

Inspection report for Sale Road Sure Start Children's Centre

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| Local authority | Manchester City Council |
| Inspection number | 407024 |
| Inspection dates | 14–15 November 2012 |
| Reporting inspector | Susan Walsh |

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| Date of previous inspection | Not applicable |
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| Linked school if applicable | Not applicable |
| Linked early years and childcare, if applicable | EY104238 Sale Road Children's Centre EY104267 Royle Green Children's Centre |

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 one additional inspector and one early years inspector.

The inspectors held meetings with senior managers, the outreach worker, health and education professionals, and representatives of the local authority. They spoke with users of the centre. They observed the centre's work and looked at a range of relevant documentation.

Information about the centre

Sale Road Sure Start Children's Centre is a phase two centre which was designated in October 2007. The centre is located across two sites. The main site is the Sale Road Sure Start Children's Centre, in Northern Moor, Manchester. The satellite site is Royle Green Children's Centre at Northenden, Manchester. Childcare provision at these two sites is subject to their own inspection. The reports of these inspections are available on our website: www.ofsted.gov.uk. Childcare is subject to a phased programme of closures. A range of services are delivered at both sites, although Sale Road accommodates a larger range of activities and services. The provision of services at Royle Green is declining as the future of the site is undecided. A range of other agencies occupy offices at the Sale Road site. The Northern Moor area is predominantly former council housing, with higher levels of financial hardship, lone parents, teenage pregnancies, unemployment and lower educational attainment. Northern Moor is divided into two distinct areas, separated by the A5103. On one side, there is a higher proportion of owner-occupiers and generally less deprivation.

Across the reach area, 29% of children live in workless households and a similar proportion of families are dependent on benefits. Almost half the families live in areas where there are particularly high levels of economic and social disadvantage. The reach area is predominantly families of White British heritage. A smaller number of families come from a very wide range of ethnic heritages.

The centre delivers a varied programme of activities and services to meet the needs of children and their families and the local community, in line with Manchester's core offer. Health services are delivered, including ante-natal services and speech and language therapy. A baby well-being clinic and the psychological well-being service are available on site. Family support services are offered at the centre through partnership working with Barnardo's, the children's charity which is commissioned to deliver family support through its early intervention team (family workers) and the parental outreach worker who is based at the centre.

The centre is managed under the strategic direction of the local authority, with one advisory board representing the two sites. In February 2011, the Head of Centre left and an interim centre leader was in post until the end of April 2011. The current Head of Centre is also responsible for managing Brooklands Children's Centre which is situated nearby in Wythenshawe. The Head of Centre took on responsibility for this centre in May 2011.

The majority of children enter early years provision with skills, knowledge and abilities that are below 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

3

Capacity for sustained improvement

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

3

Main findings

The effectiveness of the centre's provision in meeting the needs of the reach area is satisfactory. Users say that staff are welcoming and friendly. They also comment positively on the bright vibrant surroundings. The centre offers a range of enjoyable activities such as 'Stay and Play' and 'Baby Massage', some of which are well attended and valued by parents. The identification of target groups is improving and more is being done to address their needs. For example, the effective partnership with Jobcentre Plus means that lone parents are supported to improve their economic stability. The centre has developed a support group for teenage parents. This has provided teenage parents with a good range of information about health issues that are relevant to their particular circumstances. The centre meets safeguarding requirements and adequately promotes equality and diversity.

Activities such as the parenting courses positively impact on the communication skills of children and the emotional well-being of parents and children. However, the centre does not track the development of children who attend activities closely enough. Therefore it lacks the information needed to plan activities that move children's learning on. There is a varied range of courses that improve parents' confidence and their ability to support their children's learning but courses are not always planned to meet the needs of parents who may have higher levels of skill to start with. Additionally, the achievement of adults is not adequately monitored. The centre's partnership with local primary schools is not fully developed. This hinders the centre's ability to identify and focus on the skills where children need most support.

The leadership and management of the centre are improving and result in satisfactory outcomes for families. The local authority has supplied the centre with detailed information about outcomes for families and the centre's systems for monitoring the work of outreach and early intervention workers have been strengthened. The centre works particularly effectively with Barnardo's staff and they have provided very useful support to the centre, including help with the analysis of data and development of effective methods to track contact with families. However, the centre has not yet made full use of the good quality data available to set numerical targets when planning for improvements. Leaders have not used targets to carefully measure the impact of the centre's work. Managers and the local authority are keenly aware that the advisory board is not providing sufficient challenge at present; additionally, it lacks regular representation from key partners and parents.

The managers know that there is more to do ensure that all the families in the area register with the centre and take full advantage of the provision on offer. The centre is not always aware of the exact location of families with children under the age of five because it no longer gets sufficient information from health partners. It is using a host of strategies to try to overcome this difficulty. However, currently there is no set routine to establish first contact with all families in the reach area and to robustly identify families in target groups, including those families whose circumstances might make them particularly vulnerable.

The centre is aware of its own strengths and weaknesses. It knows which groups it should be reaching and is working hard to improve outcomes for families that live within the reach area. Staff remain positive in the face of declining resources, the imminent reorganisation of local children's centres and the closure of the co-located childcare provisions. The centre has continued to move forward in challenging circumstances and to show satisfactory capacity for further improvement. Management systems are strengthening. For example, the role of the outreach worker is being developed in order to have a greater focus on improving the reach of the centre and the quality and range of local partnerships.

What does the centre need to do to improve further?

Recommendations for further improvement

- Increase the number of families that register with the centre and the proportion that regularly attend activities by:
 - developing clear procedures for making first and subsequent contact with families
 - developing robust ways of identifying families from target groups and those whose circumstances make them vulnerable
 - enhancing partnerships with health partners.
- Help adult learners to plan clear routes to improve their educational attainment and employability by:
 - making sure that their learning is tracked
 - ensuring they can access courses that build on their previous learning.
- Improve the rate at which children learn and develop by:
 - implementing systems that monitor children's progress and by using information to inform the planning of sessions
 - enhancing partnerships with local primary schools so that the skills most in need of improving receive a strong focus.
- Use data more effectively to set measurable targets when making plans for improvement and apply numerical criteria more effectively to measure the impact of the centre's work.
- Improve the level of challenge provided by the advisory board by including a greater range of partners and more parents in the decision-making process.

How good are outcomes for families?

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The centre is very aware that breastfeeding rates are low. It has responded by working with health partners to recruit more volunteers to support breastfeeding mothers. Volunteers who have attended training say that it is of good quality. Consequently, they are enthusiastic and keen to offer support. Obesity rates at the end of Reception Year are similar to those seen nationally, although too many children have gained excess weight by the time they reach Year 6. The centre has responded by delivering a range of activities such as 'Lively Tots' that encourage active lifestyles and help for families in promoting a balanced diet. The 'Health day' event was successful and also encouraged families to create a smoke-free home and raised their awareness of the early signs of cancer. Adults are successfully supported towards better emotional and mental health in association with the psychological well-being service.

There is a satisfactory emphasis on helping children and parents to be aware of how to keep themselves and their families safe. Very few children who live in the area are subject to child protection plans or are looked after but, when necessary, staff have an adequate level of involvement with families who are facing challenging circumstances. Early intervention workers provide much needed support for families whose lifestyles lack order; they are helped to organise themselves, therefore preventing the escalation of concerns. The improved Common Assessment Framework process is used appropriately to identify the levels of support that are needed and to share important information between agencies. Families feel safe in the centre and they and their children enjoy the activities that are provided. Children behave in ways that are safe in the centre and relationships between parents and staff are warm and supportive. Parents contribute towards decision making via the parents' forum but their representation on the advisory board has waned.

Parents are particularly pleased with the opportunities for children to make friends and develop their social skills. The proportion of children in the area who go on to reach national expectations in personal, social and emotional development and in communication, language and literacy at the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage has improved and is close to the national average. However, there are significant differences in outcomes for children living in different parts of the reach area. The gap between the proportion of children gaining scores in the lowest 20% in the Early Years Foundation Stage Profile and the rest has narrowed. Although the support received from the speech therapy service has declined through changes to service agreements, a well-attended 'Chatterbox' session is still provided.

The provision of good quality childcare at the Sale Road and Royle Green sites is also helping to improve outcomes for children. The activities on offer help children to develop their knowledge and understanding as they confidently explore activities available to them and make good use of the attractive outdoor environment. Outcomes for parents are not improving at the same rate and most courses for parents focus on developing their confidence rather than educational attainment. The partnership between the centre and Jobcentre Plus is helping to improve outcomes for target groups, including lone parents and teenage parents. Some parents are developing their skills and self-belief through opportunities to work as volunteers. The centre's limited information about those who access these courses means they are not always able to help users plan routes to improve educational attainment and employability. Parents are given suitable individual advice in times of financial hardship that helps them to manage their situation. The link with Barnardo's is very useful in this respect.

These are the grades for the outcomes for families:

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| 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 |

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| The extent to which all children and parents, including those from target groups, enjoy and achieve educationally and in their personal and social development | 3 |
| The extent to which children engage in positive behaviour and develop positive relationships, and parents, including those from target groups, contribute to decision-making and governance of the centre | 3 |
| The extent to which children are developing skills for the future and parents, including those from target groups, are developing economic stability and independence including access to training and employment. | 3 |

How good is the provision?

3

The centre no longer receives data from health partners about live births; therefore workers attend a local point for the registration of birth figures. It is aware that although 75% of parents have registered with the centre, only 55% make use of the services. Although outreach workers go into the local community to recruit more users, there is no clear system for making early contact with families and identifying the most vulnerable families. The use of the Common Assessment Framework process has improved and the needs of families are assessed appropriately. The range of services offered is suitably matched to their requirements.

The centre has considered the needs of its target groups and has developed provision with the needs of lone parents and teenage parents in mind. However, it cannot be sure that it reaches all the families who are in need of its services. The activities provided by the centre are appropriate and some, such as the parenting course, are of good quality. A suitable number of activities successfully focus on children's social skills and promoting better outcomes for health. The centre promotes purposeful learning adequately although it is not currently tracking the progress of children and using this information to inform the planning of sessions. Additionally, work with local primary schools to identify and enhance the focus of learning and development has yet to be fully developed. The centre evaluates sessions and takes careful note of parents' responses but is not doing enough to measure the achievement of adults or to provide courses that build upon their previous learning.

When vulnerable families are identified, they receive suitable individual support from early intervention workers employed by Barnardo's. This includes identifying support from other agencies. One parent commented, 'I do not know what I would have done if the centre had not been there.' The centre ensures that information about many aspects of parenting, including advice about how to keep children healthy and safe, is freely available to parents at both the Sale Road and Royle Green sites. Additionally, guidance on stopping smoking, tackling alcohol and drugs misuse and improving sexual health is also offered and is sometimes targeted to those in the most need, for example, teenage parents.

These are the grades for the quality of provision:

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| 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

The local authority firmly holds the centre to account and the managers in the centre share their ambitious vision for the future. However, governance at a local level is less effective. Managers and the local authority know that the advisory board is not working well. It lacks consistent representation from key partners and parents so is not able to ask a full range of important questions about the quality of provision and its impact. The centre actively seeks parents' views through the parents' forum and uses these views to shape services. Although it now has accurate information about the features of different parts of its reach area, it is not using data effectively. Target-setting lacks precision and development plans do not contain quantifiable measures of success. The effectiveness of partnership working is variable. Some effective partnerships are in place, particularly between the centre, the early intervention team and other workers employed by Barnardo's, but partnerships with local primary schools are underdeveloped. Although there are plans to improve strategic partnerships with health providers, the exchange of information between them and the children's centre is not always as good as it could be.

The centre's rigorous risk assessment ensures a safe environment. The centre has responded well to parents' concerns about overgrown shrubbery and has cut back this area. Identities and the backgrounds of staff are carefully checked through the vetting and recruitment process and they are appropriately trained in safeguarding. They are sensitive to child protection issues, particularly those relating to drug and alcohol addictions and domestic violence. The centre has clear guidelines regarding the use of mobile telephones and the taking of photographs, which users are alerted to.

The centre satisfactorily promotes equality and diversity and the attainment gap is narrowing between the lowest achieving 20% of children and their peers. All families are made welcome irrespective of their background and a range of festivals including Diwali are celebrated. Disabled children are successfully supported by the specialist resource team which is based on the Royle Green site. Over 80% of the families where children are known to have special educational needs have contact with services provided by this or other local children's centres. Outcomes for families, together with their level of involvement with the centre, show that value for money is satisfactory.

These are the grades for leadership and management:

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| 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 secures 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

Inspectors took into account the inspection reports relating to Sale Road Children's Centre early years provision which was inspected in March 2011 and the inspection report for Royal Green Children's Centre early years provision which was completed in February 2011.

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Summary for centre users

We inspected the Sale Road Children's Centre on 14 and 15 November 2012. We judged the centre as satisfactory overall.

We would like to thank all the people who spoke to us when we visited the centre. We were pleased to hear that you and your children enjoy sessions such as 'Play and Stay' and 'Baby Massage' and that you find the centre to be a warm and friendly place. We have judged the

overall effectiveness of the centre to be satisfactory because outcomes for families and the quality of what the centre provides are satisfactory.

Breastfeeding rates are below average in the area so midwives are helping to train more volunteers to provide support for new mothers. It was good to hear that those of you who have volunteered are so keen and enthusiastic and are enjoying the good quality training. We were particularly impressed by the parenting courses. It was really good to hear parents describe how they are able to understand and effectively manage their children's behaviour and are able to help their children to learn to speak through modelling language. The centre is aware that a lot of children are putting on too much weight as they grow older so it has put on popular sessions that encourage healthy eating. The centre provides you with lots of written information about how to keep your children healthy and safe and you told us that you find this useful. The centre has clear guidelines regarding the use of mobile telephones and not taking photographs, which users are made aware of and must follow. The recent health day event was a success and there has been a good emphasis on creating smoke-free homes.

The centre has worked hard to meet the needs of young parents and lone parents who live in the area. It is good to see Jobcentre Plus coming into the centre and helping parents to gain employment. There are lots of courses that help parents to gain confidence and knowledge about how to help their children with literacy and numeracy. However, the centre has not done enough to measure the achievement of adults or to provide courses that build upon their previous learning. Although an appropriate range of enjoyable activities are provided for children, the centre has not made sufficient checks on the progress children make in their learning and development or used this information to plan for future activities. That said, despite limited work with local primary schools on learning and development, children's skills at the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage have improved. Fewer children now have very low levels.

The centre has not rested on its laurels and a lot is going on behind the scenes to improve services and the quality of outcomes. The local authority is providing the centre with much better data and staff from Barnardo's are helping centre managers to understand and use this information. We have asked the centre to use this information to set targets for improvement so that they can measure the impact of the centre's work. Improvements have also been made to the way the managers monitor the work of the outreach and early intervention workers. These staff are working hard to support families and there are striking cases where they have helped families to improve their living arrangements and to establish routines. This has helped families to keep their children safe.

The centre is well supported by the local authority. Although many changes are on the way, staff are coping well with this. They are determined to continue to improve outcomes for families in the reach area. They know that more needs to be done to make sure that the great majority of families in the area take full advantage of the activities and services provided by the children's centre. Currently, there is not enough communication with health partners about the location of families, although senior leaders are working on this. The centre does strive to make sure it registers families and identifies their needs but this is not

always done in a logical and well planned way. There is no doubt that the centre listens to your views and the development of the parents' forum is a step forward in this respect. However, there are no parents on the advisory board at present and other partners do not always attend. This limits the board's ability to ask challenging questions about provision and outcomes for local people.

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