

Inspection report for Woodthorpe Children's Centre

Local authority	Sheffield
Inspection number	404514
Inspection dates	24 - 25 October 2012
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Date of previous inspection	Not applicable
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Linked school if applicable	Not applicable
Linked early years and childcare, if applicable	Sunshine Pre-School EY295674
	Woodthorpe Playscheme, After School and Saturday Club 300815

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.

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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 one additional inspector and one early years inspector.

The inspectors held meetings with leaders and managers from the Manor and Castle Development Trust (MCDT), centre managers and staff, representatives from the advisory board, local authority staff, representatives from a range of partner organisations such as health professionals, advice agencies and education professionals.

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

Information about the centre

Woodthorpe Children's Centre is a phase two centre in Sheffield which is managed by the Manor and Castle Development Trust (MCDT) on behalf of the local authority. The centre operates from purpose-built accommodation and shares its site with Woodthorpe Primary School. Sunshine Pre-School shares accommodation with the centre and came under its direct management in July 2012. A separate inspection report for the school is available at www.ofsted.gov.uk.

Most families within the community are of White British heritage and live in social housing or privately rented accommodation. Social issues that are characteristic of the reach area include high unemployment rates, poverty, youth crime and substance misuse. Around 41.5% of children aged under four live in poverty. This figure is much higher than the overall rate for Sheffield which is 27.4%. Approximately 36% of children live in households dependent on workless benefits.

The centre meets its core purpose and services offered by the centre include childcare provision, family and outreach support, adult learning, health services and employment advice. Most children enter early education with knowledge and skills that are slightly below expectations for their age.

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 families

2

Capacity for sustained improvement

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

2

Main findings

Woodthorpe Children's Centre is a good centre. It is led well by a highly committed manager who has the support of a confident, competent team of staff. In addition, the centre works productively with a wide range of partners from different sectors. Through their membership of the advisory board, they contribute well to governance of the centre. Partners are also actively involved in planning, delivering and reviewing services.

Links with health professionals are particularly strong. A good example of the impact of this joint working is the booklet 'Buzz has Itchy Eyes.' The booklet is used with families to promote smoking cessation and was produced with input from both centre staff and health professionals. The centre recognises that breastfeeding rates are low and uses a range of strategies to try to increase these rates.

Parents are viewed as partners and the centre develops provision with families. Consultations with parents are a constant feature of the management of the centre. Parents make a significant contribution to the improvement and development of services and feel that their views are valued. Outreach work is also highly effective in reaching the wider community.

The quality of provision is good and is responsive to community needs. The range of activities that allow children to learn, develop and have fun is also good. As one parent explained, 'What the centre gives to my child, I can't possibly give as a parent.'

Centre staff have an in-depth understanding of the barriers and challenges faced by families who live in an area that is characterised by multiple social issues. Although fear of crime and violence in the community is a concern of many families, they feel very safe at the centre. This is because safeguarding and safety are integral to the work of both staff and partners. The centre also ensures that promotion of safety is relevant to needs. Safeguarding procedures are routinely monitored to ensure that high standards of practice are

maintained. Consequently, the extent to which children are protected and safeguarded is outstanding.

Data show that children make good progress in their education. Centre staff work well with education partners to promote good quality learning opportunities for children and adults. However, the centre is still developing ways to monitor and track children's progress routinely in relation to outcomes they achieve after attending sessions. Parents benefit from a good range of learning opportunities at the centre. These contribute to the economic and social well-being of families.

The quality of care and support offered to families is excellent. Staff are highly skilled in providing exceptional support and care for families, some of whom have to deal with multiple barriers and life challenges. As a result of the support they receive, families overcome problems, such as those associated with substance misuse or gain the confidence to access centre services without needing 'handholding' support from staff.

The centre's performance management and self-evaluation systems are effective and lead to improvement. Good use of data ensures that the centre's performance monitoring is effective and thorough. These aspects, along with the good quality of its leadership, its effective governance and good management, confirm that the centre has good capacity for sustained improvement.

What does the centre need to do to improve further?

Recommendations for further improvement

- Improve overall health outcomes by persisting in actions and work with partners to increase breastfeeding rates.
- Strengthen use of strategies to monitor and track children's progress routinely in relation to outcomes of sessions they attend.

How good are outcomes for families?

2

Outcomes for families are good. The centre has very strong partnership links with a range of health professionals such as midwives, breastfeeding specialists and health visitors. As a result, parents have good opportunities to access health care support. Obesity rates for children are 10% and only slightly above the national average. The centre contributes well to healthy eating through individual and group sessions and parents are developing a good knowledge and understanding of how to prepare healthy meals. Breastfeeding rates at six to eight weeks are lower than the local average of Sheffield, but improving securely. Rates have risen from 30.2% in 2009-10 to 42.7% 2010-11. Centre staff continually work with health partners to explore how they can increase these rates and their work is having a positive impact.

Parents confirm that they feel very safe at the centre and 'emotionally secure.'. They also receive excellent support to make their homes safer places for their families. The centre manager works hard to ensure safety promotion work remains relevant to the needs of families. For example, results from a safety questionnaire the centre issued to families indicated that carbon monoxide detectors were not being used by many parents. In response, the centre is using a range of strategies to raise awareness about carbon monoxide and ensure that families have detectors installed in their homes. Centre staff and their partners also use the Common Assessment Framework (CAF) process very skilfully to ensure that safeguarding arrangements are paramount and meet the needs of families. Support and intervention work with families who have children subject to child protection plans are also excellent. Highly effective partnership working with social care teams helps parents improve their parenting skills and gain a better understanding of how they can protect their children from harm.

Schools report that children who access the centre make a better transition to school than those who have not accessed provision. Parents also identify good development in their children's social skills as a result of their participation in centre activities. Staff work productively with early years professionals and providers to focus on local educational priorities. These include developing children's skills in reading and writing. Although the percentage of children who achieve 78 points across the Early Years Foundation Stage is lower than the figure for Sheffield, data show good improvement over time. Adults who attend the centre also make good progress in their learning and personal development. Some are studying towards gaining an accredited qualification in childcare, while others participate in activities to build their confidence and raise their aspirations.

Behaviour of children is good and parents develop positive relationships with each other and with staff at the centre. Parents make a positive contribution to decision-making through their representation on the advisory board and the successful recruitment of parents in the role of 'Chair' on the advisory board. Parents also contribute well to the centre's work as volunteer 'health champions', and as they volunteer and support, and in some cases lead, group activities. The centre is well-established in the community and recognised for its positive contribution to the lives of families.

Staff are well aware of the economic barriers faced by many families within the community. In response, they use a range of strategies to try and minimise these barriers. These include working with partners to provide good quality employment advice and guidance for parents. As a result, their job search skills improve or they are able to make informed choices to improve their economic circumstances. A significant number of parents have increased their economic well-being by volunteering at the centre and have progressed on to becoming employed by the centre.

These are the grades for the outcomes for families:

The extent to which children, including those from target groups, are physically, mentally and emotionally healthy and families have healthy lifestyles	2
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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 children and parents, including those from target groups, 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 parents, including those from target groups, contribute to decision-making and governance of the centre	2
The extent to which children are developing skills for the future and parents, including those from target groups, are developing economic stability and independence including access to training and employment.	2

How good is the provision?

2

Centre staff and their partners know their community well. They have a good understanding of the barriers that inhibit some families from engaging with what they perceive to be authority figures or organisations. They use data and local intelligence gathered from a range of sources very effectively to identify needs. Provision is matched well to both community and individual needs of families. Outreach work is also used productively to promote services to the wider community. Data show that a large majority of families now participates in centre activities. Participation rates from key target groups, such as lone parents, are good and improving for those living in the most deprived parts of the community.

Parents benefit well from a range of opportunities designed to raise their aspirations and develop their knowledge and skills. Courses provided to parents lead to vocational or academic qualifications. In addition, parents can access a good range of volunteering opportunities. These enable them to develop their personal and employability skills. Many parents benefit from attending 'Parents as Experts' sessions which help them understand how they can support their children's learning. One parent described how the centre has enabled her child to 'develop a thirst for learning.' Learning for children is purposeful and linked well to the Early Years Foundation Stage. Children benefit from a range of provision that promotes their enjoyment and educational achievement. However, strategies to monitor and track the progress children make during sessions and plan the next steps in their learning are not yet fully implemented.

Families who are engaged with the centre receive excellent care and support. Staff work intensively with many families who live in a community with circumstances that make them vulnerable. Personal testimonies and case study evidence confirms that when crisis events arise, the centre offers the best possible care. For example, excellent support from staff has enabled some families to obtain better quality and safer accommodation. Others have been referred to specialist agencies and received excellent support to overcome substance misuse

problems. The recording and tracking of intervention and support provided is also exemplary.

These are the grades for the quality of provision:

The extent to which the range of services, activities and opportunities meet the needs of families, including those in target groups	2
The extent to which the centre promotes purposeful learning, development and enjoyment for all families, including those in target groups	2
The quality of care, guidance and support offered to families, including those in target groups.	1

How effective are the leadership and management?

2

The centre is led by an energetic and dedicated manager who is supported by a highly committed team. Staff have a good understanding of their roles and responsibilities. These are linked well to the overall mission of MCDT to regenerate the community and improve the life chances of families. Accountability arrangements are effective and there is good communication between the centre, the board of trustees of MCDT, the advisory board and the local authority.

Centre staff have developed strong partnerships with a wide range of organisations from the voluntary, private and statutory sectors. In addition, the manager actively promotes collaborative working between partners who may work directly with the centre but not necessarily with each other. Partners contribute effectively to the planning and development of provision. They are represented well on the advisory board and make a meaningful contribution to the centre's development.

Performance management is good and includes regular reporting and ongoing evaluation of the centre's performance. Ambitious and measurable targets are set to drive improvement. The process of self-evaluation is effective and links well to development planning. Resources are used well to meet the needs of families from a range of target groups. Staff are deployed and matched well to their roles. Value for money is good and this is reflected in the positive outcomes for families and also increasing participation rates.

The centre strongly promotes equality and inclusion and has been successful in reaching all of the disabled children in the area. Disabled children and their families within the wider community also benefit from using the centre's multi-sensory room. In addition, data show that the achievement gap between the lowest 20% of children who achieve 78 points across the Early Years Foundation Stage profile and the rest is steadily narrowing.

Safeguarding practice is outstanding and regularly scrutinised through the centre's safeguarding audit. Policies and procedures to promote safeguarding and safer recruitment are comprehensive and implemented well. Staff are well-trained in all aspects of safeguarding. Criminal Record Bureau and other recruitment checks on staff and volunteers

are carried out rigorously. The centre's multi-agency and early intervention work are excellent and highly effective. Staff work exceptionally well with safeguarding and social care professionals from within the local authority's multi-agency support teams (MAST) and multi-agency allocation (MAAM) teams. The centre's promotion of safeguarding for families living with domestic violence is excellent. For example, staff have been exceptionally creative and successful in using an inspirational poem to motivate and empower women whose lives have been affected by domestic violence to take action to protect themselves.

The centre's engagement with families and the wider community is outstanding. Through consultations, surveys and group discussions staff routinely gather views and feedback from parents and children. Outreach work is excellent and used to reach out to families who may be registered with the centre but not actively participating in activities. By using a survey to consult with fathers in the wider community, the centre has been able to provide activities that reflect the interests of fathers. As a result, the participation rates of fathers have increased.

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 effectiveness of evaluation and its use in setting ambitious targets which secures improvement in outcomes	2
The extent to which resources are used and managed efficiently and effectively to meet the needs of families, including those in target groups	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 partnerships with other agencies ensure the integrated delivery of the range of services provided by the centre to meet its core purpose	2
The extent to which the centre supports and encourages families in the reach area to engage with services and uses their views to develop the range of provision.	1

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

The findings from the inspection of Sunshine Pre-School were used to support this inspection.

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Summary for centre users

We inspected the Woodthorpe Children's Centre on 24 October and 25 October 2012. We judged the centre as good overall.

Thank you to all of you who took the time to meet with us during the inspection. We enjoyed our visit and it was a pleasure to meet so many of you and your children. Like you, we found your centre to be a very welcoming place. We appreciate the time you took to tell us about how much you and your families enjoy attending the centre.

Your children are developing well as a result of attending activities at the centre. From our look at statistics, we could also see that their achievement in school has improved significantly in recent years. The activities offered at your centre contribute well towards this. However, we have asked staff to do more to monitor the progress children make after they have participated in activities. This will ensure that activities are planned better to take account of the needs and interests of all children.

During our visit we were able to meet representatives of some of the external organisations and professionals that work in a really constructive way with staff at your centre. For example, we met many health and educational staff from other organisations. Health promotion work is good and we know you benefit from being able to attend clinics at your centre. We know that breastfeeding rates are improving, but they are still low. Therefore, we have asked staff to continue with their efforts to increase these rates.

We were impressed with the way so many of you support the work of your centre by contributing ideas and suggestions about how the centre can do things differently. The way your centre works with families to develop services but also reaches out to the rest of the community is exceptional. We heard many examples of how your ideas have made a difference to your centre's work. Some of you also volunteer in different ways to support the centre's work. This is commendable support which we hope you will continue to provide.

You told us how safe you feel at the centre. We know that this is something you value highly. Staff and the partners work together to keep families safe. This is one of the exceptional strengths of the centre's work. We like the posters and leaflets around the centre which encourage you to make your homes safer places for your children.

Some of you also told us about the excellent support and care you have received from the centre. This is another one of your centre's key strengths. From what you told us, and also from other evidence we have gathered, we can see that when difficulties arise, centre staff are there for you. They also work exceptionally hard with staff from other organisations to make sure that when practical issues arise such as difficulties with housing, you receive the best possible help and support.

Once again, we would like to thank you for your contribution to the inspection. We wish you and your families all the best for the future.

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