

Inspection report for Wainfleet Magdalen Children's Centre

Local authority	Lincolnshire
Inspection number	366434
Inspection dates	8–9 February 2011
Reporting inspector	Georgina Beasley AI

Centre governance	The local authority
Centre leader	Rowena Corbitt
Date of previous inspection	n/a
Centre address	Wainfleet Magdalen CofE Methodist School
	Magdalen Road, Wainfleet
	PE24 4DD
Telephone number	01754 880500
Fax number	01754 880500
Email address	rowena.corbitt@lincolnshire.gov.uk

Linked school if applicable	Wainfleet Magdalen CofE Methodist School
Linked early years and childcare, if applicable	Busy Bees Nursery

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.

This inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors.

The inspectors held meetings with centre staff, local authority representatives, health professionals, members of the social care team, parents and carers, and partners from the Girls' Friendly Society charity, the Queens Estate project, Wainfleet Magdalen Church of England (CE) Primary School and Busy Bees Nursery. They talked to Jobcentre Plus by telephone.

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

Information about the centre

Wainfleet Magdalen is a Phase 1 children's centre. It was designated in March 2006 and fully operational in August of the same year. It is situated on the site of Wainfleet Magdalen CE Methodist School. It offers all elements of the full core offer. 206 children aged 0 to 5 live in the reach area. All but a very small number of Asian families are from White British backgrounds. The social and economic position of families is low. The centre serves a rural community which is in one of the 30% most deprived wards in the country. The proportion of children who live in workless households is 31%. Around half of the children registered live in families that receive benefits and a third live in lone parent families. Nearly 60% of fathers are registered.

The centre provides a base for a wide range of health, educational and social services that take place on site, in the home and in other local venues. The linked Nursery provides 45 registered day-care places for babies, toddlers and nursery aged children for 50 weeks of the year. On entry to the primary school the level of skills shown by children are below that expected for their age. The lead practitioner is relatively new to the post of centre leader. The local authority manages the provision as the governing body.

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

The children's centre is good and serves its reach area well. The respect with which users treat each other is good. Everyone gets along well at centre activities and the atmosphere is extremely positive. Users consider carefully how to make new attendees welcome so that they return the following week and benefit from the same level of care that they themselves receive. This atmosphere is established due to the welcome that all staff give every user and visitor who steps inside the building. Practical support ensures everyone has equal access to services and activities.

Outcomes are good. Children make good progress in their learning and development. They start school at the expected level in their personal, social and emotional development. Despite good progress overall, the large majority start the Reception year with skills that are below expected levels for their age in communication, language and literacy skills. Nevertheless, positive transition arrangements ensure children settle quickly when they move to the Reception class. As one mother said, 'It is just an extension of the nursery.'

Procedures for ensuring every user's safety and well-being are outstanding and results in parents and carers' excellent knowledge and understanding of how to keep themselves and their families safe. Children follow this example as shown by their excellent behaviour at the primary school. The centre has excellent partnerships with health and social care services, and community partners. These ensure extremely well-focused support for children with special educational needs and/or disabilities and families causing concern, teenage and young mothers and families who live some distance from the centre. Rigorous procedures ensure the safety and well-being of children whose circumstances make them vulnerable. Families in need of extra support are monitored closely and regular reviews identify the precise support needed to help them overcome numerous challenges. A weaker partnership is with Jobcentre Plus. While the centre actively promotes its services, users have to travel to Skegness to attend appointments. This is an extremely arduous task for many with few regular transport services and no crèche facilities for children when they get there. As a result, the number of children living in workless families remains high.

'The centre is at the hub of the community' was a sentiment echoed unprompted by several users including parents and carers and key partners. Users trust centre staff to treat all disclosures sensitively and provide positive support and practical help. This is because relationships between the centre and families that use the centre are extremely positive. A good number of parents and carers attend centre activities, including those who live on the Queens estate situated over a mile outside the town and with few transport links. All parents and carers are expected to, and so do, join in with their children's play and learning during all group activities. 'Do we have to sing too?' mothers asked humorously at the start of 'Bump and Baby' group knowing full well that the answer would be 'of course'.

The lead practitioner provides clear and purposeful leadership. She has quickly gained an accurate view of what the centre does well and the areas in need of further improvement. She recognises that there is a lack of specific data about the centre's reach area to help target priorities more precisely and measure progress towards the success of subsequent actions taken. The local authority gives good support in monitoring and in providing resources to target areas of need. A recent evaluation of the cost effectiveness of activities is resulting in a more detailed analysis of cost against quality of outcome. This has further highlighted the lack of detailed and precise data specific to the reach area so that resources can be targeted even more effectively. Due to the focused evaluation procedures and constant and successful drive for improvement, the centre's capacity to improve is good.

What does the centre need to do to improve further?

Recommendations for further improvement

- Focus support in pre-school on the development of the children's communication, language and literacy so that more start the Reception class with levels closer to their developmental stage.
- Improve the economic well-being of children who live in workless families by developing more proactive partnerships with Jobcentre Plus.
- Ensure the local authority provides data specific to this centre's reach area to identify an objective baseline for all outcomes and to set measurable targets for monitoring the quality of its services.

How good are outcomes for users?

2

Parents and carers enjoy groups such as 'Active Tots' and 'Messy Munchers' that encourage them to get active with their children and to cook healthy meals from scratch. As a result, obesity figures for children in the Reception year are well below average. An above average number of pregnant mothers attend antenatal group which results in a higher than average rate of natural and unassisted births. There are not precise figures about the numbers who give up smoking but parents and carers are encouraged to smoke outside so that their children can live in smoke-free

environments. While there are some individual success stories, the number of mothers who choose to breastfeed their babies is below the national average. Despite the health team's continual drive to promote breastfeeding, midwives and health visitors have not been successful in breaking the cycle of 'three generations of bottle feeders'. Excellent support is given to teenage mothers by the centre, its partners and other parents and carers and, as a result, very few have a second baby and nearly all have returned to education or training. Satisfactory advice and support is given to promote dental health. The take up of immunisations is average.

While there is an above average number of families who are made vulnerable by their circumstances, the number of looked after children and those subject to a child care plan is low. This is because of the highly effective monitoring processes that ensure support matches need. The Common Assessment Framework is the starting point of a structured system of monitoring and review that sees the team build support early and gradually in response to each family's needs. Individual support for mental health is built into Team Around the Child (TAC) plans to effectively support parents and carers. Advice to families about safety in the home has led to a considerable reduction of attendances at accident and emergency departments to its well below average rate. Support for families who suffer domestic violence is good and becoming more formalised as users become more confident in disclosing issues. Two-year-olds who need extra support receive free placement at one of the local settings, and the support for their learning and development by the children's centre teacher ensures they make good progress.

Children feel exceptionally safe reflected in the confident way they come to the centre activities. The youngest children greatly enjoy their time at the centre and make an excellent start to learning. Smiles of delight spread across the babies faces' when the singing starts in the early education group. Children make good progress from their low starting points by the time they start school. An above average number reach six points in their personal, social and emotional development and an average number in communication, language and literacy at the end of the Reception year. The gap between the lowest 20% and the rest is closing faster than the national rate due to good and sometimes excellent provision in centre activities and excellent provision in the Reception class.

There are good informal systems for ensuring users' contribution to the centre's work. The 'Kidz Inc' partners plan and organise numerous events for families especially during school holidays. Parents and carers have played a large role in creating the community garden on site. Users' views inform changes to centre activities; for example, several groups run at the Queens estate making it easier for parents and carers to attend. While there are parent representatives on the advisory board, there have been few formal meetings over the last year.

Good support is given to help users develop work-related skills. A good number achieve level 1 and level 2 literacy and several users have achieved CLAIT level 2. In response to users' requests and as a result of good support, a good number have been successful in passing their driving theory test. While there are some telling

examples of success of individuals returning to work, the proportion of children living in workless families remains high.

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	2
The extent to which children are safe and protected, their welfare concerns are identified and appropriate steps taken to address them	1
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	2

How good is the provision?

2

The centre provides a varied range of services and activities that meet the diverse needs of users in its reach area. Attendance at groups is good except for the fathers' group. Nevertheless, a majority of fathers are registered and take an active interest in their children's lives. Assessments for indentifying and monitoring children in need of extra care to ensure their safety and well-being are thorough. The TAC process provides highly effective early intervention support for children and their families who are made vulnerable by their circumstances either at the centre or in the home. This prevents a return to a more formal child care plan or a need for one in the first place. Parents and carers' learn to join in with their children's learning and play through numerous activities and parenting courses. A baby songbook encourages parent and carers to sing with their children at home.

The needs of children with special educational needs and/or disabilities are assessed closely to ensure services support their learning well. One-to-one support through portage and speech and language therapy is excellent and ensures children have the support and additional equipment they need to be fully integrated into activities. The children's centre teacher tracks closely the progress of two-year-olds in receipt of funded day care. Individualised learning journeys plan relevant next-step learning goals for adults to follow. The focus given to personal development is excellent. Children become confident speakers, and make good progress in their early language and literacy skills.

Due to greater trust established between the centre and its users, parents and carers are confident to leave their children in crèche facilities while they study for accredited

qualifications and work-related skills such as level 1 and 2 literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology (ICT) courses. This is giving those who attend the skills they need to get back into work. Support from Jobcentre Plus is not so well established and is reliant on users getting into Skegness for advice about benefits and guidance in finding work. Parents and carers value being trained in first aid as this not only gives them the confidence to deal with any minor injuries at home, but also increases other users' confidence when they are present on the various trips.

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

The recently appointed lead practitioner has quickly gained an accurate view of the centre's strengths and areas for development. She has started to implement an improvement plan that details precise actions that different staff and services need to take to bring about the required improvements. Precise measures for success have been identified where the centre has the data and who will be responsible for each action. Staff are fully committed to ensuring children have the best possible start in life. They lead the aspects for which they have responsibility well.

Each agency has rigorous procedures in place for monitoring its work. Regular individual meetings between different agencies and services and with the centre ensure accountability. There have not been sufficient formal meetings of the full advisory board over the last year for everyone to come together to share outcomes and to plan for improvement. Although parents and carers have good opportunities to make their views known through regular surveys and meetings with different agencies, their representation in formal governance is only satisfactory.

Partnerships with health and social care services and many community partners are excellent and are a major contributor to the centre's promotion of diversity and inclusivity. The Girls' Friendly Society gives excellent support to young mothers in crisis ensuring that they register with the centre so that they receive the support to which they are entitled and need. The Queens Estate Project has been instrumental in building the confidence of its residents in planning and organising events, activities and adult learning opportunities and in getting involved in centre activities. It sees

the centre as 'key to the charity's exit strategy later this year'. There is good opportunity for users to meet with representatives from the Citizens Advice Bureau on request at the centre or Queens Estate. Similarly, good advice is given to users about adult education courses and training that will help build their confidence and give them the skills they need to get back into work. Partnership with Jobcentre Plus is less positive in supporting workless families in the practicalities of signing on for benefit and finding suitable work. There is insufficient flexibility in giving users advice about benefits and holding appointments at the centre, especially for those who find it extremely difficult to get into Skegness.

The centre works in partnership with the local authority to complete a cost analysis of its services and activities against the number of attendees. While this measure is useful, the centre and local authority acknowledge that there is a lack of measurement of value for money against quality in terms of user outcomes. Currently, some data gives general figures for the whole of East Lindsey district, but this does not help the centre to set quantifiable targets specific for its own improvement. When measured against the data for current outcomes, the centre gives good value for money.

There are excellent processes for ensuring and monitoring the safety and well-being of children and their families. Everyone is logged in and out of the building. Very strong partnerships between the centre and social care are highly effective in monitoring the safety and well being of the most vulnerable children. Every person working in family support, preventative team and social care is clear about their role and follow this diligently. Constant conversations ensure everyone in the team is clear about what needs to be done to support the family through its difficulties. Paperwork is thorough. A log details every action and communication, the required next-steps support and the date that this is achieved. Every home visit requires that the child is seen. In any moment of crisis, this enables anyone in the team to pick up the notes, and to know not only what has been actioned and when, but what needs to be done next. The identity, qualifications and suitability of all staff and volunteers have been checked fully. Close monitoring of all safeguarding processes ensures the safety of all users, staff and visitors.

Children with special educational needs and/or disabilities are given the support they need to access services. Families in receipt of benefits qualify for help with transport costs to venues. A volunteer driver network is available to families who live in isolated rural areas who have no access to public transport and who cannot drive. The children's centre teacher gives valuable support to the pre-school for building the most vulnerable children's good personal, social and emotional development and in smoothing the transition to the Reception class. The centre promotes positive attitudes towards all sections of its community. Users who register and who subsequently have not accessed services and activities within a given time are canvassed for their views as to how the centre can better meet their needs. This has resulted in some activities being held in different community venues closer to users' homes.

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 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	1
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

The inspection of Wainfleet Magdalen Methodist Primary School took place at the same time as the children's centre inspection. The inspection of its Early Years Foundation Stage provision, which was judged outstanding, contributed to the children's centre report and judgements.

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 Wainfleet Magdalen Children's Centre on 8–9 February 2011. We judged the centre as good overall.

The centre offers a good range of services and activities that meet you and your children's needs well. Systems to ensure you and your children's safety and well-being are excellent. The centre ensures your safety while at the building and is also helping you to follow safe practices at home. Many of you told us that, 'the staff are all great' and that you trust that they want to do the best for you and your children. Excellent care and support is given to families and children who need it most. The 'Team Around the Child' system enables families to receive targeted support early and often for short periods to enable them to get back on their feet. Excellent support for children with special educational needs and/or disabilities enables them to join in with all activities. Support for teenage mothers is similarly excellent to give them the support they need to return to education should they wish.

You have a good understanding of the importance that your families lead healthy lives. Your good attendance at activities such as 'Active Tots' and 'Messy Munchers' has resulted in children who are generally fit and healthy. However, the number of new mothers who start breastfeeding their babies is below the national average. You told us how much you enjoyed joining in with your children's play and learning. This was evident in 'Parent and Toddler' and 'Bump and Baby' groups. We were particularly impressed with how you welcome new people to the groups. The centre welcomes your views and responds positively to your suggestions. For example, many of you valued the support to help you pass the driving theory test. The advisory board has not met often enough recently to help you make a more formal contribution to the centre's work.

Many of you have successfully gained additional qualifications to support your return to work. You receive good advice from the centre to support you and your families' needs. We have asked the centre to work more closely with Jobcentre Plus to give you the practical support you need in getting your benefits or in finding work.

Your children make good progress in their personal development due to the positive relationships you and they have with centre staff. We have asked the centre to support the children's development of early communication, language and literacy skills in the same way to help them start school with higher levels than they do now.

The centre uses its good knowledge of your needs to deliver valuable and relevant services. We have asked the local authority to provide the centre with data that is more specific to the area so that the information can be used to set improvement targets that help it evaluate the quality of its services.

Thank you again for welcoming us to your centre and telling us how you, your children and your families have benefited from its work.

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