

Darnall Children's Centre

563 Staniforth Road, Darnall, Sheffield, South Yorkshire, S9 4RA

Inspection date 26–27 February 2014

Overall effectiveness	This inspection: Previous inspection:	Requires improvement	3
		Not previously inspected	
Access to services by young children and families		Requires improvement	3
The quality of practice and services		Requires improvement	3
The effectiveness of leadership, governance and management		Requires improvement	3

Summary of key findings for children and families

This is a centre that requires improvement. It is not good because:

- Although registrations have increased year on year, the engagement of a small number of target groups, such as fathers, lone parents and families from minority ethnic groups, is low.
- The centre has not succeeded in improving health outcomes relating to smoking and obesity for children entering Reception, which remain high.
- Although children are making expected progress the gap between the lowest achievers and the rest still remains wide.
- There are insufficient opportunities for adults to make a valuable contribution to shaping services, for example, through the parents' forum or as representatives of the advisory board.
- The systems for monitoring and tracking the progress of children, including of those entitled to free early education and those adults accessing further education or employment, are not sufficiently well-developed.

This children's centre has the following strengths:

- Darnall Children's Centre is a hub in the community and the staff ensure that there is a welcoming, supportive and caring atmosphere within the centre.
- Satisfaction rates are high. Parents speak highly of the centre, staff, and the support that services give to help their children learn and behave well.
- The centre has established some good partnerships with other organisations. Successful working between key agencies ensures that child protection concerns are swiftly acted upon.
- The centre receives good support from the local authority and the local stakeholder forum. Managers have an accurate understanding of what it does well and a clear plan for future improvement, and have the capacity to go from strength to strength.
- The highly qualified and experienced centre manager is efficient and committed to both improving the quality of practice and services and raising families' outcomes.

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 three additional inspectors.

The inspectors held meetings with senior leaders, members of staff and partner professionals from other agencies. Discussions were held with the advisory board, reception staff, one representative from the local authority and parents.

Inspectors visited a number of sites including Darnall Health Centre, The Family Development Project, Manor Community Childcare Centre in Manor, Tinsley Green, MAST (Multi-Agency Support Team Office), and Woodthorpe Children's Centre.

The inspectors visited three sessions held during the inspection, a 'Breastfeeding Support Drop-In', 'Community Health Clinic', Tinsley and 'Play and Wait/Health Visitor Drop-In', Darnall.

They observed the centre's work and looked at a range of relevant documentation, including self-evaluation documents, parental satisfaction surveys and a range of case files.

Inspection team

Qaisra Shahraz, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Tara Street	Additional Inspector
Rajinder Harrison	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about the centre

Darnall Children's Centre is a stand-alone, phase two centre which opened in 2009. It has recently merged with Manor and Tinsley which are now part of Darnall Children's Centre. In partnership with other organisations, the centre provides a range of services including family support, health services, toddler groups and family learning.

The centre's key target groups are families living in the most disadvantaged communities, lone parents, fathers, those living on low incomes or in workless homes and those belonging to minority ethnic groups. The large majority of families living within the local area in Darnall and Tinsley are those who speak English as an additional language. There are 2703 children under five years of age living in the area, the large majority of which are in the 30% most disadvantaged areas in the country. Unemployment is above the national average and 36% of families are dependent on workless benefits. Most children in the area enter early years provision with skills below those typical for their age.

Governance of the centre is provided by Sheffield Local Authority in conjunction with the stakeholder forum that includes providers and local delivery partners. Greenlands Nursery Infant School (URN: 107020) manages the purpose-built building from which the Darnall Children's Centre operates. The site is shared with a voluntary childcare provider called Darnall Community Nursery (URN: EY375641). These settings are subject to separate inspections and their reports can be found at www.ofsted.gov.uk Darnall Children's Centre services are also delivered from venues in the community.

What does the centre need to do to improve further?

- Increase registrations and in particular, participation from target groups such as fathers, lone parents and families of minority ethnic groups where current engagement is low by:
 - planning more outreach activities
 - developing stronger links with childcare providers and schools
 - marketing and promoting the children centre across the new reach area.
- Improve outcomes and the quality and impact of practice and services by:
 - developing links with all local schools and early years providers in the area to ensure continuity in children's learning
 - shaping services to contribute to children's school readiness and working with partners to close the gap between the lowest achievers and the rest in order to increase the proportion of vulnerable children reaching a good level of development by the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage
 - by reducing the proportion of mothers who smoke during pregnancy and obesity for children at the end of Reception Year, by continuing to work with health partners.
- Improve the governance and accountability of the centre by:
 - establishing a system to follow up how well children and adults make progress when they access course or programmes delivered by partner agencies, and use the information gathered to inform the planning of future services
 - increasing the representation of parents on the advisory board in order to shape centre services and inform decision making.

Inspection judgements

Access to services by young children and families

Requires improvement

- A large majority of those living in the most deprived areas, including those identified as being in most need, access universal and targeted services at the centre. The use of birth data and good partnerships with health professionals working on site are helping to increase registration figures, currently at 69%. However, participation rates for fathers, lone parents and families from the minority ethnic target groups are relatively low.
- Regular prenatal, postnatal and child health checks are held at the centre as well as much appreciated breastfeeding advice. This means that some expectant mothers and families have good access to early childhood services.
- The large majority of families most in need, access free nursery places for their children who are aged two years. In addition, at 94%, almost all children take up the three- and four-year-old entitlement to early year's education. However, the centre does not yet work closely with all the schools and early years childcare providers that these children attend. This results in them not knowing how much of a difference the centre is making to the lives of these children.
- The centre is sensitive to the needs of families and does all it can to help them stay safe. The strong multi-agency involvement means that individual families who have been identified as needing support, including in their homes, receive the help they require. In particular, the centre staff work very closely with health and social care partners, making referrals and sharing information where necessary, to ensure the well-being of children and families.
- Disabled children and their parents are well supported through clear signposting to specialist support groups, provided through the multi-agency support team (MAST). Similarly, staff signpost families well to the expertise of partners, such as Job Centre Plus, Citizen Advice Bureau and the training providers. These services are used to support and advise them about financial matters, benefits and routes into employment.
- Volunteering opportunities at the centre have enabled family members to build their confidence and progress into training and eventual employment.

The quality of practice and services

Requires Improvement

- The Darnall Children's Centre is warm and welcoming and very much the hub of the community. Care is taken to maintain an attractive and stimulating learning environment. Displays are vibrant and the centre provides good-quality health and safety information to help families to be healthy and safe.
- Overall, outcomes for those families accessing and benefiting from the centre's services are improving. Parents develop their self-confidence, emotional well-being and make new friends. They benefit from a range of opportunities and specialist projects, such as 'Incredible Years', 'Doula Project' and 'Successful Family Programme'. These initiatives improve their parenting skills and their understanding of how to support their children's development and how to manage their behaviour.
- Health outcomes are varied. Health-related sessions held in the centre help raise awareness of the importance of healthy lifestyles and provide good support for breastfeeding. However, the centre has not succeeded in reducing the rate of mothers smoking at delivery or in improving the obesity for children at the end of Reception Year.
- The centre contributes well to improving children's life chances and preparing them for school, through its sessions, such as 'Talking Toddlers' and 'Ready Steady Go' groups. The proportion of children living in the area who achieved a good level of development by the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage has shown some improvement over time. However, the gap in attainment between the lowest achieving 20% and the rest still remains wide.

- There is good support and guidance for all families, including parents with children with special educational needs and/or disabilities and for parents recovering from post-natal depression. This greatly improves families' outcomes, personal circumstances and helps to reduce inequalities. Case studies demonstrate that the centre's involvement has helped to reduce the level of support needed for some vulnerable families.
- Parents speak highly of the centre, the staff and the support they receive, describing how their lives have been transformed for the better. 'Thank you for turning my life round and making my family happy again' are the words of gratitude one parent expressed in a letter.

The effectiveness of leadership, governance and management

Requires Improvement

- Darnall Children's Centre and its staff have been through a period of instability due to its recent merger with two other children's centres, Tinsley and Manor. The centre manager is highly qualified, skilled, hard working and has a clear vision for the centre. This is based upon an accurate and honest view of the centre's strengths and areas for future priority. She is supported well by the local authority.
- The newly formed advisory board, the stakeholder forum, is made up of a range of community members and partners who appropriately support and challenge. However, there are insufficient opportunities for adults to make a valuable contribution to shaping services. For example, through the parents' forum or as representatives of the advisory board.
- Targets for improvement are clearly defined. The local authority and advisory board play a pivotal role in holding the centre to account for its actions and its effectiveness in reaching and supporting those families most in need. Everyone is ambitious to make the centre good and improve outcomes for the families who are accessing the centre services.
- The centre recognises that systems are not in place to track and measure the progress made by children and by adults towards achieving their goals where they have been signposted to courses and programmes provided by outside delivery partners.
- Safeguarding procedures meet requirements and all necessary safety checks are carried out before staff have contact with children. The centre plays a pivotal role in collaborating with other organisations, such as MAST, in the use of the Common Assessment Framework to identify the needs of the most vulnerable children and for taking action to ensure that children in need and those subject to child protection plans are kept safe.
- Resources are of good quality and used efficiently. The large majority of the centre services are provided through the centre's effective work with its partners. Apart from the centre manager there is currently not a full staff complement.
- The centre is committed to inclusion, reducing barriers and inequalities. This includes enabling some families to have good quality advice and guidance from bilingual workers, especially in breastfeeding sessions. Similarly, the centre celebrates diversity well. This is reflected in displays which use positive images of people from around the world, and through the choices of books and appropriate toys.

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.

Children's Centre details

Unique reference number	20915
Local authority	Sheffield City Council
Inspection number	430212
Managed by	The local authority
Approximate number of children under five in the reach area	2703
Centre Leader	Catherine Ellison
Date of previous inspection	Not applicable
Telephone number	0114 242 3510
Email address	catherine.ellison@sheffield.gov.uk

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'raising concerns and making complaints about Ofsted', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk. If you would like Ofsted to send you a copy of the guidance, please telephone 0300 123 4234, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

(Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, work-based learning and skills training, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for looked after children, safeguarding and child protection.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 4234, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may copy all or parts of this document for non-commercial educational purposes, as long as you give details of the source and date of publication and do not alter the information in any way.

To receive regular email alerts about new publications, including survey reports and school inspection reports, please visit our website and go to 'Subscribe'.

[Piccadilly Gate](#)
[Store St](#)
[Manchester](#)
[M1 2WD](#)

T: 0300 123 4234
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.ofsted.gov.uk

© Crown copyright 2013

