

Inspection report for Ellergreen Early Years and Children's Centre

Local authority	Liverpool
Inspection number	362474
Inspection dates	22–23 September 2010
Reporting inspector	Gill Jones HMI

Centre governance	Ellergreen Early Years Centre Governing Body
Centre leader	Mrs Jane Rogers
Date of previous inspection	N/A
Centre address	Ellergreen Road, Liverpool L11 2RY
Telephone number	0151 233 4602
Fax number	0151 233 4594
Email address	sue.evans@liverpool.gov.uk

Linked school if applicable	Ellergreen Early Years Centre
Linked early years and childcare, if applicable	Ellergreen Early Years Centre

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.

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (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.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 1231, 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'.

Royal Exchange Buildings
St Ann's Square
Manchester
M2 7LA

T: 0300 123 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.ofsted.gov.uk

No. 100024

© Crown copyright 2010



Introduction

The inspection addresses the centre's contribution to:

- facilitating access to early childhood services by parents and carers, prospective parents and young children
- maximising the benefit of those services to parents and carers, 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 additional inspector.

The inspectors held meetings with staff, users, professionals who work in partnership with the centre, the governing body, the local authority and community workers.

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

Information about the centre

This centre serves Norris Green, a suburb of Liverpool which experiences very high levels of social and economic disadvantage. The population in the centre's reach area is mainly White British. The rates of worklessness are well above the national and city average. Two out of every three adults in the centre's reach area are out of work. Incomes are well below the national average. A higher percentage of families are on benefits, including disability allowances, than in the city and nationally. Children's skills, knowledge and understanding on entry to Nursery are well below the expected levels nationally for three- and four-year-olds.

The children's centre is a tenant in a local authority community building, opened in 2000. It shares facilities with Ellergreen Early Years Centre Nursery School, Ellergreen Community Crèche and out-of-school club, and Liverpool Community College. On the campus there is a medical centre and leisure centre. The campus borders an area designated for regeneration which is partly derelict. There is new social and cooperative housing close to the centre and some established residential areas.

This is a phase 1 children's centre, which provides the full core offer. The local authority has commissioned the governing body of Ellergreen Early Years Centre Maintained Nursery School to manage the children's centre. The headteacher of the nursery school has overall responsibility for the children's centre, supported by a

centre coordinator. Following the retirement of the headteacher in 2009, the governing body seconded an executive headteacher from a neighbouring infant school to support the centre on a part-time basis until end of August 2010. In April 2010 a new seconded acting headteacher took up post.

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 users and the wider community

3

Capacity for sustained improvement

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

3

Main findings

Ellergreen Children's Centre is providing an adequate level of support to the families and children in its reach area and outcomes for its users are satisfactory. The governing body and advisory board, including the executive and seconded headteacher, are demonstrating determined ambition to improve outcomes for children and families living in Norris Green. The local authority is setting appropriate performance targets which the centre is now striving to reach, with some success. Over the past year the centre has extended its work significantly by strengthening its partnerships, with health professionals in particular, and increasing the space available for use by the centre. The number of families in the reach registered at and using the centre has grown in the last six months. Leaders at all levels are focusing more closely on meeting local needs, particularly of the children and families whose circumstances make them most vulnerable. Consequently, the centre is demonstrating a satisfactory capacity to sustain improvement.

Relationships between the centre's staff and users are friendly, encouraging and productive. Parents and carers talked to inspectors about the good individual support they receive. Mothers who suffered from post-natal depression appreciate how the centre's staff and health visitors brought them to the centre to take part in activities, such as healthy eating, and they explained the difference this made to their lives. The centre provides well for families and children with special educational needs and/or disabilities. A specialist special educational needs link worker designs activities which help parents and carers to support their children's learning and this is resulting in children's good progress. The targeted work for families in need is effective through appropriate use of the Common Assessment Framework.

Users report that they enjoy the activities provided and feel safe in the centre. Safeguarding arrangements meet current requirements. Until recently, the number of users attending activities at the centre was low and the most popular activities are still those provided in the leisure centre and the local church halls. Leaders and managers are tackling this with some success. For example, users received the recent change to the shared reception area positively. However, because it is a multi-purpose entrance shared by community groups and the college, it is not an especially welcoming space to children and families. In addition, some users reported that receptionists do not provide advice and guidance relating to the centre's activities or the children's information service. However, the reception staff are not employed by the children's centre and are not yet fully engaged in its core purpose. The centre is striving to promote its work more widely, but is frustrated by some of the tenancy restrictions. For example, documentation shows it has taken the governing body two years to gain agreement from the local authority to erect a sign directing users to the main entrance of the centre.

Children in the reach area are achieving satisfactory outcomes and most are meeting the national expectations for five-year-olds. However, there are weaknesses in children's communication, language and literacy development. Staff are not assessing children's progress effectively enough to secure good outcomes in this

aspect of children's learning. Outreach workers are designing activities to develop this area. For example, they selected the equipment used in the popular 'Wiggles Jiggles' sessions for toddlers to develop left-to-right brain functions, aiding pre-reading and writing skills. Adult education courses are popular among users and several parents and carers told inspectors how outreach workers supported them to aim for gaining qualifications. Some users who started as volunteers at the centre gained employment at the centre. However, the centre does not keep an accurate record of users directed onto courses or gaining certifications and, consequently, is unable to show the impact of this work.

The advisory board and the centre's leaders have a good instinctive knowledge of the locality, derived from working and living in the area for many years. However, they do not use the data available to them to determine with accuracy the impact of their work or the exact level of need. Consequently, self-evaluation is weak. The advisory board has low representation of users from the community and there is no forum for users. This means the centre does not have a secure means of engaging with families in the reach area or of knowing why there is a low take-up of activities, particularly among young mothers. As the community in the reach area lacks cohesion, this is vital work for the centre.

What does the centre need to do to improve further?

Recommendations for further improvement

- Improve self-evaluation by:
 - making better use of all the available data to determine priorities
 - ensuring that all staff know and work to the priorities of the centre
 - ensuring that accurate records are kept of the full range of the centre's intervention work.
- Increase the number of users attending the centre and/or participating in activities, particularly from groups whose circumstances make them vulnerable, by:
 - integrating the activities provided at the centre by working more closely with partner organisations, such as the community college
 - extending individual work with targeted families to join targeted groups in the centre
 - extending the membership of the advisory board to include more partner or potential partner organisations
 - celebrating success of users and staff.
- Develop a user voice to help shape services and to play a full part in the future direction of the centre's work by:
 - encouraging those users already attending the centre to develop their confidence to take on leadership roles, for example through support

groups

- following up dormant registrations
- setting up a forum for users.

How good are outcomes for users?

3

Users of the centre are positive in their appreciation of the services received. This is particularly the case where users have received individual attention from outreach workers. This indicates that services are having a constructive impact on individual children and their families. The centre promotes healthy lifestyles. It has been working in partnership with 'Fag Ends', to encourage smoking cessation. Data show that this has been successful with families and is leading to a reduction in the percentage of expectant mothers smoking both before and after birth. Midwives and health visitors work well with the centre to identify needs and the rates for breastfeeding and immunisation are improving slowly. The improved relationship between health services and the centre, including regular meetings led by health professionals for the centre's leaders, is leading to better integrated work, but there is still some way to go to ensure that the pathway of support for parents and carers is seamless. More users are taking advantage of the health-related activities for babies and toddlers and some are popular with users, such as 'Ducklings' and baby massage.

Children using the nursery school and day care or crèche appear relaxed and happy. They are confident to explore their environment, both indoors and outdoors. Recent Ofsted inspections judged the nursery school and day-care provision at the centre as good and this provision is having gradual success in narrowing the gap between the poorest children and those with greater advantage. The centre provides places for children in need and 'wraps care around' these children well, particularly where child protection plans are in place. Families who have taken part in the Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents (RoSPA) home safety scheme appreciate the safety equipment. The centre has started to provide Webster Stratton parenting courses and the small number of families involved shows a reduction in stress levels, resulting in happier homes.

Several users explained to inspectors how they had been able to get back into employment or education through assistance from the centre, although the centre does not keep records of this outcome. Parents and carers told inspectors they use the crèche facilities while they extend their own learning or take part in courses run by the centre. Users say they enjoy the courses and are proud of their success in gaining qualifications, such as first aid certificates. Jobcentre Plus holds regular sessions at the centre but, again, the centre does not keep data to show the impact of this work on outcomes for users.

The centre ensures equality of opportunity for users through developing respectful

relationships. For example, it provides translators where families do not speak English. Support for families who have children with special educational needs and/or disabilities is particularly good and parents and carers appreciate the understanding shown by staff and other users. However, despite these strengths, there is very limited involvement of users in designing the activities provided by the centre and they do not have a strong voice in the overall strategic direction of the centre. Another area in which the centre has yet to gain success is with young mothers. There are high numbers of teenage and young mothers in the reach area, but the centre has yet to engage them successfully in activities.

>These are the grades for the outcomes for users<

The extent to which children, including those from vulnerable 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	3
The extent to which all users 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 users contribute to decision-making and governance of the centre	3
The extent to which children are developing skills for the future and parents are developing economic stability and independence including access to training	3

How good is the provision?

3

The range of provision has increased in the last year. The leadership has focused on ensuring a broader breadth of services to support strong targeted work. This includes the Jet service weekly 'Job Café', providing activities in outreach venues and developing better relationships with health professionals, resulting in the successful increase of registered users.

The assessment of individual users' needs, linked to the Common Assessment Framework, is good. Some compelling evidence from the outreach family link worker shows the impact of this work on improving outcomes and life chances for families whose circumstances make them vulnerable. Provision for children with special educational needs and/or disabilities is meeting needs well, although the numbers accessing this provision are very small. The centre uses the strengths of staff well to deliver appropriate activities for individuals and groups of users. However, some weaknesses in assessing children's needs in the nursery school and day care mean that the centre is not yet improving outcomes sufficiently in children's communication, language and literacy skills. In addition, there are some groups, such as teenage mothers, who the centre has not yet reached.

The sessions observed by inspectors had a clear focus, were purposeful and enjoyed

by users. Staff promote children's learning through the activities and there was good evidence of improved outcomes during the session, particularly in personal development. Staff are keen to receive feedback from users and in some instances sessions have been changed as a result.

The centre provides a satisfactory level of care, guidance and support for users. There is improving partnership with health services, including the enhanced midwife and community midwife services providing antenatal and post-natal care. However, although users receive advice about contraception and sexual health as part of this service, no additional information is easily accessible in the centre. In addition, the reach area experiences high levels of drug and alcohol abuse but, again, although there are numerous local support groups in the area, information on where to get help is not explicit. The recent introduction of a midwife drop-in service is leading to an increased use of the centre. Midwives appreciate the new designated space for these sessions and are securing closer relationships with the centre's staff, leading to better information sharing between agencies.

Although the range of services is increasing, participation rates at the centre are still low for many activities. For example, a 'Musical Movers' group during the inspection was only attended by four families. The centre does not analyse information closely enough to target provision to meet local needs. The governing body and staff are aware of this and are beginning to tackle it. For example, the centre held a fun day in the summer for local residents. Parents, carers and children enjoyed the day and it introduced them to the variety of the activities run by the centre. This contributed to the increase in active registrations.

>These are the grades for the quality of provision<

The effectiveness of the assessment of the needs of children, parents and other users	3
The extent to which the centre promotes purposeful learning, development and enjoyment for all users	3
The extent to which the range of services, activities and opportunities meet the needs of users and the wider community	4
The quality of care, guidance and support offered to users within the centre and the wider community	3

How effective are the leadership and management?

3

The local authority is working well with the governing body to hold the centre to account for the outcomes achieved. In the past year the governing body and the local authority children's centre coordinator introduced appropriate targets that are leading to securing improvement in most aspects of the centre's work. The performance management and supervision of staff is regular and increasingly robust. The governing body, advisory board and the centre's staff have a clear

understanding of what the centre needs to achieve to have an impact on the local area.

The temporary executive headteacher and newly seconded headteacher are working well together to integrate the services provided by the centre and on the campus. However, despite the positive aspects of the centre's work, barriers to improvement remain. Some of these are in relation to the seemingly insurmountable difficulties of the tenancy arrangements, and others to the already high volume of local authority, health care, social care and voluntary work in the area. The centre is conscious of potentially overlapping work and to tackle this is including more organisations on its advisory board as partners.

Many recent developments are at an early stage and leaders and managers are not evaluating the impact of their work systematically enough to know exactly how much difference they are making to lives within the community. For example, the centre does not make links between users gaining qualifications at the college, despite the centre's staff supporting their attendance. The centre is providing satisfactory value for money. The advisory board ensures that managers devolve resources appropriately and the lines of accountability are clear. Leaders and managers promote equality of opportunity and diversity well in all the activities provided. However, they do not ensure that all groups in the reach area whose circumstances make them vulnerable, such as young mothers, are targeted for support.

Safeguarding and procedures to protect adults and children in the reach area whose circumstances make them vulnerable are satisfactory. Recent improvements in the relationship between the Primary Care Trust are leading to better coordinated work. However, health visitors reported that there are still gaps in the communication between services. Regular meetings between strategic health visitor leaders and local children's centre leaders are starting to tackle these gaps effectively.

>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 extent to which ambitious targets drive improvement, provision is integrated and there are high expectations for users and the wider community	3
The extent to which resources are used and managed efficiently and effectively to meet the needs of users and the wider community	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	3

adults	
The extent to which evaluation is used to shape and improve services and activities	3
The extent to which partnerships with other agencies ensure the integrated delivery of the range of services the centre has been commissioned to provide	3
The extent to which the centre supports and encourages the wider community to engage with services and uses their views to develop the range of provision	4

Any other information used to inform the judgements made during this inspection

None

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 Ellergreen Children's Centre on 22–23 September 2010. We judged the centre as satisfactory overall.

The centre has made improvements to its work in the last year and this is starting to have an impact on the quality and range of services provided for children and families in the local area. The new leadership of the centre, supported well by the local authority, is reaching out to partner organisations to meet the needs of the locality. It has made improvements to the building and has gained some extra space to provide more activities for users. The governing body and the advisory board are determined that the centre will make a positive difference for the people living in Norris Green.

Users of the centre, mainly parents, carers and grandparents, told inspectors how they enjoyed attending courses run by the centre. They spoke highly of individual staff who helped them overcome post-natal depression and other difficulties. Some parents and carers explained how they had gained qualifications at the local college and, as a result, gained employment. They use the centre's crèche facilities and enjoy some of the activities, such as first aid, healthy eating and the scheme for safer homes.

Children attending the centre are making good progress in their learning and achieving well. The centre is beginning to have an impact on helping mothers to stop

smoking and to breastfeed their babies. Parents and carers who are attending parenting courses say they feel less stressed and their homes are happier.

Although the centre is satisfactory, we think it can do more to meet the needs of the local community. For example, although there are many young and teenage mothers in the area, the centre does not specifically target them for support. Also, there are not many parents, carers or other local users on the centre's advisory board, so the centre does not have a clear picture of the sort of services potential users would like it to provide. To improve the centre, we have asked it to evaluate its work more carefully and to ensure that the local community is more involved in designing the services it provides.

We would like to thank those of you who spared the time to speak with us. We wish you and your families the best for the future.

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