

Inspection report for Denbigh Children's Centre

Local authority	Luton
Inspection number	362466
Inspection dates	12 December 2010
Reporting inspector	Lois Furness AI

Centre governance	Local Authority
Centre leader	Elaine Close
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected
Centre address	Denbigh Road
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Linked school if applicable	Denbigh Junior School Denbigh Infant School
Linked early years and childcare, if applicable	Denbigh Pre-school 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.

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 two additional inspectors.

The inspectors held meetings with a range of users, staff, a range of partners and with representatives of the local authority. They observed the centre's work and looked at a range of documentation, including the centre's operational plans, its evaluations and safeguarding procedures.

Information about the centre

Denbigh Children's Centre is located within Denbigh Infant School and Denbigh Junior school which are due to amalgamate in January 2011. This Phase 1 centre provides the full core offer of childcare, early learning, health services and family support services. It serves a community that is ranked within the top 30% of the most deprived areas in the country, with three of its super output areas in the top 20%. The vast majority of the reach population are of Asian and Asian British heritage, with an increasing number of Eastern European families settling in the area. Within the reach area, there are 1,207 children from birth to five years, of which 20% live in households dependent upon workless benefits, and approximately 10% are known to have special educational needs. Governance is provided by the local authority, alongside the management board. A pre-school Learning Alliance has a service agreement with the local authority to support the development and monitoring of this setting.

Evidence indicates that children enter the Early Years Foundation Stage with attainment that is much lower than that expected for their age especially in their language development. The centre manager, who is the acting headteacher of the

junior school, has assumed responsibility for the centre, which prior to March 2010 was managed by a local authority representative.

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

Denbigh Children’s Centre provides a satisfactory service for local families, effectively helping those who use it, to improve the outcomes for their children and themselves. Parents and carers, who are frequent visitors, are enthusiastic supporters. One parent said: ‘I would be lost without this centre. It gives me the opportunity to meet others, develop confidence and provides training so I can get qualifications.’ All spoken to agree that their children benefit from attending. Provision for children’s learning and development is good, and supports vulnerable children and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities well. Observations of children and adults learning, show that enjoy and achievement are good. Parents and carers make new friends through attending centre-based sessions, and they display a good sense of enjoyment during activities. Parent and toddler groups such as ‘Stay and Play’ are well attended, and provide a safe environment to discuss everyday topics. In these sessions, many of the commissioned services regularly attend to provide parents and carers with useful advice and support in addressing any welfare concerns. The environment is safe and good attention is given to site safety. The centre promotes equality and diversity satisfactorily. The friendship and practical help all staff offer are its main strengths and the centre is a harmonious community as a result. A recent audit by the local authority confirms that safeguarding documents and procedures although of good quality, are not consistently embedded in all agency practices.

The level of engagement with the centre’s reach area is improving but not all vulnerable groups in the community access the centre’s activities. Also, although a wide range of services is provided, the centre is unable to evaluate fully the effect of its work because it does not have suitable information. For example, its services are having a positive impact on improving health outcomes such as breastfeeding, tooth decay, obesity and smoking cessation but insufficient data is provided by the local authority and the health authority on these aspects.

Capacity for sustained improvement is satisfactory, but self-evaluation does not go far enough. The management board and the local authority provide appropriate support and regular meetings take place to provide guidance in relation to the development of services and improvement plans. However, the quality and accuracy of self-assessment and the evaluation and interrogation of pertinent data is not sharp enough. The centre manager has identified that the management board is not sufficiently involved in strategic planning. The annual conversation, although identifying useful actions for the centre to implement, does not make clear enough evaluations to support the management board in setting priorities for improvement.

What does the centre need to do to improve further?

Recommendations for further improvement

- Work closely with the local authority to obtain precise data about the reach area from the health authority, to enable the centre to show impact on users' outcomes.
- Implement strategies to engage with the most disadvantaged and vulnerable groups in the community, who do not currently access the centre's activities.
- Develop the systems for evaluation so that leaders can identify accurately the centre's strengths and weaknesses, and set challenging targets for improvement

How good are outcomes for users?

3

Children, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, make good progress from their starting points in their personal, social and emotional development and in developing communication, language and literacy skills. The 'Every Child a Talker' project has been instrumental in improving children's spoken language. Children are well prepared for starting in the Reception class at the infant school and the gap between the lowest 20% of children achieving expected levels in key early learning goals is beginning to narrow. Children learn to share and play together well and clearly enjoy their learning. During the 'Stay and Play' session observed, many children left their parents and carers, confident to engage with the toys available. A parachute game was a great success because as it progressed, many children who had previously been reluctant developed confidence to join in. Parents and carers say they enjoy learning with their children, because of the advice given by the centre for example in using 'Chatterboxes' and the 'Story and Maths sacks.'

Parents have satisfactory opportunities to develop skills and improve their economic stability. The Jobcentre Plus representative offers monthly appointments, providing advice about finances, employment and training. English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) classes are well attended with some good outcomes. The take-up of other adult learning courses, including information and communication technology, sewing and health and beauty is satisfactory. Fathers in particular enjoyed the computer workshop as they learnt how to share their skills with their children. A minority of users move on to becoming volunteers, take up further training and gain

qualifications; for example, as a teaching assistant.

Good behaviour and positive relationships throughout the centre create a welcoming, respectful environment in which children and users feel safe and grow in confidence. As one user said: 'I was new to this country and I knew no-one. But from when I first came to the centre, staff made me welcome and always listened to me.' Other users comment how their concerns are listened to, and acted upon. In the 'Gup Shup' session, trust was evident as users shared anxieties and concerns. The parents' forum provides users with useful opportunities to communicate their ideas about developments to the management board. However, this forum has only recently been established.

Parents and carers' appreciate how the centre helps them to ensure safety at home; for example, by using stair gates and locks for cupboards. They say the first aid course has been useful. The support parents and carers have received in managing behaviour at the 'Fresh Start New Ideas' parenting course has proved effective. 'This course taught me so much - it was a life saver,' said one parent. Families access and receive a good range of information about how to keep themselves and their families' safe through leaflet and display information. These are raising parents' and carers' awareness of issues, such as fire and road safety. Satisfactory support processes are available for those who have a child protection plan, and the use of the common assessment framework is developing well. Safeguarding documentation is thorough but is not fully embedded in all the services' practice.

Parents and carers' are learning how to keep themselves and their children healthy. During snack times the eating of fruit and vegetables is encouraged as well as drinking milk and water. Sessions for parents, carers and children often include physical activities, and the 'Look and Cook' workshops are providing information about recipes that use healthy ingredients. The centre dietician, school nurse, family workers and a wide range of health workers work closely together to support improving health outcomes. The local midwives are proactive in encouraging breastfeeding, and sessions such as 'Bumps 2 Babes' are effectively providing pre-natal and ante-natal advice. Families with children with learning difficulties and disabilities are encouraged to attend the centre and families are being consulted about how services can be used to help them.

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	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
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How good is the provision?

3

The enjoyment and appreciation of those who use the centre regularly is undeniable. Support from centre staff and family workers was highly praised by the parents and carers interviewed and the quality of day care for children aged two to five years is good. There is a strong ethos of care amongst all staff. The centre co-ordinator is well trusted by all users. The family workers provide good support and deliver some effective activities such as 'Chatterbox' and a reading club for parents and carers. These make a strong contribution to children's development. One family worker with an expertise in language development is deployed well to develop children's speaking skills. The inclusive approach and welcoming environment ensures that, once users register with the centre, they go on to engage with a suitable range of activities, and participation rates are increasing. Courses, such as computing, completing curriculum vitae and interview workshops were delivered in response to users' requests. Records show satisfactory impact on the number of users involved and, as a result, individual users have gained qualifications, work experience and employment.

However, the extent to which the range of outreach services, activities and opportunities meets the needs of users is not evaluated accurately by the centre. This is because of the lack of robust data from the local authority and the health authority. Targeting support and guidance is based on local knowledge rather than on an accurate analysis of users' needs. Nevertheless, there are early signs that there is an improving picture as more information is becoming available. The newly-introduced birth registration forms are providing the centre with detailed information about children within the reach area. In addition, evidence from case files show that professionals from different services are finding ways of working together to support individual families. Multi-agency days are held where many service's including Jobcentre plus, adult community learning, diabetes team, oral health team, stop smoking service, library service, and centre staff meet together to discuss sessions to be made readily available or those the centre need to signpost. Outreach workers directly target the most vulnerable families, for example in signposting those experiencing domestic violence to seek help and support, and negotiating with landlords when housing provides unacceptable living accommodation.

Nevertheless, the centre accepts that over 45% of families in the reach area are yet to engage and access services. Also there is evidence that some parents and carers only interact with the centre after their first child has started at infant school. As one parent said, 'I wish I had known about the centre when my first child was born.'

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The effectiveness of the assessment of the needs of children, parents	3
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and other users	
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	3
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

Leadership and management of the children’s centre are satisfactory. They are improving rapidly. Through the direction of the centre manager, ably supported by the centre co-ordinator, previous performance has been consolidated and priorities identified. These include more rigorous self-evaluation, effective use of data and implementing plans to engage those vulnerable families who are not engaging with the centre. These reasons are why the centre’s capacity to improve is evaluated as satisfactory. The management board is clear about its roles and responsibilities. Key partners are represented on the board, including representatives from parents and carers. However, the management board’s involvement in strategic planning is embryonic and the lack of availability of accurate performance data from the local authority and the health authority means its role of holding the centre to account is limited.

The day-to-day management of the centre is well organised and the centre’s activities generally run smoothly. Staff work well as a team and show a strong commitment to the centre’s work in making a difference to children and their families. Policies and procedures are clearly understood by centre staff and staff from outside agencies. The local authority recognises the potential of the centre in raising the quality of childcare within the local area. Partnerships with other agencies are positive. However, some are quite new, such as those with midwives which have had limited time to impact on outcomes. All staff have undertaken relevant training in safeguarding users and all regulations are met. Health and safety checks are systematically logged and staff recruitment and vetting checks are securely in place. However, some safeguarding protocols for those working at the centre and other agencies are not yet fully understood by all.

Equality and diversity are promoted satisfactorily as services engage users appropriately from the different groups within the area. The centre has worked actively at involving fathers in their children’s lives, and children with learning difficulties and disabilities are becoming more integrated into the centre’s provision. However, leaders recognise that there is a lack of detailed information about the groups of users to enable them to target resources more efficiently. Even so improving outcomes, especially in enjoyment and achievement and feeling safe, means the centre provides satisfactory value for money.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The extent to which governance, accountability, professional	3
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supervision and day to day management arrangements are clear and understood	
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 adults	3
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	3

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

A discussion was held with the inspector of the pre-school day-care facility that is Denbigh pre-school nursery, which was inspected the day before the inspection of the children centre.

Inspectors referred to the inspection report of Denbigh Junior School which was inspected in July 2010.

Denbigh Infant School should have been inspected at the same time as the Children's centre but this was postponed due to the amalgamation in January 2011.

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 Denbigh Children's Centre on 1-2 December 2010. We judged the centre as satisfactory overall.

We greatly appreciated the opportunity to talk to those of you who attended the various activities we visited during the inspection, such as the 'Stay and Play' session, the English improver's class and the 'Gup Shup' group. You gave us lots of useful information, and we are glad you are pleased with the centre's work. We agree your centre is friendly and caring, where there are many activities, which you and your children clearly enjoy. We agree when some of you said the centre tries hard to help you to speak English more fluently and it was giving some of you the chance to gain qualifications to help you find employment. We think your children progress well during their time at the centre, and this gives them a good start for when they start at school in Reception. Some of you said you found the 'Chatterboxes and the 'Story and Maths sacks' very useful, and we could see how well these were helping you to support your children's learning. It is good to know that you feel safe, and you are learning lots about how to keep you and your family safe at home. We think that the centre's safeguarding procedures are satisfactory but the centre leaders must make sure that all agency staff understand all safeguarding procedures. Many of you told us how the staff have helped you and your children to become more confident. We saw this for ourselves, as some of you attending 'Gup Shup' group shared with others some of your successes and difficulties in managing your children.

However, although we are glad that those of you who attend the centre regularly are pleased with its work, we noticed that not all families are taking the opportunity to attend the activities. We have asked the centre to explore why this is and make sure it is providing the right services for all of you. To be able to do this, we have asked the local authority and other partners to provide more information about how well their work is influencing you and your families, especially in keeping healthy. We have also asked leaders and the management board to evaluate more carefully how well they are doing and set targets for improvement to make your centre more effective. Nevertheless, we think that the centre is making some good improvements; for example, in your children's development, and we think the capacity for further improvement is satisfactory.

We would like to thank all of you who found time to talk to us and 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.