

Inspection report for Central Shropshire North Area Children's Centre

Local authority	Shropshire
Inspection number	404515
Inspection dates	12–13 December 2012
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Date of previous inspection	Not applicable
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Linked school if applicable	The Wilfred Owen School URN123427
Linked early years and childcare, if applicable	Poppies at Wilfred Owen School EY363679

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: December 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 head of centre, staff, service users, partner representatives and representatives of the local authority. They observed the centre's work, and looked at a range of relevant documentation.

Information about the centre

Central Shropshire North Children's Centre is a phase two centre situated on the edge of Shrewsbury. The centre was designated in October 2007 and operates from a principal site, a satellite site and several different community venues in the local area. The principal site of the centre has a nursery which caters for 82 children aged from birth to five years. The nursery is subject to separate early years inspection arrangements. The centre provides the full core purpose of integrated childcare and early learning, health, family support and outreach, and links to Jobcentre Plus. The local authority has responsibility for the strategic management and direction of the centre. The head of the centre is currently responsible for a cluster of centres serving the central Shropshire north area. The centre has an established advisory board which oversees the work of all centres in the cluster and is made up of representatives from the local community, professional agencies and parents.

The majority of the population in the reach area is of White British heritage with a small percentage of minority ethnic groups. Recent figures show that 1410 children under five years live in the reach area and 21% of these children live in families dependent on workless benefits. The centre is within the 30% of most deprived wards in the country. Most children enter early years provision with skills, knowledge and abilities 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

2

Capacity for sustained improvement

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

2

Main findings

The centre works well to meet the needs of all families, particularly those whose circumstances make them vulnerable. Those using the centre's services speak highly of its importance in their lives. 'It has been a lifeline of support.' is a typical comment and reflects the effective care, guidance and support given to families using the centre.

Effective partnerships and good levels of information sharing ensure that families' needs are assessed promptly and support is swiftly put in place. This results in good improvements to outcomes for those families. Children's learning is effectively monitored and promoted. Adults benefit from adult and community learning courses which improve their knowledge and parenting skills. However, a relatively small number of adults are engaged in training, and the progress of those who attend accredited courses at local colleges is not effectively tracked. Centre users benefit from a range of provision provided at different venues across its broad reach area. As a result the centre is establishing its role in the community and is effectively engaging the large majority of families in its reach area. The centre staff know families using the centre well. Some services are designed to meet the needs of specific target groups such as teen parents and a support group for families of children with learning difficulties or disabilities. Centre users' views are sought and used to shape services. Some parents are actively involved in governance through membership of the advisory board.

The centre is led and managed well. The shared vision and drive of the head of centre and current coordinator is effectively shared with staff, who are passionately committed to improve the life chances of the local community. Centre leaders have a good knowledge of the local community and its needs. However, the centre does not have an accurate picture of some target groups in the area, such as lone parent and children in workless households. Good improvements have been made to the numbers of families engaged in the centre's services and to the speed at which families' needs are effectively assessed. Breastfeeding rates have improved and Early Years Foundation Stage profile scores show that the gap between the lowest achieving 20% of children and the rest is closing. These developments and the

centre's clear plans for the future, demonstrate a good capacity for further improvement.

What does the centre need to do to improve further?

Recommendations for further improvement

- Work with the local authority and other partners ensure that data more effectively identify all target groups in particular lone parents and children in workless households.
- Increase the number of parents engaged in adult learning or relevant activities, and ensure that the progress of those undertaking accredited courses is effectively tracked.

How good are outcomes for families?

2

Positive links with health professionals, including health visitors, to increase the proportion of mothers breastfeeding at 6-8 weeks have resulted in an increase in the rate from 34.8% in 2009/10 to 45.3% in 2011/12. Immunisation rates are higher than national averages. Families' awareness of healthy eating is developed well as this is promoted effectively by staff at the regular 'Stay and Play' sessions and through weaning advice. Teen parents receive valuable advice on healthy eating at their drop in group. The centre is therefore effective in helping improve the health of the community. Families are safe at the centre. They are given good advice about home safety and some families have been provided with home safety equipment. Parents who have attended courses for victims of domestic violence report an increase in their confidence and feelings of safety. There is a strong commitment to preventative work. The centre has developed 'Early Help' meetings, where agencies meet to decide how best to prioritise and meet families' needs. Case studies identify times when children have been prevented from becoming looked after children as a result of swift and appropriate action by the centre. The Common Assessment Framework is used well for the early identification of children's additional needs and to ensure coordinated service provision to meet them.

Data show that children's level of achievement in Early Years Foundation Stage profile scores, although broadly average, have risen between 2010 and 2012. The gap between the lowest achieving 20% and others has narrowed from 29.9% in 2009 to 24.7% in 2012. Children's learning is effectively tracked in sessions provided by the centre and demonstrates that children make good progress from their starting points, including two-year-old children who receive funded nursery places. Parents report increased confidence through attendance at sessions such as 'Stay and Play' where they learn to help with their children's learning. As one parent commented 'It has helped me and my daughter develop confidence.' Parents are confident to express their views and know they will be taken into account by the centre. For example a first aid course was adapted in light of parental requests that it include advice on resuscitation. Some parents are members of the advisory board and have received training for this role to increase their confidence and effectiveness.

A few families have improved their economic stability through effective advice from

the benefits worker linked to the centre and a small number of parents have been helped into employment. Families access training courses on first aid and healthy eating to improve their health. However, only a small number of families are engaged in this learning. Parents are signposted to local colleges if they wish to take accredited course, but the centre does not have systems in place to effectively track their progress.

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	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 been successful in increasing the numbers of families engaged in services to 78%, from around 50% in 2010. It knows the families in its reach area well and has effective systems in place to ensure that needs are assessed promptly. The centre has clearly identified some of its target groups such as teen parents, and families with disabled children, and some groups specific to its reach area such as parents with partners in prison and families who are victims of domestic violence. However, it does not have data to accurately identify some groups, particularly lone parents and children living in workless households.

Centre users report that they enjoy the range of sessions provided such as 'Stay and Play' and 'Bumps to Babies'. Provision is located well to ensure that families in different parts of the broad reach area are able to access them. To ensure that families living in the rural parts of the reach area are effectively engaged in services, the centre commissions a 'Playbus' which transports services out to these areas. The centre ensures that the services are of consistently good quality by working closely with the Education Improvement Service to make sure that sessions are delivered in a similar way in the different venues. Achievements are celebrated and adult learners' needs are effectively assessed both before and after attending training to ensure that their needs are well met.

Staff and partners work skilfully and sensitively to meet the needs of families who

frequently face a raft of complex and at times overwhelming issues, such as domestic violence, debt and isolation. They understand the barriers faced by families and offer individual support within the home. The integrated package of support makes a difference to the lives of families with circumstances that make them most vulnerable. Case studies and discussions with families demonstrate the successful outcomes for families through the personalised support given.

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

The centre's leadership team, supported by the local authority and advisory board, has had a positive impact on improving outcomes for centre users. The day-to-day management of the centre is undertaken by an experienced centre manager who instils high expectations of staff, partners and the community. She and her team have a secure knowledge of the needs of the reach population. Staff are highly committed and motivated and have a shared vision to promote the best possible outcomes for users. Governance and accountability arrangements are clear and understood. Parent representatives on the advisory board share their views and have an impact on how to improve services.

Senior leaders have a clear understanding of the strengths and successes of the centre and focus their work on meeting the needs of the target and vulnerable groups. The area action plan accurately identifies ambitious priorities for further improvements, such as further increasing the number of families engaged in the centre.

Strong partnership working enables information to be shared at an early stage. The effective level of integrated working ensures referrals are timely and services fully coordinated to avoid duplication. Particularly good links exist with social care workers, health workers, and the Education Improvement Service. The holistic approach used to assess the needs of all members within the family has been successful in supporting families and improving outcomes. Close working relationships with health professionals have had a positive impact on breastfeeding rates. Parents report a high level of satisfaction with the centre and their views are used to shape services.

The centre provides a welcoming environment to all families. The centre can demonstrate that it works well with individual families to ensure that they are

included, including families with children with learning difficulties or disabilities. Equality of opportunity is promoted well. The centre provides a crèche weekly to support Shrewsbury International Women's Group. Festivals and cultural events are celebrated.

Effective policies and procedures are in place to safeguard children and families using the centre, including robust vetting procedures. Staff attend regular training in child protection and clear referral system ensure that families' needs are met in a timely way. Careful priority is given to the value of services and to ensuring premises are effectively used. The quality of resources is good. The centre is proactive in making good use of resources to benefit families in the community by providing services at a variety of locations and by providing the 'Playbus' to access rural areas. Services offered by the centre are used well and engage the majority of families in the target groups in the area. The centre provides good value for money.

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 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	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

The outcome of the inspection of Poppies at Wilfred Owen School on 11/12/2012 has been considered as part of this inspection.

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Summary for centre users

We inspected the Central Shropshire North Area Children's Centre on 12–13 December 2012. We judged the centre as good overall.

Thank you for your participation in the inspection and for taking the time to tell us about the centre's work and how staff have helped you and your children. It was very helpful to visit the activities taking place such as the 'Stay and Play' session and thank you for welcoming us into your groups. Here is a summary of what we found.

The centre offers a warm and welcoming environment, and makes sure that everyone is valued and included in its services. The centre leaders work well to provide services in a range of different venues in the area so that you are able to access them easily. This includes some of you in more rural areas where services are available using the 'Playbus'. You told us that you enjoy attending the 'Stay and Play', and 'Bumps to Babes' sessions particularly. You told us that these sessions are valuable to you in terms of making friends and learning how to develop your own children's learning. As one of you said 'The group has helped me to develop friends for life.' The centre is successful in giving new mothers good support to continue breastfeeding. It is also good at developing children's learning. The centre asks for and uses your views on activities and courses and some of you are involved in helping manage the centre.

We found that staff work effectively together with a range of other agencies to find out about those of you who may need support and therefore can target support to meet your needs. You told us that you find that support extremely helpful particularly if you are going through difficult times.

We know that some of you have attended training in first aid and parenting, and that these have been helpful to you. We have asked the centre to make sure that more adults are involved in some sort of training. The centre has helped some of you to attend training courses at local colleges, to become volunteers or to find jobs. We have asked the centre staff to make sure they know how well you have done if you attend a training course at college, and whether the courses have helped you to move into further training or employment.

We found that the centre leaders are committed to improving the centre further and making sure that the services you attend are the best possible quality. Many of you

already attend the centre regularly and the leaders have plans to make the centre even better known and reach even more families. We have asked the centre leaders to work with the local authority and other professionals to get clear data about who is living in the area so they know how well they are meeting everyone's needs.

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