

# Inspection report for Ashby Clinic and Children's Centre

Local authority	North Lincolnshire
Inspection number	362431
Inspection dates	11-12 October 2010
Reporting inspector	Mrs Rajinder Harrison

Centre governance	The Local Authority
Centre leader	Mrs Debbie Thurston
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected
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Linked school if applicable	n/a
Linked early years and childcare, if applicable	Ashby Neighbourhood Nursery EY 334781

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 Sections 49 and 50 of the Childcare Act 2006. The report of this inspection is available on our website [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk).

This inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors.

The inspectors held meetings with the centre manager, members of the Advisory Group, a range of providers, parents and carers, users and the local authority officers linked to the centre. They observed the centre's work, and looked at sessions in operation at both the centre's sites. They also looked at relevant documentation including the centre's operational plans, evaluations, key policies and safeguarding procedures.

## Information about the centre

Ashby Clinic and Children's Centre is a Phase 1 centre located in the Ashby area of Scunthorpe. The centre is located on two sites. The purpose-built premises house doctors' surgeries, other health services, a pharmacy, a cafe and the children's centre; the second site, 'Small to Tall', is in the grounds of Grange Lane Infants' School. The area is mainly White British, with a very small number of families from ethnic minority origin. The centre also serves Bottesford, a Phase 3 area that has no designated areas of deprivation and 70% privately owned housing. Ashby has high levels of social deprivation with an above average proportion of families eligible for free school meals. A high proportion of children from the reach area enter school with skills below those expected for their age. Within the reach of the centre there are significant issues surrounding unemployment, anti-social behaviour, crime and substance misuse and low levels of literacy and numeracy.

The centre has a manager and there are links with the local authority for monitoring and supervision of the provision. It offers a range of health, social care, and family

support and education services. The centre has encountered considerable staffing issues in the last year. Governance of the centre is provided by the local authority in conjunction with the advisory group that includes providers, members of the local community and users that attend the children's centre. Daily 'Stay and Play' and regular crèche sessions are held at the children's centre and the on-site independent nursery provides childcare.

The Ofsted report for the Ashby Neighbourhood Nursery for October 2010 report can be viewed at [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)

## 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

Ashby Children’s Centre provides a warm, welcoming and safe environment for all its users. They appreciate the work it does and value the positive impact this has on their lives. A typical view expressed by a user is, ‘The centre is like being at home - I can relax without fear of being judged; I feel safe and respected here’.

In strong partnership with the local authority, a key strength is the good leadership provided by the centre manager and her management team. Leaders model good practice and set high standards for others to follow. Safeguarding and equality procedures are good. Users’ views are heard through the parents’ forum and via discussions and evaluations with centre users who are playing an increasingly important role in determining the priorities for the services the centre provides. The multi-agency advisory group and the local authority lend their expertise and support, and challenge the centre to provide better outcomes for its users.

Over the last year the centre has increased the number of users it reaches by over a third. It has been particularly successful with those who are hard to reach, with a notable rise in the numbers of dads, young parents and children under five using the centre on a regular basis. This has been through a concerted effort to promote the centre’s services and the benefits to local families, particularly through home visits and referrals from partner service providers. It has rightly resulted in the centre being considered a ‘good place to go for help and advice and a place to make and meet friends’. The increased usage of the centre’s facilities is causing some difficulties, for example, in having sufficient space to park prams and conduct confidential meetings when the centre is busy. While those that discover its location thrive on the support that it offers, it is not signposted well enough for easy access for new comers.

The outcomes for users are good because provision is good. It is strongest when the centre uses the expertise of professionals, for example, the welfare benefits team and adult education, to influence its work in order to help families become more independent and self-reliant. Information from course evaluations and data is used

effectively to plan developments. Data is used well to identify users' needs and the centre's priorities. Development planning accurately reflects the changing profile as the number of users' increases. While information from most providers, including healthcare professionals, is readily forthcoming because partnership working is well embedded, partnership with the health workers is not as well developed. Information exchange is not always effective or efficient to support individual families and this occasionally results in duplication of support or advice to users.

Action to overcome gaps in provision and improve outcomes is effective. Leaders are pro-active in ensuring that any areas identified as weaknesses are addressed promptly and all providers regularly informed of changes. Leaders are accurate in their self-evaluation and acknowledge that they need to work in close partnership with all their partners to improve further. The local authority is increasingly providing a robust quality assurance role. This provides the centre with good capacity to build on these successes and further improve outcomes for families and children.

## What does the centre need to do to improve further?

### Recommendations for further improvement

- Establish more effective partnership working with the health workers, by:
  - ensuring that home visits deliver consistent advice and avoid duplication
  - implementing procedures whereby information about supported families is shared regularly on a formal basis.
  
- Improve access to the children's centre, by:
  - displaying signposts that help centre users locate the premises more readily
  - ensuring that centre users have adequate space to park prams outside the meeting rooms
  - providing appropriate accommodation for confidential conversations between centre users and service providers.

## How good are outcomes for users?

<b>2</b>
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Well-attended sessions create a lively atmosphere where adults and children feel safe and comfortable. All groups that attend the centre, from a variety of backgrounds, work and play together harmoniously. The centre effectively addresses users' feelings of isolation and a number say, 'I don't know what I would have done without it- it's kept me sane'. It provides good opportunities for families to engage in a range of services and to develop strong friendships and a sense of belonging. A typical view is that, 'this is the only place I can meet friends and talk about problems without feeling looked down on. All the centre staff listen to us and we help each other'. A number of users report that their confidence and self-esteem has improved since attending the centre and that they feel they can now tackle problems more easily.

Good quality information and practical advice is provided to all families to improve, for example, their parenting skills so that they can support their children's learning more effectively. Parents report that they have developed a better understanding of

early years' education through good quality family learning activities, such as the 'Wiggle and Giggle' and 'Stay and Play' sessions. Users report that some health providers are very helpful in that they provide useful information and signpost families to appropriate services to improve their lives. Family workers work in close partnership with healthcare professionals to promote access to the service, and to advise and support users. The breastfeeding group has seen considerable success in encouraging mums who have previously not breast fed to persevere because they recognise the health benefits for their babies. Children with disabilities are supported well and specialist staff work with family workers to ensure positive outcomes for parents and the children. Smoking cessation and 'Cook and Dine' sessions have led to fewer mums smoking through pregnancy and young parents creating healthy meals despite budget constraints. However, this approach is not fully effective. For example, despite centre staff working hard to promote healthy lifestyles through weaning demonstrations and healthy cooking courses, parents do not always follow the guidance they receive to impact positively on their family's health. In particular, obesity levels in the area remain above average.

Services offered in the centre ensure users are safe and resources such as free home safety packs aid safety at home. Relationships between centre staff and families are very trusting. This allows staff to identify quickly and sensitively, any safety concerns and intervene appropriately before a crisis occurs. Access to a good behaviour management course has helped parents to secure better relationships, behaviour and home safety for their children. Similarly, an anger management course helped some users curb their stress and distress, to ease flashpoints when problems arose at home.

Children are well prepared for nursery and mainstream school through the effective provision for the Early Years Foundation Stage at the centre and at 'Small and Tall'. Children have good quality learning experiences that impact positively on their learning and development. A suitable programme to improve children's speaking and listening skills and effective consultation with the speech therapy service, identify early any children who need additional support in this area. Good quality educational courses for adults result in high success rates in skills such as literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology. This success raises confidence and self-esteem, enabling some users to progress to vocational courses such as child care, hairdressing, carpentry and foundation degree courses. Users benefit from the centre's effective partnership with Jobcentre Plus. They are effectively signposted to relevant information and guidance that is tailored to their needs and circumstances.

Behaviour in both settings is good. The centre staff successfully promote a sense of belonging and mutual respect between staff and users. As a result, all parties enjoy being there. Play sessions successfully engage parents and carers by involving them in 'buddying' newcomers. Parents are encouraged to suggest ideas for future activities and the Dads group has successfully organised football matches and trips. While the centre has struggled to recruit parents to the advisory group, the parents' forum has several parents who participate confidently to identify future activities. As a result, many users develop relevant skills and qualifications to equip them for the

world of work and improve their life chances.

*These are the grades for the outcomes for users*

<b>The extent to which children, including those from vulnerable groups, are physically, mentally and emotionally healthy and families have healthy lifestyles</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which children are safe and protected, their welfare concerns are identified and appropriate steps taken to address them</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which all users enjoy and achieve educationally and in their personal and social development</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which children engage in positive behaviour and develop positive relationships and users contribute to decision-making and governance of the centre</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which children are developing skills for the future and parents are developing economic stability and independence including access to training</b>	<b>2</b>

## **How good is the provision?**

<b>2</b>
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Outreach services are generally very effective in meeting the needs of the wider community. Home visits are programmed, with target families given high priority, and outcomes following these visits are monitored well. Families where members' disability limits their capacity to access the centre, receive additional support, often involving providers such as the portage service and child care so that individual needs are identified early and met well. While the local community has few families of ethnic minority origin, appropriate agencies are involved with centre staff to signpost services, for example, welfare benefits and, if appropriate, courses in English as an additional language. One or two users raised concerns regarding a duplication of services, with health visitors and family workers not always coordinating visits.

Partnerships with social care are good. As a consequence, family workers coordinate well with care workers to support effectively families in crisis and those who require referral to family support services. When emergencies arise family workers from the centre are quick to respond and flexible in meeting individual needs. This personalised support is a strength and users appreciate its value.

Sessions and courses are of good quality with purposeful learning observed. For example, the 'Baby Massage' and the crèche facilities provide stimulating opportunities for many parents, carers and their babies and young children to enjoy quality time together. The babies explore in a safe, nurturing environment; parents receive good quality advice and support from a range of professionals and have valuable time to share experiences with each other.

Users understand the relevance of training and attendance at sessions in improving their lives. While not all are ready to take up formal education courses, many attend

the various childcare and parenting courses regularly and are keen to engage in activities that help them support their children’s learning and development. The numbers attending cookery classes are rising rapidly and many return regularly in order to maintain good habits, particularly with regard to cooking from fresh. However, attendance at, for example numeracy sessions, does fluctuate. The centre recognises it has more work to do to attract more users and meet set targets.

The centre assesses and review users’ needs well and consults with individuals, groups and providers as to where to target further provision. Signposting and referral to services and courses is swift and effective. Sustaining long-term benefits for users is a priority, so skills are developed well through courses such as the ‘Ambassador’ course that promote confidence and resilience. Individuals requesting specific help or guidance receive this promptly, which may include attending other centres in the town. In ‘Stay and Play’ sessions, assessments effectively focus on children’s needs and ensure activities are interesting and relevant to their lives. For example, children as young as two explored pizza making and the colourful end results were impressive, healthy and very popular. Parents, grandparents and other carers are shown how they can help and joint assessments record the child’s success through notes and photographs effectively.

The quality of care for users and their children is good. Support for users’ well-being is high priority and families report that their lives are better for having the specific help they needed, particularly at low points in their lives. The family workers at the centre have had to respond swiftly on occasions but have done so in a very professional and sensitive manner and this has resulted in positive outcomes that effectively support community cohesion.

*These are the grades for the quality of provision*

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

## **How effective are the leadership and management?**

**2**

Leaders and managers have a clear view of the provision and where improvements need to be made. They are accurate in their self-evaluation. Staff are supervised well and effectively supported to improve their practice through robust performance management procedures and high quality professional development opportunities. Users’ views help to shape developments and inform evaluations. They are encouraged to offer their views at parent forum meetings, after sessions and



activities and through home visits, email and text. This inclusive approach allows everyone to have their say about the services their community wants or needs.

The centre's development plan addresses local and national priorities effectively and is based on analysis of regional data and information. Leaders review the centre's progress regularly with the local authority and set further targets. However, the targets, for example, for levels of uptake for numeracy, are not sufficiently challenging to raise aspirations further. Some partners provide timely and relevant information to influence the development of the provision but this is not yet consistent across all providers.

Equality and diversity are promoted successfully. This is because all services are designed to engage users from the range of backgrounds in the local area. The 'Thumbs Up' group successfully supports those families where children or their parents have a disability. Any families experiencing particular hardship, for example, with respect to debts receive sensitive support that enables them to cope with legal issues and to plan their spending more effectively.

The leaders have a reflective approach to working and continually look for new ways to reach into the local community and include all groups of users effectively. For example, fathers are effectively encouraged to attend the centre to improve their relationships with their children and families; this group has flourished in the last year. Home visits, leafleting, a good 'buddy' system and an effective children's centre network in the town, helps users go further afield to extend their opportunities. Award ceremonies celebrate success and raise aspirations in the community. Leaders ensure a wide variety of users and community groups make good use of the facilities, but an absence of signposts makes it difficult to locate for first time users. Also, as the centre grows busier, the accommodation is becoming increasingly stretched particularly, for example, at 'Baby Clinic' sessions, where mums like to spend time forging friendships and sharing news about their babies' growth and development. All the safeguarding and child protection procedures are robust and all centre staff implement stringent checks to secure the safety of children and their families. The centre offers good value for money.

*These are the grades for leadership and management*

<b>The extent to which governance, accountability, professional supervision and day to day management arrangements are clear and understood</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which ambitious targets drive improvement, provision is integrated and there are high expectations for users and the wider community</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which resources are used and managed efficiently and effectively to meet the needs of users and the wider community</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which equality is promoted and diversity celebrated, illegal or unlawful discrimination is tackled and the centre fulfils its statutory duties</b>	<b>2</b>

<b>The effectiveness of the centre’s policy, procedures and work with key agencies in safeguarding children and, where applicable, vulnerable adults</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which evaluation is used to shape and improve services and activities</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which partnerships with other agencies ensure the integrated delivery of the range of services the centre has been commissioned to provide</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>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</b>	<b>2</b>

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## Summary for centre users

We inspected the Ashby Clinic and Children's centre on 11 and 12 October 2010. We visited a number of activities, looked at the centre's plans and documents and had discussions with some of you and the staff that work there. Thank you to everyone who took the time to come and speak to us, we are very grateful. Following this visit we have judged that the centre provides good support to you and your families.

The centre provides a good range of services that are helping you to improve your lives. Users appreciate the positive approach of all staff and were eager to explain how the centre has supported their families successfully. We were impressed to hear that you regard the centre as a safe and welcoming place to be and where you make good friends. We can see that the work the centre does in the community has transformed some families' lives. The number of families that the centre works with has increased rapidly in the last year and many return to access more services.

The centre works well with a range of partners and providers such as social care, education and some health services. It provides effective support for your children so that they get a good start in life. Adults are guided well as they undertake various education and training courses in order to achieve their potential. High attendance at courses has resulted in many of you gaining formal qualifications and access to work. Most providers work very closely with the centre to provide you with the best service possible but partnerships with the health workers are not always as effective. This sometimes results in you receiving unnecessary home visits that cover the same ground by both the centre staff and health workers.

The variety of courses and services provided meets a wide range of needs well. 'Stay and Play' and 'Wiggle and Giggle' sessions are very popular and provide good opportunities for grandparents, carers, parents and your children to play, explore and learn together. The centre has worked particularly successfully with young parents and dads. As a result your families have benefitted through improved relationships and a better understanding how to stay safe at home and about healthy eating, keep fit, budgeting and computers and digital cameras.

The centre is led well by the manager and her team. The parents' forum provides an effective means to hear your views and the local authority oversees the centre's work effectively. The centre staff are supported and challenged by these groups to ensure they strive to improve outcomes for all your families.

We have made the following recommendations to help improve the centre:

- strengthen the partnership working with the health workers to avoid duplication of services
- improve access to the centre by signposting it more visibly and providing more space for parking prams and for private conversations with service providers.

We wish you every success for the future.

The full report is available from your centre or on our website [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk).