

Inspection report for Daventry East Children's Centre

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Linked school if applicable	N/A
Linked early years and childcare, if applicable	Happy Faces Day Care: EYR219935

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 an additional inspector and an early years inspector.

The inspectors held meetings with representatives of the Northamptonshire County Council and Northampton Health Foundation Trust, centre staff, advisory board members, partner agencies such as health professionals, and parents. They observed the centre's work and looked at a range of documentation.

Information about the centre

Daventry East Children's Centre is located in three ground floor flats in the heart of a social housing estate. It is a phase two centre, designated in 2007 and offering all elements of the core purpose. The centre is open from 8.30 to 4.30 p.m. each day. The centre serves communities in some of the most deprived areas of the country. Families in the Southbrook estate (Hill Ward) live in homes that are largely a mixture of social housing or privately rented accommodation. Families in the wider reach area live in a mix of social, private rented and owned homes. The majority are predominantly of White British heritage, with 10% from different minority ethnic groups.

Of the 928 children aged under five years living in the reach area, 24% live in workless households dependent on benefits, 340 households and 140 lone parents, are eligible for the childcare element of working tax credits. On entry to early years provision, children's skills knowledge and abilities are typically below those expected for their age.

A locality manager, newly in post, oversees the work of the centre supported by senior members of the team from health and education services. The centre's advisory board is made up of representatives of various professional partners and parents. Governance is provided by Northamptonshire County Council (NCC) and by Northamptonshire Health Foundation Trust (NHFT). A range of health, social care,

family support and education services is provided at the centre, through home visiting and from other outreach accommodation across the area. From April this year the centre has been undergoing many changes, including restructuring of the service and a change from paper based registrations to using a computerised system.

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

Daventry East children’s centre provides satisfactory and improving support to children and carers. The Centre’s approach to safeguarding, safe recruitment and child protection is robust and fully meets statutory requirements. Risk assessments are carried out rigorously and records usefully kept on file.

Outcomes are satisfactory. Parents report how comfortable they feel in the centre and pay tribute to the work of the staff. They talk with great feeling about the warm welcome and non-judgemental attitudes of staff and provide moving accounts of the difference the activities and support they have received have made to their own and their children’s well-being. One parent told inspectors how much the support she had received from centre staff following a family bereavement had helped her deal with her feelings.

Children behave well and form satisfactory relationships with their peers and adults. Healthy eating and physical activity is highlighted through courses in the centre and in other locations across the area with parents commenting how this has helped them cook cheap and nutritional meals and live healthier lives. Financial management support is provided through a ‘Community Law’ link with many families being helped in times of difficulty.

An effective volunteering programme has led to some parents progressing through learning activities and into work. Children who use the centre make sound progress in their learning and development. While there were few opportunities for inspectors to observe sessions, it was apparent in their observations and in a scrutiny of planning that staff are not yet fully up-to-speed with the requirements of the Early Years

Foundation Stage (EYFS) framework in order to provide experiences that assist children's good learning and development. Key performance data shows fluctuations in the outcomes for reception-age children over time. The current proportion of children achieving 78+ scale points is in line with the national average. In addition, the gap between the lowest achieving 20% of children and the rest at 30% is also broadly average.

Actions taken to ensure equality of opportunity and to tackle discrimination are satisfactory. Any unacceptable behaviour is tackled effectively and an inclusive approach is taken to engage with groups whose circumstances have made them vulnerable such as lone parents, fathers, younger parents and families with specific needs. Interpreters support the centre's work and assist Polish and Chinese families to develop their English language skills. One-to-one support is provided to those who feel unable to visit the centre in order to support and develop their confidence.

Leadership, management and governance are satisfactory overall. The centre has come through a period of significant change and has managed to sustain satisfactory outcomes which are beginning to improve as the new leadership focuses the centre's work on more precisely assessing local needs, setting a clear vision and direction and establishing robust monitoring systems. New staff are getting to grips with their roles well and are keen to play a full part in delivering the well-conceived development plan and meeting targets. Despite some issues still to be tackled at the strategic level, for example establishing communication protocols with the local primary schools and developing data analysis systems, the centre has pinpointed accurately its strengths and weaknesses and has satisfactory capacity for sustained improvement.

What does the centre need to do to improve further?

Recommendations for further improvement

- Ensure rigorous communication systems are established at the strategic level so that everyone involved with the centre is clear about its main priorities and future direction.
- Improve data collection and analysis to better inform the setting of priorities and targets to improve the outcomes for families with young children.
- Improve practitioners' knowledge of the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) and extend their skills to better assess individual needs and plan for children's good learning and development.
- Establish communication and build a strong partnership with local schools to support children's transition into full time education.

How good are outcomes for families?

3

Parents and children benefit appropriately from a range of services which promote healthy lifestyles. At 7.4% the level of obesity in young children compares favourably with the national average. Midwives and centre staff provide sound support for breastfeeding mothers. Through this support and that provided by health

partners, the number of mothers initiating breast feeding is improving. Midwifery services and health visitor contacts are provided directly by Northampton Health Foundation Trust (NHFT) to reach mothers following the birth of their baby. This ensures that any problems are identified early. Centre staff supports these services effectively and are receiving further training for them to become even more skilled in the support they offer.

The Common Assessment Framework (CAF) is used successfully to ensure teams can be assembled quickly to support children and families when needs are identified. Teams work hard to ensure these processes keep children safe, particularly those children subject to a child protection plan, and including looked after children. Cases are 'stepped up' or 'stepped down' to ensure the safety of the children. Case reviews show that the centre is satisfactorily supporting the emotional well-being of children and adults, especially when they are experiencing difficult times. All of the adults inspectors met spoke with great feeling about the positive impact on their lives from the parenting programmes, literacy and numeracy courses they had accessed, and because of the individualised support they have received. More than one parent talked about suffering from depression and 'never feeling embarrassed or unwanted', some stating that 'without the centre's help the alternatives are unthinkable.'

The centre has a strong focus on the safety and welfare of its users. Systems for security ensure that parents and children are well protected and feel safe when attending sessions. There is a satisfactory range of information provided about how to keep safe and some families have attended first aid courses. Safety in the home is effectively supported through the provision of safety equipment, such as cupboard locks and safety gates where families need this extra help. Some volunteers have recently undertaken a level two course on 'Understanding Public Health' which has extended their knowledge and understanding. Sensitive support is available for families experiencing domestic violence. Whilst numbers are currently low, there is a programme for young parents to meet and be supported by staff and a crèche worker to develop activities for their children.

Satisfactory opportunities enable children to build positive relations and take sound first steps in learning. However the assessment of their progress is not yet fully effective and as such limits the planning of even better early learning experiences. There is strong evidence of effective practice supporting individual adults' personal and social skills development. For example one young mum, with the support of the centre, has worked through personal crises, progressed through a series of courses and gained qualifications, become involved in volunteering and has now accessed full-time work. There has been a steady cohort of young parents involved in the parents' forum who have opened a bank account and raised money to support summer activities such as local family fun days.

Courses have been provided for adults to access further learning opportunities, including literacy and numeracy, and NVQ qualifications, particularly in health and social care and some in business administration. A small number of parents interviewed by inspectors explained confidently how much their expectations and

aspirations and improved as well as their own educational attainment as a result of the opportunities provided by the centre. For example, two parents are currently taking up places on 'Access to Higher Education' courses.

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

Provision is satisfactory overall. The increased focus on embedding new systems to help plan and monitor the impact of services are helping to improve outcomes. There is a strong ethos of care among all of the staff which centre users identify as having positive impact on their well-being. Close links with health professionals and an early years' experienced practitioner provide good support for the centre staff team and result in the dovetailing of services to better meet local needs. In the absence of robust data being provided by the county council and the foundation trust, the centre has made a useful start in setting up its own internal data capture systems. Scrutiny of a sample of these systems and files show that assessment and recording of individual cases is currently satisfactory.

Learning and development is promoted satisfactorily. For example, the centre has developed its contacts with families from the Polish community who live in the area and is offering an increasing number of services to meet their needs. There are monthly Saturday sessions targeted at fathers and there are summer fun activities driven by the parents' forum. There are positive links with a local nursery but there has been no specific contact with primary schools to support transition for children into full-time education. A weekly session with young parents in a nearby young offenders unit provide these families with support for play and health development. Activities also take place monthly supporting childminders in the area to develop better practice in their play activities with children and they have a notice board in the centre to enable the sharing of information.

The quality of care, guidance and support for those who access the centre is

satisfactory. Professionals from different services work together effectively to support individual cases, particularly when using the Common Assessment Framework (CAF). Parents appreciate the activities, resources and experience they access through programmes at the centre. They also express how much they value being able to meet other parents, make new friends while their children learn to play and share with others.

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

Leadership, management and governance are satisfactory. The centre has come through a period of significant change and has managed to sustain satisfactory outcomes which are beginning to improve as the new leadership sets a clear direction. Now that most of the newly formed team is operational, focussed attention is being given to planning and establishing systems that identify local need accurately and enable the targeting of services more precisely. An advisory board consisting of some of the stakeholders has been in place for some years and this is now beginning to focus much more on challenge and holding the centre to account.

Despite some issues still to be tackled at the strategic level, for example establishing communication protocols and developing data collection and analysis systems, the centre has pinpointed accurately its strengths and weaknesses. The foundation trust commissioned an area wide survey in April to help identify the key issues facing the community and to support the changes the centre is making towards targeted and preventative work. This provides a firm foundation on which the centre can build for the future. Resources are currently allocated soundly to meet local needs and the value for money provided is satisfactory.

Safeguarding arrangements are satisfactory and comply with the Local Safeguarding Children's Board and are fully supported by the many well structured policies and procedures used by the foundation trust. Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) records are updated regularly, and the centre has just received confirmation of these checks being in place for staff who work with them from other organisations. Clear procedures are in place for reporting child protection issues and are understood by staff whose training is regularly updated. All staff are checked thoroughly to ensure they are suitable to work with children and are legally able to work in the United Kingdom. Child protection, staff safety and safer recruitment procedures are rigorous and given an appropriate high priority.

Partnership work is satisfactory, links with health provision, family learning and a private training provider make important contributions to meeting the needs of families. Links with Jobcentre have previously been effective, although these have not been as pronounced over recent months.

Centre staff promote equality and celebrate diversity well. For example, the work the centre carries out in supporting families from the Polish community has involved English as a second language programmes that enhance their basic skills. Fathers who attend the Saturday sessions enjoy practical activities and creative play. Some work with those lacking in confidence and self-esteem is carried out individually to try to build small steps to attending other activities when appropriate. A small number of children and parents with physical disabilities have accessed the centre. Those children with behavioural or educational needs are identified so that they are included positively in sessions. Through the work of the parents' forum, parents are enabled to make a positive contribution to the life, and development of the centre.

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

The private day-care provision, known as 'Happy Faces Day Care' was inspected in 2010 and judged to be outstanding.

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Summary for centre users

We inspected the Daventry East Children's Centre on 19–20 September 2012. We judged the centre as satisfactory overall. As part of our inspection we visited a number of activities, looked at the centre's plan and documents and talked with a number of you, staff and others who work with you. Thank you very much for your help during the inspection.

Outcomes are satisfactory and improving as new leadership sets a clear path for improvement. The Centre's approach to safeguarding, safe recruitment and child protection matters all meet requirements which together with satisfactory care, guidance and support result in you being well protected. We found that the centre is working well with some other services like the health visitor and those who can provide advice on housing and benefit issues to help you improve your lives. In order to support more of you to feel able to progress in your lives we have asked the centre to improve its methods of finding out about your individual needs. We have also asked them to clearly identify how many of you are accessing services and how well this improves your life chances, so that they can better plan what works best in your area.

Actions taken to ensure equality of opportunity and to tackle discrimination are satisfactory. Any unacceptable behaviour is tackled effectively and an inclusive approach is taken to engaging with those of you whose circumstances have made you particularly vulnerable. Interpreters are engaged when available to support the centre's work with those of you from Polish and Chinese families and to help you develop your English language skills. One-to-one support is provided to those families who feel unable to visit the centre in order to support and develop their confidence.

The children's centre offers a number of activities to help the people in your community to improve their health and well-being. This includes providing services for dental care, cooking healthy and cheap meals, and encouraging your children to try eating different fruits and vegetables. The centre has helped some of you build new skills and gain in confidence for example through parenting programmes and one-to-one support when suffering personal anxiety. Many of you have taken part in the outdoor fun activities during previous summers, it was unfortunate that an event this summer had to be cancelled, due to the awful amount of rain we had. It is great to see the parents' forum planning and organising these important events.

Some parents in particular talked about how attending a number of learning programmes and making progress in your own personal development has led to the achievement of qualifications and being able to move into work, which is a great benefit to the whole family. Making new friends and removing feelings of isolation were commented on by many of you as being two of the most important things the

centre has done for you. Children who use the centre make sound progress in their learning and development. There is room for staff to extend their knowledge of the Early Years Foundation Stage and to better assess your children's needs so that they can plan for their next steps in learning. We have asked the centre manager to ensure the team does this. The links with the local nursery school help your children make a smooth transfer and we have asked the centre to forge strong partnerships with other local schools as well.

If you were one of the parents or carers we talked to, thank you once again for your help.

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