

Inspection report for Devizes South Community Children's Centre

Local authority	Wiltshire
Inspection number	365776
Inspection dates	3–4 October 2012
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Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected
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Linked school if applicable	Southbroom Infant School
Linked early years and childcare, if applicable	Not applicable

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.

Report published: October 2012



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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 senior leaders, representatives from the local authority, health professionals, partners who offer services and parents. Inspectors observed the centre's work, and looked at a range of relevant documentation, including action plans and policies relating to safeguarding and child protection.

Information about the centre

Devizes South Community Children's Centre is situated in the market town of Devizes, Wiltshire, and serves the town and surrounding rural areas. The centre's building is adjacent to Southbroom Infant School, on a large multi-purpose site. The whole site includes a junior and secondary school, a leisure centre and further education college. There is car parking next to the centre. The children's centre has use of an outdoor area belonging to the infant school. There is a separate signing-in reception and information area with displays and notices relating to services, family information and policies available, such as safeguarding, child protection and the complaints policies.

Devizes Children's Centre opened in 2007 as a phase 2 centre, governed by an advisory board on behalf of the local authority. Since April 2011, 4children manage the centre under contract from Wiltshire Council. The centre is open from 8.45am to 4.45pm Monday to Friday for 51 weeks of the year and meets the core purpose of children's centres. Services delivered directly by the centre at the main centre site include family learning, ante- and post-natal groups, breastfeeding groups, childminder groups, a children's café and one-to-one support for parents. The centre provides return to work advice and training through partnership arrangements, as well as sessions relating to finances. The centre delivers some sessions from outreach locations in the rural part of the reach area.

There are currently 388 families with children under 5 years of age within the centre's reach area. The community includes significant pockets of deprivation and high need and a number of more affluent families. The levels of skills and knowledge shown by children on entry to the Early Years Foundation Stage are generally below those expected for their age, particularly in communication, language and literacy. The majority of families are of White British origin. The number of families from ethnic minorities, or whose first language is not English, is low. Approximately one third of the families in the reach area are lone parents and the proportion of teenage mothers is low. Families out of work and those dependent on workless benefits or receiving the childcare element of Working Tax Credit amount to less than one fifth of all families.

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

1

Capacity for sustained improvement

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

1

Main findings

Devizes South Community Children's Centre provides outstanding provision for the very large majority of families, including the most vulnerable, in the reach area. A key strength is the centre's excellent care, guidance and support for families and their children. The centre supports children with additional needs and vulnerable children very well.

Parents and their children achieve well in their learning and development. The progress of all families is very effectively tracked which means that support is sharply tailored to meet the needs of parents, babies and children. Recent data show good improvements in narrowing the gap in children's achievement, especially in communication, language and literacy.

Extremely positive relationships make a highly tangible difference to the well-being of the centre users. Families appreciate the very caring atmosphere, friendly staff and the outreach work. The centre has a strong focus on the health of families and so outcomes are outstanding. Sessions provide healthy eating opportunities, such as through the extremely popular children's café. The proportion of mothers within the reach area breastfeeding their child at six to eight weeks is above the local authority average. The children's centre benefits from the use of a safe and enclosed outdoor

area. This means there is regular access to fresh air and outdoor activities.

There are well-established systems for capturing the views of families, including children, and local partners. Parents say that staff members listen to their views about individual sessions and respond by making changes. For example, bringing an off-site session into the children's centre has meant better access for buggies and families who may have additional needs.

Safeguarding arrangements are outstanding, as are the very effective arrangements for keeping families safe. As a result, any concerns related to children's safety are acted upon quickly and appropriately. This makes a significant difference to improving the outcomes of the most vulnerable children. During centre sessions children play happily and behave very well. Staff have a strong commitment to promoting equality and diversity and inclusion is central to the services provided.

There is a well-established system for coordinating support for families, such as in building confidence in preparation for volunteering and returning to work. A number of parents participate in the accredited customer care course. Courses are aimed at some of the most vulnerable families. Consequently, parents go on to become volunteers at the centre and many return to paid employment. Families attending courses improve their economic stability and employability and report how highly they regard the opportunities provided. However, the centre acknowledges that there are currently less opportunities for adults to improve their literacy and numeracy skills.

Local partners contribute to the evaluation of the impact of the centre's work. The centre leader shares information and assessment data with the advisory board. Consequently, managers have an accurate understanding of the centre's strengths and areas for further development and have produced an appropriate action plan for improvement.

Performance management arrangements for staff are robust. Actions taken so far to provide outstanding provision, such as the excellent care and guidance for the most vulnerable families, together with the very effective way in which families using the centre feel safe, and the strong commitment of staff, continue to make a highly discernible difference to the lives of families. These aspects of the centre's work and the very high take up of services demonstrate an outstanding capacity to improve.

What does the centre need to do to improve further?

Recommendations for further improvement

- Further enhance the volunteering and employment prospects of adults by working with partners to develop more opportunities in providing a range of accredited literacy and numeracy courses.

How good are outcomes for families?

1

Keeping families safe lies very effectively at the heart of the centre's outstanding work. Parents act on the advice they are given by staff and so keep themselves and their families safe. The breastfeeding group discussed the dangers of drinking alcohol while breastfeeding. A practical activity included parents wearing special glasses which mirrored the physical effects of alcohol. This demonstrated the potential dangers to the health of both mother and baby.

The centre has very effective assessment systems in place to ensure the safety of vulnerable children and adults and those families subject to Common Assessment Framework (CAF) processes, such as two-year-old funding for nursery places. Child protection plans are monitored closely. The CAF process leads to outstanding outcomes for individual families, such as how to play and talk to their children and becoming volunteers at the centre, such as for breastfeeding.

By attending the breastfeeding sessions, mothers have gained confidence in breastfeeding their baby. Mothers report that the approach in sessions is friendly and welcoming and, as a result, they feel confident to talk about any worries or concerns they may have. Attendance at sessions is high and rigorously tracked.

At the Children's Café the advice and practical opportunities in sessions, such as making carrot and coriander soup and bread, are much valued by parents. Sessions relating to family welfare and clinics cover all aspects of health, including sleep, diet and risks associated with smoking and drugs.

The high levels of trust between vulnerable families and the centre staff underpin the centre's work in helping families overcome difficulties in relationships, returning to work and housing problems. Parents experiencing difficulties report that the support offered by the centre is 'fantastic'. Programmes aimed at young parents, such as Parents with Prospects, build confidence in parenting skills. These sessions provide good information and guidance to help parents reflect on opportunities to play and learn with their children.

Over half of parents typically return to work through opportunities provided or signposted by the centre. The majority of families using the centre engage in training and opportunities to enhance financial stability. However, there are less opportunities for parents to achieve accredited literacy and numeracy courses in preparation for employment. Questionnaires and surveys show that an overwhelming majority of parents are satisfied with the services provided.

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
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1

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	1

How good is the provision?

1

Through the centre's excellent services and activities a large majority of families are helped to maintain their economic stability. The centre provides outstanding support for adults seeking financial advice. Parents report that through attending the Money Matters course they now budget for their weekly shopping, such as buying some items in bulk. Parents new to employment report how proud they are to receive their first ever wages. There are opportunities for adults to develop their communication skills through the accredited customer service course in preparation for return to work, but less to develop their written and numerical skills.

The quality and range of services are very well integrated to meet the personal, social, health and safety needs of local families. The children's centre works with health and social care professionals to assess and support the needs of families. The Team Around the Child meetings support some of the most vulnerable children. The family support workers help families through times of crisis and the care offered to them is outstanding. This enables the delivery of services to target groups very effectively.

Case studies provide evidence about the discernible difference the centre's services make to the outcomes of those in most need. Sessions at the centre with health professionals respond to individual parents' concerns very well and signpost to other professionals, such as speech and language, for further support. Parents enjoy the Baby and You sessions which contain fun activities, include information for new parents and talks from outside agencies.

Participation rates are high, as is the take up of courses. For example, the parenting course run by midwives is well attended by expectant mothers and fathers. During these sessions the concerns of parents are continually sought, leading to discussions about common worries, such as how to prepare for the visit to hospital at the start of labour. The centre provides a monthly session for fathers, which is well attended, and there are plans to expand the range of opportunities involving fathers.

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	2
The quality of care, guidance and support offered to families, including those in target groups	1

How effective are the leadership and management?

1

The outstanding governance and accountability arrangements mean that leaders have an accurate understanding of the links between self-evaluation and the provision of services. The advisory board provides a very effective level of support and uses data to challenge the centre leaders on actions taken to maintain high performance. Equality and inclusion run through the centre's work.

Feedback from users shows confidence in how the centre treats all adults and children as individuals. The integration of multi-agency services supports opportunities for children and their families. Protocols for the sharing of information between services, partners and other professionals are established at a strategic level. Joint working includes working with a range of pre-school providers and schools. School staff report that children are well prepared for their transition to school.

The use of resources, including the deployment of staff, volunteers and session workers, and the outstanding outcomes for families, demonstrate that the centre is providing excellent value for money. Staff training is a high priority and, as a result, centre workers are knowledgeable and up-to-date in their professional expertise. Regular supervision of staff ensures that all centre workers are well supported in their roles in delivering a high quality service. The use of assessment data and evaluation systems by leaders and managers to improve services further is excellent. The success of groups, courses and activities is evaluated by the centre managers, staff and the advisory board, including feedback from parents.

Safeguarding arrangements are comprehensive. New parents are routinely made aware of the procedures for child protection and safeguarding. Health and safety matters are closely supervised and supported by robust risk assessments. Awareness about child protection matters is closely monitored and supported by effective risk assessments. The systems for staff vetting and recruitment fully meet requirements.

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	1
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	1
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	1

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

Southbroom Infant School was inspected as part of the primary school inspection in May 2012. The inspection of the children's centre was informed by the findings and judgements at the time.

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Summary for centre users

We inspected Devizes South Children's Centre on 3 and 4 October 2012. We judged the centre as outstanding overall.

The children's centre cares for you exceptionally well. The centre provides you with a very safe and inclusive environment where you and your children feel safe, valued and respected. The groups run by the centre encourage you and your children to live healthy lives. You really enjoy the Children's Café, and an overwhelming number of

you attend sessions. You develop strong friendships with one another and appreciate the support you receive from staff and volunteers.

From our observations, discussions and case studies, we were able to see that the centre has an outstanding impact on your lives. This is because the centre successfully engages with a high number of all families in the reach area.

The parenting classes support you and your child's learning well and so the achievement of families is good. You told us you particularly like the Stories 4 Me and You which supports your child's speaking, listening and singing skills. You told us how you and your children are benefiting from the advice given to you through the health sessions. The outstanding provision supports those of you in receipt of the two-year-old funding and your child's transition to school.

We found that staff are enthusiastic and work with partners very successfully helping you to make positive changes to your lives, such as learning new skills, volunteering and returning to employment. Outcomes for families are outstanding overall. We know that staff listen to your views about the services offered to you.

We can see that children behave in ways that are safe for themselves and others. Toddlers are keen to investigate toys and respond well to you and other adults. During the inspection youngsters independently played with the good-quality toys and resources provided.

Some of you volunteer at the centre, and your work is appreciated by other parents. Advice and guidance are available on housing, employment, training and family budgeting. However, the centre is aware that there are fewer opportunities for you to access courses that lead to qualifications in literacy and numeracy in preparation for employment and we have asked the centre to improve this.

The outstanding partnerships with key agencies enable excellent support and guidance to be offered to those of you using the centre's services whose circumstances may make you and your children vulnerable. Staff and partners assess the individual needs of vulnerable families very well in order to ensure you receive the correct support. Health and social care professionals work together to ensure you and your child thrive.

When you visit the centre you are very well looked after. The excellent safeguarding arrangements help you to feel safe and free from risks. For example, leaders follow rigorous and robust practices to ensure all adults working in the centre are suitable to do so. Staff are well trained in how to safeguard children and they make you aware of policies and procedures relating to child protection.

The centre plans the use of space and resources very well and provides very effective value for money. Centre managers and staff use a range of information when planning activities. Managers listen to feedback from you and make changes where necessary. The comprehensive analysis of data and information presented to

the centre by the local authority on the effectiveness of the range services provided is well considered by managers. Consequently, the advisory board of the children's centre has an accurate view of the centre's strengths and provides a high level of challenge and support towards further developments.

It was good to see how you and your babies and children enjoyed spending time in the activity sessions provided. Families using the services on offer are extremely well supported.

Thank you for your contribution to the inspection.

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