

Inspection report for Sunnybank Children's Centre

Local authority	Barnsley
Inspection number	384123
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Reporting inspector	Janet Stacey HMI

Centre governance	Local Authority
Centre leader	Ms Julie Fearnley
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected
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Linked school if applicable	Not applicable
Linked early years and childcare, if applicable	EY310670 Kendray & Worsbrough Sure Start Children's Centre - Full day care

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.

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.

An inspection of the registered early years/childcare provision was carried out at the same time as the inspection of the centre under Section 3 of the Childcare Act 2006. The report of this inspection is available on our website www.ofsted.gov.uk.

This inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and one early years inspector. The inspectors held meetings with the centre manager, the early years consultant, the chairperson of the advisory board, users, key partners and a local authority officer linked to the centre. They observed the centre's work and looked at a session in operation at the satellite site. They also looked at a range of documentation including the centre's development plans, evaluations, key policies and procedures regarding safeguarding children.

Information about the centre

Sunnybank Children's Centre is a phase 1 centre which was established in 2006. It started to offer the full core range of services in 2008. The centre is located in a purpose-built building in the middle of a large housing estate. The centre serves the wards of Kendray, Bank End, Ward Green, Worsbrough Dale, Worsbrough Bridge and Stairfoot. The reach area is ranked amongst the 10% most deprived areas in the country. Social issues affecting these areas are a high number of lone parents, families on workless benefits and adults with no qualifications or skills to enable them to enter the workforce. The centre works with a high proportion of families who have, or are suffering from, domestic abuse and this tends to be linked to the high proportion of drug and alcohol misuse which takes place in the area. There is low ethnic diversity in the reach area and most families are White British. However, there has been an increase in Eastern European migrants and asylum seekers moving into the area. The reach area is characterised by social housing. The centre takes referrals from and supports families with children in four local schools.

Family support, and early years advice and childcare are offered at the centre. Health partners are based at Oaks Park Health Centre and Worsbrough Lift. The social work team are based at Hoyland. Children in the reach area enter childcare and early education with a narrower range of experiences and skills than that expected for their age. The centre operates a variety of groups and activities on site and at the Sport and Development Centre, which is known locally as the Miners' Welfare Centre. Stay and Play sessions are offered at the centre and also at Kendray Primary School.

Governance of the centre is provided by the local authority in conjunction with an advisory board which represents three children's centres. A wide range of professionals are represented on the board. These include centre staff, local headteachers, health partners, social work partners, the local housing association, Barnsley College, a local councillor and the local police. Users from two of the centres attend; however, there is no representative from Sunnybank Children's 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 users and the wider community

2

Capacity for sustained improvement

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

2

Main findings

Sunnybank Children's Centre provides a good service for the young children, parents, carers and families who live within its reach area. It is particularly good at identifying the most vulnerable groups in the area and allocating resources in proportion to scale and intensity of disadvantage. In addition, the centre's intervention strategy is well designed and meets the expressed needs of parents and carers, as well as the needs identified by the family support team.

Strengths of the centre include very effective early years work to improve children's skills and knowledge and help prepare them for school; successful and sustained engagement with families but with opportunities for more intensive support where most needed; the improvement of parenting skills and the provision of emotional support to users of the centre; the collaborative way that the centre works in partnership with a wide range of agencies and partners to ensure those families receive effective care, guidance and support.

The range of services that is offered is good and results in good outcomes. The family support workers are a real asset to the centre; they are extremely well respected and valued in the community and by a wide range of professionals who all cite that this team plays a pivotal role in ensuring that the families whose circumstances make them more vulnerable receive the support they need. Whilst the centre provides a good range of activities to promote most outcomes, the centre's development plan does not clearly target the work required to deal with the low-level qualifications in the area or help users to gain work-based skills. In addition, while most families are beginning to develop their understanding of how to live healthy lifestyles, the centre's development plan does not show how the centre is helping to educate a small number of parents and carers transform their eating habits and help their children to choose healthy, nutritious food.

Parents, carers and families appreciate the good-quality support and advice they receive. They especially value groups such as 'Busy Bees', where parents and carers play alongside their children and staff from the centre. During these sessions parents and carers are able to see good practice in action across a variety of child development perspectives. The centre has identified and implemented successful strategies that focus on raising children's skills and abilities by the time they enter school. The result of this concerted effort by all key partners, particularly the early years team, is that from a very low starting point children are now entering schools with knowledge and skills that are only slightly below their peers in the local authority. The support given to children with special educational needs and/or disabilities is very good. The centre goes the extra mile to do all it can to help these children succeed in society.

Partnerships with local health visitors are particularly effective. The determined work of the centre staff and the health teams to improve breastfeeding uptake and reduce smoking during pregnancy is now starting to show positive results. This, together with the good-quality advice and individual support provided for families, has had a good impact on the extent to which most children, including those from groups whose circumstances make them vulnerable, are physically, mentally and emotionally healthy and are generally happy.

All staff share the centre leader's enthusiasm, commitment and ambition for the future. Staff morale is very high despite the many challenges they have to deal with in the reach area. The centre meets requirements to care for and protect children (safeguarding) and promotes equality and diversity well. The analysis of the needs of those who use the centre and need crisis support is very good. The views of parents and carers are sought in a variety of ways in the centre and at all the satellite sites; they regularly suggest ways in which services, activities and resources can be improved. These views are listened to and shared with the advisory board. A parents' forum was in place at the centre but due to lack of interest it has now stopped. The centre recognises this as a key area for development. This has not deterred centre staff and the advisory board from relentlessly trying to persuade users of the importance of having a voice at a more strategic level to help to shape the

development of the centre.

The local authority and advisory board fully support the centre but the new advisory board tends to act more as a friend to the centre instead of holding it to sufficiently rigorous account. Whilst targets are in place they are not always precise enough or focused on the key priorities which will maximise improvement to outcomes in health and economic well-being.

Considering the success the centre has had so far, including in helping improve children's readiness for school and reducing low birth weight, it has good capacity to improve further.

What does the centre need to do to improve further?

Recommendations for further improvement

- Improve development planning to ensure that it can
 - track precisely progress made towards meeting clear targets and measurable success criteria
 - focus on improving health and economic well-being outcomes.
- Improve governance of the children's centre by
 - strengthening the way in which the advisory board challenges the centre and holds it to account for its work.

How good are outcomes for users?

2

Good partnerships with health professionals and peer support volunteers ensure that parents and carers of young children and babies are offered a very effective level of support. Many parents and carers set out with the intention of using the centre only to access what they want, such as a childcare, but stay on as their interest in learning new skills develops and as their confidence increases.

Very good-quality personal support for families makes an effective contribution to the mental health of parents, carers and their children. Parents and carers speak highly of the good range of sessions that are designed to help them manage their children's behaviour. They are particularly appreciative of the 'Incredible Years' sessions. A typical comment from one parent was, 'I am learning new skills every day; my child is developing so it's all positive. I am so much calmer now and better at dealing with problems'.

The centre operates a good range of activities such as 'Cook and Eat' and weaning parties, where all attendees are trained in techniques in moving a child from using a bottle to a cup, and they are given a weaning pack to help with this. Fresh fruit, vegetables and healthy snacks are mandatory at all activities, including day trips with users. However, a small number of families in the Kendray area do not yet

understand the basics of a healthy diet plan, how to transform their eating habits and choose healthy, nutritious food. As a consequence their children suffer from tooth decay and have difficulty in moving onto solid foods.

There is a good emphasis on helping children and parents to be aware of how to keep themselves and their families out of harm's way. Parents and carers say that they feel very safe and secure in the centre and in the community. They trust the staff to help them in times of crisis or personal difficulties. Good procedures ensure that children are well safeguarded. Outreach workers undertake safety visits to all homes; they help families, in particular new mums, understand how fitting safety equipment plays an important part in keeping their inquisitive children safe. Fire safety advisors visit all activities and share simple, inexpensive tips to help prevent fires in the home. Fire safety advisors also visit all homes in the area to help families understand the importance of how to make an escape plan in case a fire does break out. In addition, all homes are provided with smoke alarms.

'Baby Yoga' and 'Baby Massage' sessions are very popular and help parents and carers learn that nurturing contact enhances their child's feeling of being loved, respected and secure. They also teach the positive value of physical stimulation including holding, movement, touch and voice, and relaxation techniques. This early intervention is a decisive strategy implemented by the centre to help break down the challenging behaviour seen in a high percentage of children who are starting nursery provision in the reach area.

Children make good progress in their learning when they attend the centre's provision and demonstrate good behaviour and good relationships. Enjoyment levels are high. Children grow quickly in confidence and make very good progress in improving their speaking and listening skills. Whilst the centre has been successful in developing children's progress in literacy and mathematics, not enough attention is paid to raising the level of users' educational qualifications or helping them gain the skills they need to find work.

Users have lots of opportunities to offer suggestions and requests for activities that they feel will benefit their children. For example, in response to requests to develop physical activities the centre arranged for walking clubs to operate throughout the summer. These were well attended by users across the reach area and there are now plans to develop a regular walking club. Suggestions from users are also used in order to refine what the centre offers. For example, the centre has changed the day of the week and time of several courses to ensure that it fits in with what users say best meets their needs. Users spoken to were confident that they were able to contribute to the shaping of the centre, but they were reluctant to get involved at a more strategic level.

The centre has very good and detailed case studies which show how well individual families have made progress in their personal and social development and how some families have improved their economic stability. The centre successfully ensures that families are able to access the benefits to which they are entitled, which in turn has

helped some families avoid getting into debt.

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	2
The extent to which all users enjoy and achieve educationally and in their personal and social development	2
The extent to which children engage in positive behaviour and develop positive relationships and users contribute to decision-making and governance of the centre	2
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?

2

All parents who spoke to inspectors were positive about the centre and were able to articulate clearly the impact different services have had on their family's lives. They were particularly complimentary about the care, support and guidance offered at the centre.

The centre actively seeks out parents and carers who would gain the most from using the centre. They do this by making contact with health visitors and other agencies such as social services, housing and the local GP. Joint home visits are often made with staff from the referring agency, ensuring that family support is carefully focused on parents' and carers' needs. The centre now obtains more precise information about new births in the area and, as a result, the centre manager is confident they are registering and engaging the majority of families with children less than five years of age in the hardest-to-reach areas. Potentially vulnerable families are identified quickly and receive very good-quality individual support that sometimes involves other agencies in developing a whole package of care.

The centre made a successful bid to provide nursery places for some of the most vulnerable two-year-olds in the reach area. Alongside this 'Two Steps Forward' provides family learning opportunities and encourages parents to become more actively involved in their child's early education. The centre recognises that this is a crucial step in not only educating parents in the benefits of learning through play, but also by providing these children with an extra academic year it will mean they are less likely to begin school with deficits in their learning ability and social behaviour.

The early years consultant is very well respected in the community and has a wealth

of knowledge and experience of the private and voluntary sector as well as the schools which children in the reach area attend. For three years there was a sizeable gap in school readiness for the children in the reach area against their peers from similar backgrounds. The centre has focused on the key issue of ensuring that children are no longer lagging behind their peers in their knowledge and social competencies. As a consequence of this coordinated effort by all partners the gap has narrowed significantly as children are now entering school with skills and knowledge levels only slightly lower than their peers.

As part of its commitment to promoting breastfeeding the centre has successfully trained 13 local volunteers to offer peer support to mothers. They visit local groups and health centres to discuss the benefits of breastfeeding. From this, the number of mothers who are initiating breastfeeding has risen in the past year from 55.3% to 65% and the numbers sustaining breastfeeding has also risen from 17% in the last year to 30%. In addition, the number of expectant mothers stopping smoking during pregnancy is increasing. The health team cites these achievements as key factors as to why low birth rates, which were an issue in the area, are now in decline.

The centre ensures that good-quality information about many aspects of parenting, including advice about how to keep children healthy and safe, is freely available to parents and carers.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The effectiveness of the assessment of the needs of children, parents and other users	2
The extent to which the centre promotes purposeful learning, development and enjoyment for all users	2
The extent to which the range of services, activities and opportunities meet the needs of users and the wider community	2
The quality of care, guidance and support offered to users within the centre and the wider community	2

How effective are the leadership and management?

2

High expectations are shared by all staff. The centre manager is highly respected by professionals and parents and carers across the community, and is a strong and effective leader. The performance management of staff is rigorous and arrangements for supervision meetings and appraisals are thorough. Regular meetings with staff have helped to identify the key strengths and weaknesses of the centre's services. Teamwork amongst staff is very good and contributes well to the positive ethos and welcoming environment in the centre. Development plans are in place but they do not provide a clear strategic approach as to how the centre is going to tackle the embedded attitudes of some users to poor health routines and reliance on living off benefits.

Partnerships are pivotal to the centre's good work. All partners spoken to were unanimous in their appreciation of the services and support they could access at the centre. 'It's a real positive working relationship we have with this centre. I genuinely think the staff at this centre have the families' best interests at the heart of what they do'. This was supported by another partner who simply said, 'This centre is brilliant in helping us support families before it spirals out of control'. The work with the health and social work teams are extremely effective. Together they provide a thorough 'team around the child' approach to ensure that the most vulnerable children and families are protected and cared for.

The centre's comprehensive range of policies and procedures are embedded well and applied routinely. The centre promotes diversity which is celebrated through resources and information which reflect different faiths, cultures and backgrounds. Careful consideration has been given to the design of the centre so that all users can gain full access. Safeguarding users is a clear priority at the centre and keeping children and families safe is at the forefront of their work. The centre is a secure environment to visit because a wide range of safety measures are in place.

The centre offers good value for money and is particularly creative in the way it uses resources to ensure that some of the families whose circumstances make them more vulnerable can take part in and enjoy the services the centre has to offer.

Local authority supervision is good and acts as a key driver for improvement. However, the new advisory board is still in the process of establishing itself and getting to know the key issues affecting the area. As a result, the board has not yet started to challenge the centre staff on why some of the long-standing health issues, which are most prevalent in the Kendray ward, plus the high levels of unemployment and low-level qualifications still remain in the reach area.

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	2
The extent to which resources are used and managed efficiently and effectively to meet the needs of users and the wider community	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 evaluation is used to shape and improve services and activities	2
The extent to which partnerships with other agencies ensure the integrated delivery of the range of services the centre has been commissioned to provide	2
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	2

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

An inspection of the registered early years/childcare provision was carried out at the same time as the inspection of the centre under Section 3 of the Childcare Act 2006. The report of this inspection is available on our website: www.ofsted.gov.uk.

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 Sunnybank Children's centre on 17-18 August 2011. We judged the centre as good overall.

We spoke with many of you about the centre's work. We learnt a great deal. You told us how much you value the services and activities that the centre provides. Many of you said that coming to the centre has given you more confidence, has helped you understand how your children learn and helped you to understand how to manage your children's behaviour in a positive way. You expressed your views very clearly and they were very helpful to us. You told us that staff are very friendly and give you exceptionally good support. We agree with you. Families who are facing complex or difficult times receive thorough and effective support. It is clear to us that staff in the centre know the local families and the wider community and we can see how the centre is working hard to reach all of you.

We were particularly impressed by how much the centre has done to help your children have the necessary skills and knowledge to start school. However, we noticed that while the centre does provide you with lots of ideas and activities on how to provide healthy nutritious meals, a small number of you are still giving your

children foods that contain too much sugar and are not moving your children onto solid foods when they are ready to do so.

The staff work really hard to make the centre as good as it can be. To help them we have asked that they look at the way in which they plan their work so that they are fully focused on how they can provide you with the necessary skills to enter the workforce and help address some of the health and social issues that affect the area. In addition, we have asked that the advisory board challenge the centre more to ensure that they do everything they can to make a positive difference to you and your children's lives. We know that you are confident to share your views and offer suggestions as to what happens at the centre. We also know the centre and the advisory board are extremely keen for you to restart the parents' forum and join the advisory board so you can make a difference at a strategic level; so much so that they are going to change the name to the Shape and Share advisory board. We really hope some of you do this, as after meeting you we know that you have a lot to say.

Thank you very much for your welcome and openness with inspectors. We thoroughly enjoyed talking with you and wish you all well for the future.

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