

Inspection report for Staveley Children's Centre

Local authority	Derbyshire
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Reporting inspector	Alison Veall HMI

Centre manager	James Green
Date of previous inspection	N/A
Centre address	47 High Street Staveley Chesterfield S43 3UU
Telephone number	01246 281239
Fax number	01246 471748
Email address	james.green@derbyshire.gov.uk

Linked school if applicable	Barrow Hill Primary School URN 112626
Linked early years and childcare, if applicable	Treasures Neighbourhood Nursery EY295958

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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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.ofsted.gov.uk

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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 one early years inspector.

The inspectors held meetings with parents, centre staff and representatives from professional partnerships, the advisory board and the local authority.

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

Information about the centre

Staveley Children's Centre is a phase two children's centre. It was designated in January 2008. The centre is situated in, and delivers a service to families living in or close to, the small town of Staveley. It also provides outreach services to families living in more isolated areas. The population is relatively stable with strong family links; 54% have lived in the area for six years or more. The area comprises privately rented and social housing.

The centre manager also has responsibility for another children's centre. The strategic management and governance of the centre are the responsibility of Derbyshire County Council. Support and guidance are provided by the Local Advisory Group which consists of managers, staff, representatives from partner agencies and parents.

The centre serves an area of high deprivation and the most recent estimates indicate there are approximately 667 children aged nought to five years living in the area. Parts of the area are ranked in the top 10% most deprived areas nationally.

The large majority of families are of White British heritage and there are 20 children from minority ethnic groups, predominantly of dual British and Chinese heritage. A little over 37% of children live in workless households. Most children enter the

centre's childcare and early years provision with a much narrower range of experiences and skills than those expected for their age.

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

2

Capacity for sustained improvement

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

1

Main findings

This centre is described by families and partners as the hub of the community. Its reflective manager, committed staff and partners provide a wide and outstanding range of cohesive and well-integrated services. Many of the activities are well established, building on the existing services established previously by some of its partner agencies. Registration and participation rates are exceptionally high, particularly within its main target groups, and currently stand at just over 82%. However, the participation and engagement of a few of the centre's most hard-to-reach families continue to be a challenge. The centre's overall effectiveness is currently good but it demonstrates an excellent capacity for sustained improvement. Good and rapidly improving outcomes are obtained as a result of the leadership constantly monitoring the impact of services, identifying and creatively filling any gaps in service provision and identifying how improvements can be made. This is commendable.

Parents, and particularly those that are most vulnerable, comment positively on the welcome they receive and about the difference the centre has made to them and their lives. One parent said, 'It has been my lifeline, it has helped my family so much.' Another said, 'It can be a dull day and life can be dark but you come in here and the sun comes out, staff brighten your day with their welcome and smiles.' These are typical of the comments shared with the inspectors. Excellent provision, including the learning and development opportunities, are raising parents' confidence, self-esteem and knowledge, and many have become successful volunteers in a range of services around the centre's reach area.

Outstanding partnership working and a 'Think family' approach result in highly detailed knowledge about the needs of families. Partners include Jobcentre Plus, schools, women's aid and health professionals. They all share their knowledge to ensure that families receive individualised packages of support, particularly in times

of crisis. Members of the advisory board are fully supportive of the work of the centre and are clear about their roles and responsibilities. Evaluations of services and feedback from parents are used well to develop services. However, while many parents are involved in service delivery as volunteers, too few are involved in the governance of the centre.

What does the centre need to do to improve further?

Recommendations for further improvement

- Encourage more parents to contribute to the governance of the centre through representation on the advisory board.
- Improve engagement and the participation of the remaining few families within the centre's most-hard-to-reach groups.

How good are outcomes for families?

2

The centre's drive to improve the physical and emotional health of the most-vulnerable families living across the Staveley area is evident through the various activities and drop-in sessions. A very large majority of families engage well with health services as a result of the centre's very effective collaboration with health visitors, midwives and health trainers based in Staveley's Healthy Living Centre. The number of expectant mothers who smoke has dropped by seven percentage points in the past year, obesity levels are on a downward trend and, at 8.99%, are lower than district and national levels. Parents report services, such as the 'Fruit and Vegetable Cooperative', 'Fab Start' and 'HENRY' (health, exercise and nutrition for the really young), are helping their families to lead healthier lifestyles. Breastfeeding rates at six to eight weeks have increased to 44.4%, with 92% of these women continuing to breastfeed beyond eight weeks. Fathers are given good advice and encouraged to support their partners when attending the 'Father's Ante-Natal' group, and teen parents are given good support through the 'Teenage Parent Support' group.

Children are safeguarded very well as a result of the robust implementation of all relevant policies and procedures. Security across all buildings is excellent and underpinned by highly effective risk assessments. As a result, the large majority of parents say they feel extremely safe in the centre and are confident turning to staff for support. Regular events, visits and highly effective partnerships with the local community police support officers and fire service ensure that families gain an excellent good understanding of how to keep themselves and their children safe. Consequently, the number of children subject to a child protection plan has reduced by 50% in the past year. These children and children subject to the Common Assessment Framework process are exceptionally well supported as a result of highly effective multi-agency working.

Adults and children's knowledge, self-esteem and personal and social development are increasing. The centre is successfully developing the educational and employability skills of its users. Many parents, some of whom did not have a successful school experience, make good use of the adult and community learning and volunteering opportunities provided at the centre. There is also compelling evidence of some parents and carers finding employment as a result of their completion of training programs. One father said it had given him the push he needed to get out of the house, and a mother told how the centre had helped her to gain qualifications. Children are making increasingly good progress. The proportion of children reaching the expected level for their age by the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage in communication, language and literacy and personal social and emotional development is 55% which is close to the national average of 59%. Staff and volunteers in the 'Stay and Play' groups ensure that children's emotional and developmental needs are very well met. The centre has worked very successfully with its dedicated nursery and has been exceptionally successful in ensuring take-up of places for two-year-olds, with 22 children currently being in placement.

An overwhelming number of parents and carers spoken to commented on how their confidence has improved as a result of their participation in the activities offered by the centre. There is a genuine commitment to ensuring that the voice of the community is heard within the centre and that this influences the on-going development of services. The importance the centre places on working with parents and carers is reflected in their 100% positive parental satisfaction return. Parents very effectively challenge the centre through their feedback on activities and provision and they contribute strongly to the decision making through the 'Parents Forum'. However, the centre recognises that more families could engage in the governance of the centre through involvement with the advisory board.

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	1
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	1
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	2

How good is the provision?

1

The very strong centre team works closely with all its partners to ensure that

everyone's needs are met. The 'Think Family' approach is underpinned by very effective multi-agency teamwork. 'Request for support' meetings ensure a holistic approach to service provision which effectively meets a range of needs for families whose circumstances make them very vulnerable. This rigorous assessment is a significant strength of the centre and one of the reasons why its work in meeting the needs of individuals and the community is so successful.

A strong sense of empowerment and a 'can do' attitude pervades this centre. Parents' comments demonstrate this. One said, 'If I hadn't become involved in this centre I wouldn't have a qualification.' Another said, 'I am a volunteer and help to deliver sessions at the centre, I wouldn't have thought this was possible.' Volunteers receive good-quality training and support through the 'Passport' training scheme which is hosted by the centre and is one of the reasons why so many parents become successful volunteers and support and deliver a range of activities.

Provision for learning and development is outstanding and a large majority of adults participate in enjoyable courses, achieving good educational and personal development in relation to their low starting points. The centre removes barriers to learning by providing crèche facilities enabling adults to attend courses while their children are cared for in a safe and fun environment. Training to improve basic literacy and numeracy skills has enabled many parents and carers to better support their children's learning at home. Participants' views of the centre's activities are highly positive and result in many users coming to the centre because of word-of-mouth recommendations.

Staff have developed an in-depth understanding of the issues and challenges facing the community, this enables them to provide specific, targeted support which is rapidly improving the lives of children and families within the community.

Care, guidance and support are exceptionally good. Lone parents, fathers, teenage parents, families who have young children with disabilities and those families who experience a wide range of personal and social problems, such as debt, domestic violence and alcohol-related issues, all receive outstanding support. There is an excellent balance of universal and targeted provision and support within this centre which is delivered as a result of prompt, accurate and thorough assessment of need.

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	1
The extent to which the centre promotes purposeful learning, development and enjoyment for all families, including those in target groups	1
The quality of care, guidance and support offered to families, including those in target groups	1

How effective are the leadership and management?

2

The highly committed staff team is led by a visionary and reflective centre manager, a team manager who knows the families very well and supportive senior managers. Together, they demonstrate a passion and a very strong desire to support and make a real difference to the lives of the vast majority of families in the reach communities, which they do very successfully. Staff morale remains high, despite a significant restructure within the local authority. The performance management of staff is extremely rigorous, and arrangements for supervision meetings and appraisals are thorough. All of the above are underpinned by clear messages from senior managers and challenging target setting which is monitored very effectively by district and cluster managers.

The local authority provides good levels of data which now have some historical context to them. In addition, evaluation is accurate and is informed through feedback from all contacts and the activities which families attend. This is allowing the centre to demonstrate clearly and accurately where it is having the most impact. Managers and the multi-agency advisory board use the data and evaluations very effectively to plan and deliver holistic services to families who are most in need of support. Key priorities for improvement are based on good knowledge of families' most pressing needs. Parents' views have resulted in changes and improvements within the centre, but their involvement in the work of the advisory board is not strong and this limits their ability to be involved in the important decisions about the centre's direction.

One of the absolute strengths in this centre is the ability of the centre manager to see every challenge as a 'can do'. He gives excellent support to partners within the community and, in response, the centre benefits from outstanding input from its many partners. Together, they take every opportunity to share resources, seek large amounts of additional funding and make every attempt to improve the life chances for families who use the centre. The successful volunteer scheme has enabled the centre to provide activities where budget cuts may well have left a gap. The sharing of equipment and premises is excellent. Consequently, outcomes for the 82.3% of families engaged with the centre are good or outstanding across most areas for all groups, including the most disadvantaged. The centre provides outstanding value for money. There is just a very small minority of families who do not engage with the centre or benefit from its wide range of services and support.

All families appreciate how welcoming and safe the centre is. It is highly inclusive and it very accurately reflects the make-up of the community. Equality and diversity are promoted well, and the centre has been very effective in including children and families with specific needs. The provision of a crèche means that more families are enabled to access courses and children benefit from the high levels of care provided by very experienced staff.

Safeguarding users is given high priority and keeping children and families safe is at

the forefront of the centre's work. Comprehensive policies and procedures are exceptionally well embedded and applied routinely. The premises are fully risk-assessed and are extremely safe and secure. Reception staff play a vital role in safeguarding both families and staff through their vigilance and monitoring. They also provide a warm welcome to families who often drop in to the centre when in crisis. Case study evidence and discussions with parents indicate that families have received extremely well-integrated and sensitive support in times of crisis. Safeguarding arrangements, including safer recruitment, comply totally with the Local Safeguarding Children's Board and 'Working Together' requirements. Excellent procedures for reporting child protection issues are fully understood and followed by all staff and key partners.

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	1
The effectiveness of evaluation and its use in setting ambitious targets which secure improvement in outcomes	2
The extent to which resources are used and managed efficiently and effectively to meet the needs of families, including those in target groups	1
The extent to which equality is promoted and diversity celebrated, illegal or unlawful discrimination is tackled and the centre fulfils its statutory duties	2
The effectiveness of the centre's policy, procedures and work with key agencies in safeguarding children and, where applicable, vulnerable adults	1
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	1
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	2

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

Ofsted reports relating to other settings and school in the reach area were scrutinised to provide additional contextual information.

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Summary for centre users

We inspected the Staveley Children's Centre on 19–20 September 2012. We judged the centre as good overall.

Your centre is led and managed well and demonstrates an outstanding ability to continue to improve. Coordinated teamwork of the centre's staff and the outstanding professional relationship with partners and the community are at the core of the centre's work. Workers at the centre communicate well with each other, and their feedback provides a good knowledge and understanding of the community's needs. The centre is at the heart of the community and is effectively ensuring the inclusion of all children and families within its services.

Thank you to those of you who gave your time to share your views of the centre with us. Many of you told us you feel very welcome and safe at the centre and how you are always welcome. As one of you summarised, 'It can be a dull day and life can be dark but you come in here and the sun comes out. Staff brighten your day with their welcome and smiles.' Like you, we found your centre to be welcoming and friendly.

You are satisfied with the services and enjoy your time at the centre. A very large majority of you are engaged in the centre. It is very clear that the centre is having a positive impact on the lives of those of you who attend the centre's activities or use its services and on the development of your children who make use of the centre's childcare facilities. Some of you are delighted with the way your children have developed and how they have learnt to socialise with other children. You told us how you value the wide programme of activities, particularly the 'Stay and Play', 'Ready for School' and 'Daddies do Care' groups. You also value the crèche facilities that enable you to attend activities, meetings and courses. So that more families can benefit from the types of service you are receiving, we have asked the centre to make contact with and provide for families who do not currently attend.

The strong focus on helping children learn and develop, and parenting classes that give you the skills to support them, mean that children make good progress, especially in their confidence and independence. Opportunities for you to improve your confidence, self-esteem, skills and knowledge are outstanding, and many of you progress from having little confidence to further training, some embark on employment and a good number of you become volunteers and help to run groups. Volunteers supported and monitored by the centre manager and staff have been instrumental in minimising the effects of reducing budgets, for example, by leading 'Stay and Play' sessions in the wider community and by becoming breastfeeding support volunteers.

A good proportion of you are accessing a range of appropriate health services and activities and some of your families are taking up healthier lifestyles. The number of mothers in your area who breastfeed their babies has increased and is only just below the national average, and there has been a reduction in the number of

mothers who smoke during pregnancy. In addition, obesity levels in children in Reception Year at school have reduced and are lower than the national average.

You are extremely well supported when facing times of crisis and stressful situations. Those of you whose circumstances deem you most vulnerable receive home visits and one-to-one support which you value. As some of you told us, 'The centre has been my lifeline.' 'The centre is brilliant, it has helped us so much.' 'I would recommend this children's centre it helps change lives.'

There is a strong sense of the community throughout the centre. You told us how you feel listened to and have a good range of opportunities to contribute your views, including through the parents' forum and the advisory board. Your views are used by the centre to make sure services and activities provided are what families in your community need and want most. We have asked the centre to encourage more of you to play a role in shaping the future direction of the work of the centre through the advisory board and we hope that this is something more of you might like to be involved in.

Thank you to everyone who took the time to come and speak to us. We are very grateful and we wish you all the best for the future.

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