

Inspection report for St. Ann's South Children's Centre

Local authority	Nottingham
Inspection number	404504
Inspection dates	29–30 January 2013
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Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected
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Linked school if applicable	Not applicable
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.

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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 staff, parents, members of the advisory board, and representatives of the parents' forum, representatives of the local authority and with partner agencies.

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

Information about the centre

St Ann's Children's Centre is a phase two centre providing services to a diverse community in the south area of St Ann's Ward. Since the centre opened there have been several changes in structure and leadership. A new management team started work in St Ann's when the local authority reorganised its children's centres in 2012.

St Ann's Centre operates a 'Hub and Spoke' model as many services are offered through satellite services in the local community. The staff team is led by a centre leader who has oversight of three nearby children's centres. The locality team is part of, and accountable to, the local authority. The advisory board works across three centres.

The population in the reach area of the centre is predominantly White British. Over a quarter of the population comprises families from a range of minority ethnic groups. The proportion of children living in workless households and families living on benefits is higher than in other parts of Nottingham. The reach area has a higher proportion of unemployment, young single parent families and teenage pregnancies than the rest of the city. The area also has a higher proportion of homeless families and there are two hostels within the area which cater for homeless families. Average life expectancy in St Ann's is significantly lower than that for the population of the East Midlands region as a whole. St Ann's reach area also records higher than

regional averages of crime, incidences of domestic violence, clinical depression and alcohol and drug dependency.

Children enter early provision with skills, knowledge and abilities below those expected for their age. The centre offers a range of education, health and social services. The centre also provides home visiting and outreach services through its family visitor and partner support workers. The centre opens every weekday from Monday to Friday. The centre offers counselling sessions in partnership with Relate Counselling and St Ann's North (Walter Hall's) Children's Centre. A Jobcentre Plus advisor provides work focused interviews and appointments at the centre.

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

This is a satisfactory children's centre which has good processes for ensuring the safety of families using its services. The local authority restructuring of early years provision in April 2012 led to the establishment of a new leadership team. It is providing satisfactory leadership. The diligent work of staff has helped to minimise the disruption that the reorganisation has had on the families that use the centre. Families engaging with the centre are all positive about the support and help they receive.

Centre staff hold regular meetings with partner agencies to share information concerning vulnerable families. This leads to effective early support and intervention and as a result there has been a reduction in child protection plans. Families who use the centre are confident to share issues around their safety and well-being with staff. There is particularly effective work tackling and reducing domestic violence.

The centre works with an increasingly diverse ethnic mix of families. Currently 13 different languages are spoken by children and families in the reach area. Reading books in some of the different languages spoken are available. However, the range of languages is not reflected in information leaflets or notice boards. For example, information about issues such as sexual health is only available in English. The centre

is situated right at the edge of St Ann's area, alongside a busy a main road into the city and this together with the high fencing surrounding it, make it difficult for visitors to locate the centre's entrance.

The centre manager recognises that, since opening, only a minority of families use the centre. This is because procedures to register new families are not effective and not all partner organisations share details promptly of families who would benefit from the centre's services. There are ambitious targets to engage more successfully with families and clear actions planned to help achieve them. However, the centre's improvement plans do not include measurable targets for uptake by the different groups in the reach area, nor do they identify milestones to enable progress to be monitored. There is evidence that more families are registering with the centre. This, together with accurate self-evaluation, demonstrates that the centre has satisfactory capacity to improve.

What does the centre need to do to improve further?

Recommendations for further improvement

- Increase the proportion of families within the reach area attending and using the centre by ensuring that procedures to register new families are strengthened and ensure that all partner organisations which make initial contact with a family notify the centre promptly to enable a follow-up contact to be made.
- Ensure that improvement plans:
 - have milestones which can be monitored
 - written have measurable targets for all targeted groups in the reach area
 - are adapted to meet the changing needs of the centre indicated by monitoring information
- Improve the signage and information in the centre so that:
 - visitors can see clearly where the centre is and where its entrance is
 - written information is available in the languages necessary to communicate clearly to all families in the reach area.

How good are outcomes for families?

3

Families are encouraged to make healthy choices. Regular health reviews help to establish the needs of families and parents are signposted to a wide range of services to help improve health and wellbeing. All first time mothers, in the reach area, are registered at the centre and have follow-up visits. Most families show they are developing a satisfactory understanding of healthy eating because of the range of activities provided by the centre. The number of children and parents attending the regular breakfast club is slowly increasing. The breakfast club is used to

encourage healthy eating and developing parents' skills in playing with their children. Parents reported that they had begun to change their eating habits at home because of this, eating more fruit for example. High-quality advice on weaning is provided to reduce the risk of vitamin D deficiency and educate parents about the reasons for obesity. Parents found the advice about 'fussy eaters' helpful. Take-up rates for these activities are improving. Family support workers ensure all families in the reach area have access to wider services.

Children and families using the centre are well safeguarded. Practices to help keep children and vulnerable adults safe are robust and staff are trained to recognise a wide range of developmental and social issues. These include developmental checks on babies and toddlers, identifying speech and language difficulties, evidence of domestic violence and identifying girls at risk of female genital mutilation. All families interviewed by inspectors stated that they could share any concerns they may have with staff confidently. One parent stated that all the staff are good listeners and non-judgmental so she felt able to talk about her concerns with them. She said: 'I don't know where I would be without them.' There is always a trained safeguarding member of staff on site. All safeguarding procedures are embedded in the work of the centre and in the close working relationships with partners. The Common Assessment Framework and teams around the family processes are robust. Looked after children and their carers are well supported. Staff at the centre take part in weekly vulnerable children meetings and this ensures that families about whom there are concerns are tracked across the city and speedy referrals are made to help them stay safe. Children at the centre behave in ways that help keep them and others safe. All parents said they feel safe when using the centre.

Home visits help parents understand the risks in their home to children's safety. Parents explained how they used the advice to install safety equipment such as stair gates. Structured parenting programmes have helped parents manage their children's challenging behaviour and increased their confidence in their parenting skills. One parent stated that, as a result of her participation, her child was 'calmer and happier'.

The centre works sensitively with parents with disabilities and families who have disabled children and children with special educational needs. Staff identify their needs and act to deal with them. The children's disability team meet all disabled children and children with special educational needs to ensure their families access available help and support. Support continues until children are settled into school to ensure a smooth transition into school.

Children from the reach area make satisfactory progress from their starting points. The centre works closely with schools through its 'getting ready for nursery' scheme. Schools reported that children who attend these sessions settle more quickly into nursery and have improved attendance. Currently, the centre is without a teacher which limits the impact of this work; however, a replacement starts later this term

A small and increasing number of parents are volunteers. These parents have

embarked on further education courses and one is studying to be a nurse. Staff sensitively encourage parents to become more involved in sessions, such as helping other mothers with form filling and helping with refreshments. An increasing number of parents are involved in the parents' forum and, as a result of their suggestions, the centre has run courses to improve participants' literacy and skills in first aid, baby massage and those relating to returning to work. Three members of the parents' forum are part of the advisory board.

Some families using the centre are improving their economic capacity. The Jobcentre Plus adviser runs weekly drop-ins and meeting sessions. Families receive help with directing to further education and training and help with money matters.

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	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 offers a range of provision aimed at supporting newly arrived parents to Britain, lone parents and families affected by domestic violence. The centre's outreach is extended through partnerships with a range of organisations including those supporting disabled children and their parents. The centre directs vulnerable groups to other specialist services. All families complete an initial assessment of their needs and a closure assessment which indicates how good they have found the services to be. The centre knows well all its families who attend. This knowledge supports good partnership working. The centre has good evidence of how it makes effective contact with families in order to ensure that they have full access to their services. Bilingual support ensures clear oral communication of information to families newly arrived in Britain.

The centre makes effective use of its satellite site which is situated alongside the library, health centre and shops. This is more accessible to many families. All the families that use the centre enjoy good quality support and activities. Those families that engage with the centre have improved outcomes especially in relation to starting

school and improving their health and safety. Targets for improvement in the centre's planning are not broken down sufficiently to reflect the needs of different groups in the reach area.

The centre supports the development of children's literacy and numeracy skills well through play activities, as well as developing parents' skills. Staff model good reading and play behaviours and parents are encouraged to share books and to play with their children appropriately. Parents say this has raised their confidence and self-esteem.

Families using the centre receive carefully tailored support, care and guidance. However, leaflets and other forms of written information in the centre are not provided in all of the community languages. This is limiting the initiation of support to families who are new to Britain. Families reported that they are happy with the advice and guidance they have received from the centre. They provide examples of how the centre has helped them improve their lives and their confidence as parents, particularly in helping them to cope in times of crisis.

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	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

Leaders and managers have a clear, shared vision for the centre; as yet, this has not had sufficient time to impact on improved engagement with the reach families. The day-to-day management of the centre is good. Clear lines of responsibility ensure that staff are held to account appropriately and that their training needs are well matched to those of the centre. Appropriate recruitment checks are made and staff and volunteers are checked to ensure they are able to work with children. The advisory board is well informed and understands the need to improve the number of families using the centre from the reach area. The advisory board takes account of parents' and families' views and encourages their participation. The views of parents and families inform the centre's development of activities.

Strategic planning provides clear direction and appropriate actions to improve provision. Plans do not include measurable targets linked to increasing participation and engagement of families in the reach area. The centre listens to parents well and takes account of their views in its daily planning. Families' evaluations enable the centre to demonstrate how it is meeting their particular needs. This feedback helps the centre to have an understanding of its strengths and areas for development and

these link well to the development plan.

All partners understand their role in promoting integrated provision to meet local needs. The integration of services is well planned. Involvement of multiple agencies is becoming well established and clear relationships exist which effectively support partnership working; leading to improvements in ensuring families' needs are better met.

Resources are matched satisfactorily to the needs of local families, particularly those who have more complex needs. The centre provides satisfactory value for money. The centre ensures it works inclusively with all families, including those with disabled children and parents with disabilities. Outreach work to target groups and families most in need of intervention and support is developing and links to the centre's plans for improvement. The centre provides a welcoming and safe environment.

Evidence from case studies and course evaluations indicates that the centre is helping to narrow the achievement gap. It promotes equality and diversity and tackles discrimination satisfactorily.

Safeguarding follows recommended good practice across all areas of the centre's work. Staff training, particularly in relation to child protection and for those working with children and adults with learning difficulties and those new to Britain, is good. All agencies working at the centre understand the implications of the wider safeguarding agenda.

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	3
The effectiveness of evaluation and its use in setting ambitious targets which secure 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	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	3
The extent to which the centre supports and encourages families in the	3

reach area to engage with services and uses their views to develop the range of provision	
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Any other information used to inform the judgements made during this inspection

None

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Summary for centre users

We inspected the St. Ann's South Children's Centre on 29 – 30 January 2013. We judged the centre as satisfactory overall.

Thank you for your help in this inspection. We spoke to many of you about the centre's work. We noted how well you and your children are catered for by the centre and were interested in hearing your views. This information was very helpful.

Leadership and management of the centre have not had sufficient time to bring about improvements in the number of families using the centre from the reach area. Families that spoke to us were very positive about the work of the centre and the increased confidence they had in bringing up their children. Those families that use the centre have clearly benefited from the dedicated work and care of the staff. In particular, safeguarding and keeping children and families safe is a strength of the centre's work. Safeguarding procedures are robust and this ensures that families and children know how to stay safe.

The centre works effectively with a wide range of partners but the impact of this work is limited because too few families and children from the reach area use the centre. Families explained how effectively they were directed to other organisations for help and support. Families new to Britain are welcomed and bilingual support is provided. However leaflets and information in the centre are only in English. Inspectors also noted it was difficult to find the centre as signs are not obvious and the entrance was hard to find. Once in the centre, staff are welcoming. You told us how well they listen to your concerns and value your views. You all spoke positively about the quality of work and support you receive from the staff.

The centre is well led on a day-to-day basis. Staff receive good training and are held to account satisfactorily. Improvement plans are appropriately ambitious but do not have measurable targets for increasing the proportion of families using the centre. Milestones to monitor the plans are not included in the improvement plans.

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