the achievement gap. However, as seen in the results of the Early Years Foundation Stage Profile, boys' achievement is well below that of girls. Participation in adult learning courses, such as numeracy is good, however, only a small minority of adults seek employment advice or progress to further training, education or employment. Child poverty as a result of low wages remains a key local issue.

Centre staff listen to, and use the feedback of families, to help shape and develop its services. Children behave well and develop useful skills for the future, such as cooperation and independence, and families from a wide cultural and educational background demonstrate respect for each other. Some parents benefit from opportunities to make a positive contribution to the centre through volunteering or via the parents' group but few are directly involved in decision-making at a strategic level.

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	2
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 centre is at the heart of the community and provides a satisfactory range of targeted sessions and activities and is extending opportunities for families to engage with its services. Families have access to some outreach services in other children's centres in the neighbourhood. The close partnerships with the neighbouring sports centre and library widen the learning and sporting activities for families. As a result, recent data demonstrates that the centre is successful in reaching the vast majority of its target groups although fathers prove difficult to engage. Joint sessions for parents and children are fun and 'Stay and Play' sessions are very popular with

families with children under three years. However, although the centre works in partnership with primary schools, it has not established effective transition support for targeted children entering the Early Years Foundation Stage.

The centre promotes learning and development satisfactorily through its activities with a clear focus on the early development of children's communication, literacy, language, personal and social skills. Families benefit from parenting courses as well as those designed to help improve their personal learning and development of skills such as English. One parent said: 'I have attended lots of courses such as first aid- they are really good. I would come to more courses but they don't all have a crèche.' Gujarati classes are enjoyed and well attended by local families. Adults have adequate access to information, advice and guidance on training, benefits and work.

Family support workers are successful in working with the most vulnerable families, and parents particularly value home visits and well-coordinated, individually tailored support. Staff assess needs well, provide sustained, ongoing support and refer users to other services. The highly effective approach to care, guidance and support is demonstrated by the improving outcomes for families who are vulnerable due to their circumstances. Parents comment that the centre has made a big difference to their lives. Typical of parents' comments was: 'I enjoyed the yoga, it's good for keeping my body fit and healthy' and 'I get lots of information at the centre which helps me. I like the 'Stay and Play' group, I have made lots of friends.'

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

Leadership, management and governance are satisfactory. Staff are effective in their roles and are appropriately supervised. The centre manager sets high expectations and has taken effective actions to improve the engagement of key target families. There is effective use of data to monitor the provision and set improvement targets. However, governance arrangements are only satisfactory as the advisory board does not have a strong enough role in steering the strategic direction of the centre or in monitoring its performance. Board meetings have been cancelled in recent months while the local authority reviews the role of the board. Board members are currently unclear of the terms of reference and are not sufficiently empowered to steer the direction of the centre. As a result, although the centre seeks and makes use of feedback from families, user engagement in contributing to the running of the centre

is no better than satisfactory.

Strong neighbourhood partnerships enhance opportunities for families and avoid duplication of resources. Services are well integrated and deliver cohesive provision leading to satisfactory or better outcomes for families. The use of resources is leading to high engagement with families and is having a satisfactory impact on outcomes for families. As a result, the centre currently provides satisfactory value for money.

Action to promote equality has resulted in the increased participation of key target groups such as teenagers, disabled children and parents, workless families and minority ethnic groups. The gap between children's achievements is steadily narrowing.

Safeguarding arrangements meet current statutory requirements and the centre adopts recommended good practice. It has clear systems in place for recording information related to the vetting and recruitment and training of staff. Staff identify and report concerns promptly. Multi-agency co-operation is particularly effective and leads to good interventions that reduce the risk of harm to children and helps keep the most vulnerable families safe.

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

Not applicable

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Summary for centre users

We inspected the Belgrave and Rushey Mead Sure Start Children's Centre on 3–4 October 2012. We judged the centre as satisfactory overall.

Thank you very much for talking to us and welcoming us into your sessions. The information you gave and the stories you shared with us helped us to make our judgements. Some parents told us how the centre has supported them to improve their lives and how much more confidence as parents they now have.

You enjoy the sessions with your children such as 'Stay and Play' and 'Babbling Babies', and a high number of families attend these sessions. We found that children and adults benefit from accessing services at the centre and it has introduced systems to measure the impact of all its sessions.

The centre is successful at engaging with families that need most support, for example, by targeting its provision and inviting families to particular groups or sessions. The centre works with adult education providers to give families access to courses, which help to improve the education and future employment opportunities for some of you. We have asked the local authority to help the centre by making sure there are sufficient funds for crèche provision and training for volunteers so more of you can attend courses or the parents' forum and help you increase your economic well-being and contributions to the work of the centre.

You told us how your involvement with the centre and involvement in courses such as 'First Aid' are improving your ability to keep your children safe. We found that staff have a good understanding of child protection procedures and that they are well trained and promptly report any concerns to relevant agencies. This is having a good impact on helping keep families safe. Your children behave well and you learn more about how to stay healthy through advice from staff and the healthy living events held locally. We found that health professionals really work well with the centre staff and this has a good impact on keeping families both safe and healthy.

Everyone seems to get on well together at the centre and there are some opportunities for you to volunteer your services at the centre. The staff listen to you and ask you what you think of the services and activities it offers. We have asked the

centre to find ways of increasing your involvement in self-evaluation processes and in steering the future work of the centre.

We found that the centre is keen to promote equality and diversity. Families treat each other with respect. The centre works well for everyone in the community, irrespective of their background or disability, and is increasing the participation of those who most need its support. The gap between children's achievements is steadily narrowing although the average of children's achievements is below those found nationally or overall in Leicester. We have asked the centre to find ways to improve children's achievements by working more closely with schools and childcare settings so they can have an impact on more children aged three to five years. We have also asked the centre to establish programmes to help support the children most in need to make the transition to school.

The manager sets high expectations and the good focus on improving the centre is proving effective. The people who lead the centre use data well and have a clear grasp of its strengths and weaknesses. However, although partnerships are strong, the advisory board is not sufficiently involved in evaluating the work of the centre and in steering its strategic direction. We have asked the local authority to help clarify the role of the advisory board, giving it a greater role in steering and monitoring the work of the centre.

We thoroughly enjoyed spending time at your centre, meeting you and your children, and we wish you and your families all the best for the future.

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