

Secret Garden Children's Centre

Athersley North School, Lindhurst Road, Athersley North, Barnsley, S71 3NB

Inspection date 10–11 July 2013

Overall effectiveness	This inspection:	Good	2
	Previous inspection:	Not previously inspected	
Access to services by young children and families		Good	2
The quality of practice and services		Good	2
The effectiveness of leadership, governance and management		Good	2

Summary of key findings for children and families

This is a good centre.

- The centre is highly regarded by parents and other professionals who live and work in the local community. Partners work closely together to ensure families have access to a wide range of good quality services that have a positive impact on the lives of a large majority of children and their families.
- High priority is given to working with parents to develop their skills in supporting children in their learning, and well-targeted support is given to the full range of early years provision in the area. Therefore, the majority of children from target groups make good progress from their starting points and are well prepared for school.
- The committed and enthusiastic staff team are supported well by the centre manager and deputy in fulfilling their roles and in gaining further skills. This enables them to deliver a wide range of high quality groups, support and activities.
- Strong links with a range of partners ensure that children and families receive high levels of care, guidance and support and are very well supported in times of crisis or need.

It is not outstanding because:

- There is not a clear programme of adult learning opportunities to enable a large number of adults to increase their employability by gaining further skills and qualifications.
- The local authority does not always set the centre clear and measurable targets for improving outcomes for families, based a robust analysis of local need.
- The centre does not use information well enough to identify trends and gauge the impact of its work.

Information about this inspection

The inspection of this children's centre was carried out under Part 3A of the Childcare Act 2006 as amended by the Apprenticeships, Skills, Children and Learning Act 2009.

This inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors.

The inspectors held meetings with senior leaders, local authority representatives, staff members, a range of partners with whom the centre works, volunteers and parents. They also held informal discussions with parents.

The inspectors visited and observed activities at The Roundhouse Resource Centre and at the children's centre.

They observed the centre's work, and looked at a range of relevant documentation such as self-evaluation documentation and development plans.

Inspection team

Barbara Wearing	Additional Inspector, Lead Inspector
Anne Ashworth	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about the centre

Secret Garden Children's Centre was designated from a former local programme in 2005. It is a stand-alone, phase one centre. The centre is managed on behalf of the local authority by an advisory board that comprises parents and a range of other stakeholders, including headteachers, local members and health staff. The centre offers full-time childcare provision as well as access to a range of support, educational and health-related activities.

There are 649 children aged under-five years within the reach. This area comprises six lower super output areas. Three of these are within the top 10% most deprived areas nationally and the remaining are in the top 30% most deprived areas. There are a high percentage of people with no qualifications, high levels of worklessness, and 40% of families are dependent on benefits. The vast majority of families are White British. Of the remaining families there are no predominant ethnic groups. There are higher than average levels of domestic violence and substance misuse within the local area. Children's skills on entry to early years provision are below expectations for their age.

The centre is linked to Secret Garden Children's Centre Nursery and shares the site with Athersley North Primary School. Their most recent reports can be found on our website: www.ofsted.gov.uk.

What does the centre need to do to improve further?

- With partners, develop a more strategic approach to delivering a comprehensive programme of adult learning services in order to increase the qualifications and employability of more families in the local community.
- Further improve development planning by:
 - improving the rigour with which the local authority requires partner agencies to measure the impact of their work, so that it can set clear, measurable expected outcomes for the centre at a local level
 - making better use of data systems and summary analysis to identify trends and demonstrate the impact of the centre's work.

Inspection judgements

Access to services by young children and families

Good

- The children's centre is well known within the local community and the large majority of people know the range of services on offer. Over 90% of families with young children or expecting babies are registered with the centre and the large majority regularly access the good range of services it offers.
- Close partnerships and tailor-made universal and specialist services that meet the changing needs of local families ensure that the centre is well used by most target groups. This includes families suffering domestic violence, those at risk of substance misuse, disabled children, those belonging to minority ethnic groups and others unlikely to access services. In this way, the centre effectively promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination.
- An active dads' group runs once a month and staff provide very good one-to-one support to fathers when needed. The proportion of fathers engaged with the centre is lower than for other groups but it is increasing and is higher than elsewhere in the local authority.
- The centre has worked closely with parents, childminders, nurseries and health visitors in a successful pilot to compile effective, integrated and inclusive procedures for completing the progress check at age two. These include all those involved in the care and education of the children and ensure that additional support is given where the need is identified.
- The very large majority of children take up the free entitlement to early education within the centre or through other local early years providers, including school nurseries. The centre and local authority are promoting the entitlement of free early education for two-year-olds and the centre is working pro-actively with schools and other providers to meet the increasing demand for places.

The quality of practice and services

Good

- Comprehensive support and strong partnership working have significantly increased the quality of early years provision in the local community. Well-targeted support and training to all those working with children have recently improved children's skills when they start school, and inequalities between groups of children are reducing. There is a consistently high priority given to working closely with parents to develop their understanding of how to support children in their learning. Local schools report that this has had a noticeable impact on increasing parents' knowledge of early years when their children start school.
- The centre supports parents to become volunteers within the centre and the local community. Volunteers greatly enjoy their role, are proud of their achievements and are a valued asset to the staff team. One volunteer reflects that staff at the centre saw her strengths and 'picked out her good points'. Others share how they have gained self-esteem and confidence and have been supported in obtaining training and qualifications.
- Most families from target groups attend and successfully complete training or education programmes run, through the centre, by well-qualified staff. These include a range of targeted, evidence-based programmes such as parenting programmes, and sessions, such as substance misuse awareness, that are open to all. In this way, families' learning, safety, health and well-being are enhanced.
- A small number of parents have completed education and training programmes that have led to an accreditation, qualification, further training, volunteering or employment. However, the centre does not have strong enough links with partner agencies to develop a strategic approach to the delivery of a programme of adult learning that supports employability.
- The centre delivers a comprehensive range of universal and targeted services that are having a positive impact on health outcomes for families. However, some initiatives are relatively new and not all data is gathered at a local level. This means that the centre can neither clearly show the full impact of its work nor set sharply focused future targets.
- Recent breastfeeding data show that 44% of mothers who were supported by the centre and were breastfeeding on discharge from hospital were still breastfeeding at six-to-eight weeks. This is

significantly higher than the percentage for the borough. There is a very high take up of vitamins as a result of initiatives within the centre. The number of mothers smoking on delivery has decreased, as have obesity levels for children in Reception class.

- Strong partnerships ensure that excellent care, guidance and support is offered by a range of agencies and by family support workers and other centre staff who are passionate about their work supporting families and safeguarding children.

The effectiveness of leadership, governance and management

Good

- The local authority has set challenging targets that have increased the number of local families accessing a wide range of good quality programmes and activities through the centre. The impact of some of these evidence-based programmes is clearly monitored and newly introduced data collection systems allow the centre to have a clearer understanding of the impact of other services it provides. However, not all partner agencies are held fully to account to demonstrate the impact their service has on families in the centre's area. Therefore, the local authority does not always identify clear, specific targets for the children's centre, based on robust analysis of local families' current needs.
- Leadership of the centre is strong. Good systems are in place to monitor the quality of services and staff skills through regular meetings, observations and analysis of evaluations. The centre manager gives regular reports to senior managers and the advisory board to ensure they have an accurate knowledge of how well the centre is driving improvements and reducing inequalities for children and families.
- Families are highly valued and their views and ideas are routinely sought through a variety of consultation methods. Parents have a strong voice, together with a range of partners, on the advisory board. This ensures that they have a clear input into centre development plans and the review of the centre's policies and procedures.
- The centre reflects on how it can best support families to meet their changing needs and in response to government initiatives. Leaders make best use of resources by adapting services and supporting staff well in gaining further skills and qualifications to enable them to fulfil and extend their roles.
- Safeguarding is a priority of all those working in the centre. Strong partnerships and highly effective use of the common assessment framework (CAF) ensure that all children identified as in need, those subject to a child protection plan and looked after children are engaged with the centre. Clear case notes demonstrate how well families are supported in times of crisis and how this support is reduced as families' needs change and they develop skills to support themselves.

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	Practice consistently reflects the highest aspirations for children and their families and as a result inequalities are reducing rapidly and gaps are closing.
Grade 2	Good	Practice enables most children and their families to access good quality services that improve children's wellbeing and achieve the stated outcomes for families.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	Performance is not as good as it might reasonably be expected to be in one or more key areas.
Grade 4	Inadequate	The needs of children and families in its area are not being met and/or the leaders and managers are not providing sufficient challenge to bring about improvement to the quality of services.

Select details

Unique reference number	22660
Local authority	Barnsley
Inspection number	421498
Managed by	The local authority
Approximate number of children under five in the reach area	649
Centre leader	Melanie Dopson
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected
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