

Inspection report for Central Children's Centre

Local authority	Doncaster
Inspection number	404139
Inspection dates	17–18 October 2012
Reporting inspector	Marian Pearson HMI

Centre leader	John Bailey
Date of previous inspection	9 November 2011
Centre address	Welcome Way Doncaster South Yorkshire DN1 3LE
Telephone number	01302 367739
Fax number	01302 364490
Email address	john.bailey@doncaster.gov.uk

Linked school if applicable	Stirling Primary School URN: 106742
Linked early years and childcare, if applicable	Sticky Mits Childcare Centre EY336961

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: November 2012

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, work-based learning and skills training, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for looked after children, safeguarding and child protection.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may reuse this information (not including logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence. To view this licence, visit www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/, write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk.

This publication is available at www.ofsted.gov.uk/publications/100080.

To receive regular email alerts about new publications, including survey reports and school inspection reports, please visit our website and go to 'Subscribe'.

Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

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



No.100080

© Crown copyright 2012

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 and users of the centre, the centre's manager and staff, the parents' focus group, representatives from the local authority, members of the advisory board and various professionals who work in partnership with the centre.

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

Information about the centre

Central Children's Centre is a phase one centre which was designated in 2006. The centre is based in a purpose built two-storey building next to Stirling Primary School, in Doncaster city centre. The centre is sited within a triangle of land surrounded by three dual carriage ways which divide the reach area.

The centre serves an area of high social and economic deprivation, with most of the reach area being ranked in the top 10% most deprived areas in the country; all the reach area is within the 30% most disadvantaged nationally. Unemployment in the area is high. A third of the 914 children aged under five years in the reach area live in workless households. Little of the housing is owner occupied. The area has much higher levels of recorded crime and anti-social behaviour than the local authority average. The population in the centre's reach area is highly transient as a number of homes in the area are provided for asylum seekers and refugees. Many families are from minority ethnic backgrounds and a large number of languages are spoken by families in the community. On entry to early years provision children's knowledge, skills and abilities are well below those typical for their age.

Doncaster Metropolitan Borough Council has retained responsibility for governance of the centre. Services delivered from the centre by the children's centre team and partners include

family support, child and family health services, adult and family learning, employment signposting and targeted support for vulnerable families. One activity session is delivered from a church hall in Hexthorpe. The centre's linked provider is Sticky Mits Childcare Centre. A separate inspection of this provision was conducted in March 2012. A report of this inspection can be found at www.ofsted.gov.uk.

Since the previous inspection, when the overall effectiveness of the centre was judged inadequate, there has been a change in centre management and the current centre manager joined the centre in May 2012.

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

2

Main findings

Since its last inspection 12 months ago, this centre has undergone a huge transformation. First impressions are of an attractive and inclusive environment which provides a wealth of useful advice and guidance for parents. A wide range of health leaflets and safety information by the reception in languages used by the local community provide an immediate welcome for those who speak English as an additional language. Although it is a large centre, it bustles with activity and the majority of rooms are in constant use throughout the week. This is because families increasingly see the centre as a place where they can access help and support, particularly in times of crisis. 'I can ask the staff anything, they are always so friendly and helpful,' and, 'they helped me understand it's OK to ask for help and not feel ashamed of it'. These are typical comment from users, who include foster carers and childminders, highlighting how much they value the work of the centre's staff. Users respect each other and build good social networks which one parent described as being 'like a big family'. Partner agencies, such as the paediatric physiotherapist, are keen to use the centre because its child-friendly atmosphere and central location reduce non-attendances.

All weaknesses identified at the last inspection have been addressed successfully. Good safeguarding practice is adopted across all areas of the centre's work. Records evidence efficient vetting of staff, volunteers and staff from partner agencies who work at the centre.

All staff have received child protection training relevant to their role and understand well their responsibilities to report concerns. Outcomes for those subject to a child protection plan and children deemed to be in need are good because of skilful assessment of need, effective multi-agency working and individually planned support.

A wide range of stimulating activities support children's learning well. They are keen to learn and engage well in sessions such as 'Sing and Sign' which develop their skills in communication. Although the number of children reaching a good level of development at the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage is still below local and national averages, the majority of children make good progress from very low starting points, especially in their personal, social and emotional development. Particularly good progress was achieved last year in narrowing the achievement gap by 15% at the school attended by most children in the area. Determined efforts by centre staff have greatly increased the number of eligible children taking up funded childcare places. The centre is aware that a few families are still reluctant to use pre-school provision or access sessions specifically designed to help prepare their children for school.

Adults also benefit from a range of personal development opportunities, including parenting programmes, childcare courses and learning English as an additional language. A few users have used their increased confidence and skills to gain employment, progress to further training or take up volunteering opportunities. However, courses to develop basic skills in literacy and numeracy are not delivered regularly and the centre does not have a clear pathway currently in place to support users into employment.

Health outcomes are variable but are satisfactory overall. Breastfeeding is well promoted and those experiencing difficulty are patiently encouraged to continue by well-informed staff and informal peer support. During the last quarter, 48% of babies were breastfed until at least six-to-eight weeks, which is higher than the national average. In contrast, despite sound weaning advice and courses such as 'Cook and Eat', which encourage families to eat more healthily, obesity levels in children at the age of five are higher than average and show an upward trend over the last three years.

The new centre manager has acted swiftly in implementing strategies to provide the centre with a good understanding of the local community and the needs of families within the reach area. Data available to the centre have improved and are used perceptively by leaders and managers to prioritise services and re-focus activities to ensure maximum benefit in improving outcomes for children and families. Users' views and feedback are regularly sought and used to improve provision; they express high satisfaction with the centre's services.

Leaders and managers evaluate accurately the centre's strengths and areas for development. The advisory board has a shared vision about its role in improving outcomes for children and families, particularly those from target groups. Ambitious targets for improvement have been set and progress is closely monitored. Members of the staff team embrace their individual responsibilities with passion and vigour. Links with an extensive

range of partner agencies help inform and complement delivery of the centre's work. The centre demonstrates good capacity to sustain the rapid improvement in its effectiveness.

What does the centre need to do to improve further?

Recommendations for further improvement

- Improve outcomes by working with partners to:
 - reduce the number of children in Reception Year who are obese
 - establish a clear pathway for more users to develop their skills and experience to support future employment.
- Work with parents to increase the number of children participating in services that improve school readiness.

How good are outcomes for families?

2

Families are confident to ask for help when they need it because they know and trust the centre workers. Staff ensure users have a good understanding of the centre's safeguarding and health and safety procedures and the vast majority of parents feel that the centre is a safe place for themselves and their children.

Parents' confidence and knowledge of how to keep their children safe have grown through participation on parenting programmes and home safety assessments conducted by centre staff and the fire and rescue service. A large number of agencies, including the police and road safety team provide additional advice and guidance during activity sessions and at events such as the 'Family Fun Day' which extends users' safety awareness. Last year's steep rise in hospital admissions as a result of unintentional and deliberate injuries has been reversed and, to date, there have been no recorded admissions this year.

Good links exist between the centre and local schools. Headteachers universally praise the effectiveness of centre workers' sensitive yet firm approach in supporting individual families. This work helps parents to engage more positively in their children's education. The highly transient nature of the community sometimes masks the centre's achievements. As one headteacher explained: 'The centre does all this good work with the families and then they move on before we can benefit from it.' Outcomes for children attending the transition group were good as they developed increased independence and concentration levels prior to starting school. However, some families have not yet recognised the value of this provision.

A good range of child and family health services, delivered from the centre, is used well by the majority of target groups. Attendance at antenatal and baby clinics and 'Baby Time' sessions is high as users value the opportunity to access advice and information about health matters. However, take-up of immunisations is low compared with the rest of the local area and half the newborn babies live in smoking households. Baby massage sessions

and use of the sensory room promote a sense of calm and relaxed well-being for both baby and parent. An increased number of children under five years of age are registered with dentists and fewer children suffer acute dental pain. This is because parents have better awareness of the importance of oral health as a result of sound advice received through play and learning sessions. Creative solutions have been designed to tackle increasing obesity levels, such as walks around the neighbourhood, weight management courses and a 'green gym' based on the development of gardening activities, but it is too early to see the impact of these services.

Children's behaviour is good. Parents attending parenting programmes such as the 'Incredible Years' courses report increased confidence in managing their children's behaviour by implementing routines, setting boundaries and making an effort to praise positive behaviour. Staff and users show mutual respect for each other. They provide good role models for children who play amicably together, share resources well and develop positive relationships with their peers and adults.

Users, some supported by interpreters, contribute to decision making through the 'Parents Focus Group' and their views are represented on the advisory board. This enterprising group is currently seeking advice on how best to extend its role to fund additional activities at the centre. Other users undertake well-planned voluntary work which supports the work of the centre, and other local agencies such as Homestart, and provides development for individuals relevant to their skills and experience.

The centre provides satisfactory opportunities for families to access advice regarding financial management, work and benefit calculations and access to information regarding job vacancies in order to improve their economic well-being. The Jobcentre provides support for lone parents to access employment information and support with applications for jobs. Feedback from their work led to the internet being made available at the centre for users to conduct job searches, submit housing applications and research childcare provision, but the centre has little evidence to demonstrate how well this facility is used. An increase in the number of learners required to run courses and some temporary difficulties for one adult education provider has resulted in disruption to adult learning programmes.

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	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	2

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?

2

The centre has made a determined effort to find out more about families in the reach area. Good strategies are in place to increase the participation of target groups, including families with disabled children, young parents and families from minority ethnic groups. For example, the centre works with the 'Refugees' Conversation Group' to promote its services to those who regularly move around the area. Data provided on a weekly basis by the centre's midwife enable workers to visit each family before and after a baby is born. These initial visits ensure any support needs are quickly identified, provide families with personalised information about the centre's services and have increased the number of registrations of children under one year of age from 7% to almost 70% in the last year. Parents attending the 'Little Treasures' group for families with a disabled child feel more confident to access other services to support their families' needs as a direct result of accessing the group. The 'Dads Group' was discontinued because of low attendance but a large and increasing number of fathers confidently access the centre's main services.

The centre's main priority is early intervention when families are identified as needing extra support. In partnership with other agencies and the families themselves, the Common Assessment Framework (CAF) is used well to assess needs and develop a time-limited action plan with realistic objectives. Observations during the inspection, discussions with parents and case records demonstrate the effectiveness of the centre's sensitive and individualised care for families, particularly in times of crisis.

The centre is proactive in providing care, guidance and support which help improve outcomes for children and families. Initial success has been achieved in raising the awareness of the dangers of smoking as the centre has recently won an award for gaining the highest number of families in the area who have pledged to create a smoke-free home. Support with sexual health and relationships is provided routinely for all young parents. The centre's linked provider offers good quality childcare and crèche provision which effectively supports parents in employment and those attending centre courses.

Children and adults enjoy playing and learning together as activities are imaginative and purposeful. Children eagerly practise making marks through a variety of exciting activities in the 'Messy Play' session and are keen to engage in physical exercise in 'Jumping Beans'. The development of communication, language and literacy skills is targeted specifically at the 'Stay and Play' session in Hexthorpe to meet an identified need in the area. The centre's special educational needs coordinator works across all services and activities to support early identification of additional support needed and effectively secures specialist help, for example with speech and language development.

Parents are recognised as essential partners in their children's learning. They provide feedback on each session and contribute ideas for future activities. Many users are keeping a 'learning journey' to record their children's progress, celebrate achievements and increase their own understanding of child development. Extension of children's learning into the home is successfully promoted by provision of resources and imaginatively illustrated instructions, such as how to make dough, distributed at the end of each session.

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	2
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.	2

How effective are the leadership and management?

2

Everyone involved holds high expectations of the centre and there is an evident commitment to improving outcomes for children and families. The local authority provides good support and now rigorously monitors the centre's performance. Following training, the advisory board has a good understanding of its role. Its members feel empowered to offer robust challenge and support. Sub-groups linked to each outcome area ensure that specific improvement targets are set and progress is monitored regularly. Leaders and managers use the data provided to good effect in evaluating the strengths of the centre's work and identifying key priorities.

The children's centre manager provides strong leadership and a clear direction which fosters high staff morale. Senior managers supervise the centre workers well, ensuring that tasks and cases are allocated according to expertise and aptitude. On-going monitoring of work with individual families results in improved outcomes for most families.

Safeguarding of children and families is a high priority. The premises are safe and secure as risks are assessed regularly. Recruitment procedures are rigorous and induction programmes consistently include awareness of health and safety and safeguarding procedures. Many staff have benefited from additional training on wider child protection issues to support their work. Good procedures are in place to check with partner agencies that children remain safe and supported when families move from their known address.

The inclusion of all children and families is central to the centre's vision. Staff respect and value all users regardless of their background or status. The centre works diligently to reduce any barriers in accessing its services. For example, the local authority has simplified its registration form following feedback from the advisory board that parents found it

difficult to complete. Diversity is celebrated well through visual displays and resources that effectively reflect the wider community. Families from minority ethnic groups feel comfortable using the centre, as demonstrated by the Muslim community choosing the centre as its venue for its Eid celebrations. Services for families with a disabled child are particularly effective as skilled staff provide high quality support and parents are consulted well about how the centre can best meet their families' needs.

Continuous reviewing of activities and feedback from users ensure services are closely matched to users' needs. The large numbers of users, and some non-users, who responded to the latest local authority survey expressed high levels of satisfaction with the centre's work and the support they had received. The centre offers good value for money as resources are creatively used in partnership with other agencies to reduce duplication and maximise the impact of services in improving outcomes for children and families.

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	2
The effectiveness of evaluation and its use in setting ambitious targets which secures 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	2
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	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.	2

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

None

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance *Complaining about inspections*, which is available from our website:

www.ofsted.gov.uk. If you would like us to send you a copy of the guidance, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

Summary for centre users

We inspected the Central Children's Centre on 17–18 October 2012. We judged the centre as good overall.

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

We found that the centre has changed a great deal since the last inspection and has worked hard to make sure the services and activities it provides for you make a positive difference for you and your children. Our first impression of the centre was that it was a welcoming and attractive place to visit. You obviously agree as many of you now use the centre because you know you can obtain good quality help and support from its friendly and helpful staff.

The centre is good at helping you to keep your families safe, especially when you are experiencing a crisis in your lives. Staff are well trained to ensure that they can work with you and other agencies to put together action plans which you told us help improve your lives and those of your children. They also make sure that you know and understand the centre's health and safety procedures and this helps you to feel that you and your children are safe at the centre.

The centre provides a wide range of stimulating activities which support children to learn well. We enjoyed watching the children experimenting with making marks in the 'Messy Play' session. You told us and we could see by looking at the photographs how much your children enjoy physical exercise in the 'Jumping Beans' session. The centre staff have supported many of you to take up the free early education sessions your children are entitled to and some of you took your children to the transition group before they started school. We have asked the centre to work with those of you whose children have not attended either the funded childcare or transition sessions so that you understand how your children can benefit from this provision and help them to be ready to learn when they start school.

We also found that some of you have attended courses which have helped your own learning and development, such as parenting programmes, childcare courses and learning how to speak and write in English. Some of you have used your new skills and confidence to gain employment, go on to further training or volunteer to help the centre. However, the centre does not have steps in place to make sure you have access to all the information and training you need to help you gain employment and we have asked them to develop a series of learning opportunities which will support you when you are ready to seek work.

The centre promotes breastfeeding well and it is good to see that almost half the babies in the area are breastfed for at least six-to-eight weeks. Some of you told us how patient the staff were in supporting you to achieve this. It was also good to hear that many of you have signed the pledge to make your homes smoke free. We heard how the 'Cook and Eat' sessions have helped some of you to improve your family's diet but this has not made a significant difference overall as more of your children than in other areas of the country are obese at five years of age. The centre has started to introduce additional activities to help those of you who wish to reduce your weight and to promote healthier lifestyles so we have asked them to ensure that these are effective in helping you to control your children's weight as well.

The centre has undertaken lots of work to find out more about the community that you live in and to better understand your needs. This has helped them to organise the services and activities it offers to make sure that they are effective in supporting you. Centre managers use the information they receive from the local authority and the feedback you provide very carefully to develop the services they offer, assess how well they are doing and to set themselves targets for improvement. These targets are ambitious and the advisory board regularly monitor how well the centre is progressing towards meeting them or whether they need to change what is on offer. We were pleased to meet members of the 'Parents Focus Group' and learn your plans to support the centre by raising money to provide additional activities through the centre.

Thank you very much for your welcome and for taking the time to talk with us. 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.