

Inspection report for Eastfield Children's Centre

Local authority	Wolverhampton
Inspection number	410965
Inspection dates	6–7 March 2013
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Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected
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Linked school if applicable	Eastfield Nursery School URN 104280
Linked early years and childcare, if applicable	Eastfield Neighbourhood Nursery and Children's Setting EY286406

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: March 2013



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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 HMI and an early years inspector.

The inspectors held meetings with senior managers and leaders, members of the governing board and the centre's advisory board, health and social care professionals, headteacher's representatives, representatives of the local authority, community partners, family support workers, early years professionals and parents.

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

Information about the centre

Eastfield Children's Centre is based on a site shared with Eastfield Nursery School, Eastfield Primary School, Eastfield Neighbourhood Nursery, Wolverhampton Amateur Boxing Club, SCARF (School and Community Art Resource Facility) and Eastfield Community Centre. The buildings are based on a former playground, which have been upgraded and landscaped through collaboration with the local neighbourhood management group.

The Governing body is commissioned to run the services of the Children's Centre. The centre has its own advisory board with membership drawn from the local authority, health services, the local primary school, the Multi Agency Support Team, other partner agencies and parents. The centre's staff team consists of: a head teacher, who is also the centre manager of the neighbouring Bilston Children's Centre and has overall responsibility for the nursery school and childcare setting on the Eastfield site; a deputy head teacher for the Eastfield site; a Children's Centre Services Manager, with responsibility for the day-to-day running of the children's centre; a family support coordinator; three family support workers; an early communications officer; three crèche workers; a finance officer; a clerical assistant; and a part time administration assistant.

The children's centre was designated in 2006 having originally been part of Sure Start Wolverhampton East, set up in 2003. It serves an urban mixed residential and industrial area most of which is located in one of the 5% most deprived areas in the

country. A large majority of the housing in the area is council owned with some privately owned and rented accommodation. The proportion of families who claim benefits and worklessness amongst the adult population is around 26%. Many families in the local area experience multiple deprivation such as low income, unemployment and poor housing.

The local population is predominantly White British with 20% from other ethnic groups. Roughly two thirds of the families attending the centre are of White British heritage. Of the remainder, there are similar numbers of Asian/Asian British, Black/Black British or mixed heritage and smaller numbers from other groups. Within the reach area, there are 773 children who are under five years of age. Children enter Early Years Foundation Stage provision with skills, knowledge and abilities that are below those expected for their age.

The centre offers or facilitates a range of health, social care and family support services. Crèche facilities are arranged to support activities on site.

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

This is a good centre. It is well established within the community. In conjunction with the childcare, nursery school and other community organisations on the site it provides a welcoming place for families and children. As one parent said ‘It’s a nice atmosphere, we have a good time in play groups every week with different activities and the staff are friendly’. Parents speak very highly of the support they receive and the difference the centre is making to the lives of their children and themselves. As another parent said, ‘I don’t know where I would be without the children’s centre’.

The centre has demonstrated a good capacity to improve. Self-evaluation and associated plans for action are well established and involve all staff and stakeholders. Since restructuring the management arrangements over the last two years, the centre has taken concerted and effective action to focus more closely on the support needs of local families and to make good progress towards meeting its targets for engagement and improving outcomes. The centre’s engagement rate with 0–5 year old children in the area rose steeply from 37.9% in 2009/10 to 55.4% in 2011/12 including 58.9% of those living in the 5% most deprived parts. However information

about the children's centre and its services is not reaching all new parents due to incomplete collaboration with some midwives. Engagement with lone parent and teenage mothers is high and improving but engagement with fathers is declining. Group and individual support has been given to families identified as having a wide variety of support needs.

Outcomes generally are good and continuing to improve. However, despite some marked improvements, the outcomes overall for being healthy remain satisfactory. Staff are well aware of the centre's strengths but, as demonstrated in the development plan, are also striving to make further improvements. The centre responds promptly to feedback from users on existing provision or suggestions for other actions.

Families benefit from both the range and quality of the programmes on offer. They also benefit from the particularly good individual support and guidance from the centre's staff and other partner organisations.

The promotion of equality and diversity in the centre is good; however managers do not analyse outcome data in sufficient detail to identify gaps in achievement between different groups in order to take effective action to close them.

Good partnership working is a particular feature of the centre and assists in the well-coordinated provision.

What does the centre need to do to improve further?

Recommendations for further improvement

- Further increase collaboration and cooperation with midwives in order to increase the relatively low levels of contact with new parents by making them aware of the centre's services before the birth of their new child
- Re-establish some of the previously run programmes and devise others to attract more fathers in order to reverse the falling trend of engagement with this target group
- Carry out more in-depth data analysis in order to identify and then address any difference in the achievement of outcomes between groups of centre users, extending the good practice already in the nursery school.

How good are outcomes for families?

2

Families' good health is promoted through a range of services. The centre's healthy lifestyle strategy includes healthy eating through its cook and taste programme and the provision of healthy snacks for children in the centre, the use of outdoor play and exercise, and subsidised Zumba sessions for adults. The percentage of mothers still breastfeeding after six to eight weeks has doubled over the last three years and now exceeds that for Wolverhampton as a whole. Immunisation rates are very high.

However the engagement with families with new babies is relatively low and the obesity rate for children entering reception classes remains high at around 14%. Families most in need of support are clearly identified and access the appropriate interventions, which are improving outcomes for all.

Control of access to all the buildings used by the centre is strict. The main building has a new electronic registration system and the whole campus is covered by closed-circuit television. During interview, parents said that they and their families feel very safe in the centre. The risk assessment of accommodation, equipment, and activities is thorough and staff provide good role models for parents in behaviour management and in the use of resources and equipment. Children show a good understanding of their own safety; they appear secure and show consideration towards others. Centre staff provide good support for families suffering domestic violence. They also promote home safety well. The centre provides safety gates for families on the child protection register and arranges fire service advisory visits, especially for those in private rented housing. The skilled application by staff of the Common Assessment Framework processes also provides good support to families. Parents who have received targeted support report that they feel better able to support their child's emotional and physical well-being. Families in crisis receive high-quality support.

Users report successful completion of educational courses leading to improved confidence and employability. A large majority of engaged adults are involved in education or training. Successful employability training has led to employment and former volunteers from the community are now in paid employment. Completion of parenting and other courses also gives users the confidence to cope with bringing up children in difficult circumstances. The uptake of places on programmes is high.

Children make good progress from their starting points and develop skills to help them in their future and in their readiness for school. The percentage achieving 78+ points at the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage has risen year-on-year since 2009. Although the rate in the area is not currently closing with national or regional rates it would have done so, or even exceeded them, were the contribution of one of the three schools in the reach area that is currently in special measures to be disregarded. Parents contribute well to decision-making through participation in both governing and advisory boards, historically through a parent forum and through survey questionnaires. However the parent forum has not met recently and currently engaged parents interviewed during the inspection were unaware of it. Children behave well in sessions.

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	2

target groups, enjoy and achieve educationally and in their personal and social development	
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	2

How good is the provision?

2

Programmes are well targeted to improve outcomes for users and match the needs of the local community in this area of high deprivation well. Outreach services contribute well to early interventions. The welcoming and supportive environment promotes good engagement with most target groups. However engagement with fathers is low and in decline following the loss of the person previously promoting activities aimed at this group. Centre staff use assessment, including observation during more general service provision, to identify the particular needs of families using the centre. In addition to assessing the development of children attending play and stay sessions and adapting the early years activities to suit individual development needs, staff help parents to use appropriate early years activities at home. As one parent said 'Since attending Parent Power, I do more activities with my children and we spend quality time together.' The 'terrific for twos' programme provides good leaning and development for younger children.

Programmes reflect the feedback and suggestions of users. Levels of user satisfaction are high. Multi-level and effective partnership working ensures that users benefit from well-coordinated programmes within the centre, or through other partners or agencies, to support them at times of crisis. This includes on-site support about financial matters and debt-management advice, a crèche facility for parents attending programmes, and highly valued one-to-one direct support for users outside the programme provision. The centre does use volunteers to assist in its programmes and although some are undergoing the necessary checks before starting there are none currently active. Many parents progress onto other developmental programmes and are encouraged to continue with their engagement in learning once the particular programmes have ended.

Staff know the area and many of the resident families well and provide good care guidance and support. Centre staff are involved in most child protection cases in the area and are increasingly active in applying the Common Assessment Framework since social workers reduced their activity in this area.

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 arrangements for governance and accountability and the day-to-day management and professional supervision of the centre are clear and well understood. The governing body gives good support and appropriate challenge to the strong leadership provided by the senior leadership team. Leadership of the centre benefits from the additional layer of experience and expertise provided by the head teacher and deputy headteacher and the economies of scale possible from joint training and staff cover from other elements, which they manage. The children's centre has little accommodation of its own at present. However, it makes good use of its own limited physical and staff resources and also those of other organisations in the complex and elsewhere in the reach area, which, linked with the good outcomes, represents good value for money. The building refurbishment and extensions underway at the time of inspection are due to provide additional scope for a further improved service.

Managers' strong focus on outcomes has resulted in good and improving performance. The service provision reflects an effective combination of strategic planning and response to users' views and needs. Partners complement the centre and help to meet the needs of families in the area. Partnership working is a particular feature of the centre's work. In addition to the strong partnerships with other council departments, agencies and community and voluntary organisations, the centre works closely with neighbouring children's centres to coordinate the integrated delivery of the range of services to meet its core purpose. The centre recognises that even closer working with health services could enable it to reach more new parents.

Good involvement of stakeholders, including partners and centre staff, in self-evaluation has produced an extensive and largely accurate report and associated ambitious development plan. The process of self-evaluation is well embedded.

The centre promotes equality and diversity well. Increased social inclusion is central to the centre's ethos. It is most successful in engaging families in most need from the areas of highest deprivation in its reach area. The percentage of centre users who are from Black and minority ethnic backgrounds far exceeds their representation in the local area. The centre celebrates different cultures through activities around religious and other festivals such as Diwali, Chinese New Year, and Eid in addition to Easter, Christmas and fathers' and mothers' days. Although the achievement of children in the area is improving, managers do not analyse data in sufficient depth to

identify different achievement levels between particular groups in order to plan actions to close those gaps and further accelerate overall improvement.

The centre's child protection policies and procedures are comprehensive and clearly written. Criminal records bureau checks are carried out for all staff and renewed every three years and an appropriate single record kept. Staff knowledge of safeguarding issues is good due to regular and appropriate training. The centre is closely involved with child safeguarding boards and other agencies with responsibility for child safety. Staff deal regularly and appropriately with vulnerable families. Although subject to the local authority's policies relating to the safeguarding of vulnerable adults, the centre's own policies do not make sufficiently explicit reference this aspect.

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

Inspectors considered the inspection report on the linked nursery school, which was judged outstanding in October 2012. They did not consider the findings of the inspection of the child day care setting carried out the week before this inspection as the report had not been published and the centre neither commissions work there nor does it recommend any particular childcare setting to users, referring them instead to the Family Information Service for such advice.

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 Eastfield Children's Centre on 6–7 March 2013. We judged the centre as good overall.

The centre provides a valuable source of support and guidance for families and children living in its area. The agencies supporting children and families work well together, striving to make sure that your children get a good start in life. They give you good quality support and show that they care what happens to you and your children. You told us that the support you have received has changed your lives. We found the level of care, guidance and support that the centre staff provide is really good. As a result, outcomes and the life chances for a large majority of families are much improved. As one of you told us 'It's eye opening'.

Being based on the campus with the community centre, day-care setting and nursery school helps the centre respond to the needs of families living in your area. It also means that you have access to wider resources and facilities than is often the case for many children's centres.

The close links between the children's centre and the children's nursery school in the same building are helping your children to become well prepared for school. The courses run by the centre also help you to learn skills either for yourselves or to cope better with your children.

The centre caters for those most in need of support. Leaders and managers know what needs to improve to make the centre better for you. They and the staff have the skills to carry out their plans effectively and respond quickly to your suggestions.

We have asked the centre to do three things to improve it for you. The first is to work even more closely with midwives so that new parents in the area find out more easily about the centre and what it has to offer. The second thing is for leaders to make sure that all the groups that the centre needs to support in the community benefit from its services. Finally, leaders need to do more to attract fathers into the centre.

Thank you to those of you who met us to tell us your views and for contributing to the inspection. Your comments and experiences were invaluable to the inspectors and helped us to make our judgements.

We wish you and your families every success for the future.

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