

Inspection report for The Sunshine Children's Centre

Local authority	Oxfordshire County Council
Inspection number	368069
Inspection dates	24–25 February 2011
Reporting inspector	Steve Nelson

Centre governance	The Sunshine Centre Board of Directors
Centre leader	Jill Edge
Date of previous inspection	N/A
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Linked school if applicable	Not applicable
Linked early years and childcare, if applicable	The Sunshine Centre EY338625

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 one additional inspector and one early years inspector.

The inspectors held meetings with centre staff, users, representatives of the local authority and partners. They read case studies, observed the centre's work and looked at a range of relevant documentation.

Information about the centre

The Sunshine Children's Centre is a phase one children's centre that provides full core offer provision. This includes early education integrated with childcare, family support and outreach to parents and carers, child and family health services and adult education, including activities designed to support parents and carers back into employment. It operates in eight areas from three sites: the main site in Edmunds Road, one in Orchard Fields Community School and one at the Queensway School. Outreach areas cover Banbury areas of Neithrop, Ruscote and Easington. The main centre opens 51 weeks each year on weekdays from 8.30am until 6.00pm.

The head of the centre is responsible for the day-to-day running of the centre and has a full role in strategic planning. The Sunshine Centre has a service level agreement with Oxfordshire County Council. The advisory board consists of a parent chair, three headteachers, two parents, a local councillor and a health lead, a representative from the Cherwell District Council and local partners.

The majority of the families who use the centre are of White British origin. A growing number of families using the centre are of Pakistani and White/Black Caribbean origin. The centre's catchment area of Ruscote and Neithrop wards is in the 30% most deprived nationally. Banbury's rank on the Child Well-Being Index is significantly worse than its position overall, with three areas in the 10% most deprived, all of which fall into The Sunshine Children's Centre's catchment area. The children's centre has 1045 children under five in its reach area. Twenty eight per

cent of children and adults who use the centre come from homes which are dependent on benefits and where no-one is in work. The levels of skill shown by children when they start the nursery are below those expected 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 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 Sunshine Children’s Centre provides high levels of support for children and their families. This is because the welfare of the whole community, whatever individual or group needs are, is at the heart of the centre’s work. Children’s centre staff demonstrate good understanding of individual users’ needs. These are initially assessed well, with sensitivity, giving children, parents and carers and their families confidence in what the centre is doing. ‘Here they do everything they possibly can for families and they make a difference’, said one parent. The centre is making a good contribution to helping parents and careers support their children’s learning and prepare them for moving on to school.

Adults have good opportunities to take part in courses to develop life skills, for example to improve their personal development and to prepare for work. The take-up of these courses is good and they enable participants to think positively about future employment. However, discussions with users reveal a gap in the provision for improving adults’ literacy skills and in opportunities to include fathers more in their children’s learning.

Partnerships with the local community and other agencies are excellent. Regular partnership meetings are arranged, which enables everyone who is involved in the work of the centre to meet and discuss their work. The very effective partnerships with outreach workers and colleagues from health ensure that families are registered with the centre at any time, but particularly soon after a child is born.

There is much focus on teamwork and how everyone aids the success of the centre. This contributes to the high satisfaction among both staff and centre users.

Leadership and management are good. The centre manager is well supported by her experienced senior manager. Highly effective governance allows the centre manager and her team the independence to get on and do things but also provides challenge and support for leaders and managers to improve provision. There is a clear sense of drive and passion and managers have a good understanding of the difficulties they face in the challenging area they reach out to. Rigorous self-evaluation takes account of the views of centre users and partners and leads to accurate identification of priorities for improvement. The centre is successfully increasing its outreach to vulnerable groups in its reach area and the positive feedback from users reflects its effectiveness and good capacity for continuing improvement.

The work of the centre has a good focus on equality of opportunity. It has been very successful in supporting Polish families who speak very little or no English. This has given them confidence about what the centre can provide for them to enhance their lives in this country. However, the centre does not have sufficiently rigorous systems for analysing how successfully it is engaging users from a variety of minority ethnic groups and meeting their specific needs.

The quality of care, guidance and support for children and adult users is exceptionally good. The centre meets all safeguarding requirements and staff ensure it is a very safe environment for adults and the children they bring with them.

What does the centre need to do to improve further?

Recommendations for further improvement

- Extend the centre's provision for improving adults' literacy skills and involving fathers more effectively in their children's learning.
- Develop rigorous systems for assessing the impact of initiatives to engage different groups of users and use the outcomes to encourage the involvement of more minority ethnic groups in the centre's activities.

How good are outcomes for users?

2

The wide range of activities, including family cookery and the immunisation catch-up clinic, promote good, healthy lifestyles. Children are developing good awareness of hygiene, with regular reminders about putting toys in mouths and washing hands before meals. The popular yoga sessions for parents and carers and children and free-flow access to outside play have a positive impact upon their health. Highly effective coordinated working ensures children are kept exceptionally safe. Users feel comfortable and confident to approach practitioners to discuss issues, and their own awareness of children's safety is promoted very well. Parents say they are very safe at home because of the increased awareness of safety that the centre has given them. They particularly like the excellent range of home equipment, including

cupboard locks, socket covers and fire guards, provided by the centre to make their homes safe. Case studies show significant impact and improved outcomes for children on child protection plans. Robust systems are in place to support vulnerable children and any adult in need.

Effective action is taken to help adults and children achieve well. Last year showed a 10% increase in children meeting and exceeding the centre's expectations for their age-related skills. They make good progress and develop a wide range of skills to accelerate future learning. Children with special educational needs and/or disabilities mix freely with others within the setting. Parents enjoy reading with their children and are encouraged to do so regularly. This is helping to develop children's listening and reading skills. Children are well prepared for transition into nursery and school. Six of the eight adults who enrolled on numeracy courses this year achieved their qualifications. A few progressed on to GCSE courses. Increasing numbers are already enrolled on adult courses due to be delivered in the centre in September 2011.

The centre's role in the life of the community is well established. Through parents' and carers' meetings, users have opportunities to express their views and are engaged in the governance of the centre. They are actively involved in decision making and develop enterprising behaviour. Community cohesion is developing well. Parents and carers make positive contributions to the community, such as helping to produce the new welcome booklet and a local walking map for families. They are developing confidence, stability and independence through good training and volunteering opportunities, such as helping to run family days out and supporting vulnerable families. Increasing numbers of adults are attending job clubs delivered in the centre. They are developing a good range of job preparation skills by practising for interview and effective curriculum vitae writing.

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 is proactive in responding to users' needs to ensure services meet most individual needs. It works effectively with other agencies to ensure assessments, such as those carried out for children with special educational needs and/or disabilities, are robust and well informed. Assessments carried out under the Common Assessment Framework (CAF) are very clear and effective; they ensure appropriate and effective care is provided. The centre is developing systems that will enable parents to contribute to their child's assessment.

The quality of learning, development and enjoyment is good. Regular observations of children linked to areas of learning are used well by staff to tailor planning to each child's needs. Very good quality resources that are age-appropriate and interesting encourage children's engagement well. For example the 'listening lion' reminds children to turn on their 'listening ears'. The baby room is well organised to encourage early exploration and physical development. Staff make effective use of children's achievements to plan the next steps in learning. However, opportunities to model play strategies to show parents how best to make play effective with their children are missed. The centre is particularly good at celebrating users' personal development and achievements, for example through displays of work produced by children and families.

The centre offers a broad range of services and activities which effectively meet the needs of most users throughout the reach. External speakers are invited to sessions to provide good advice and guidance, such as the sessions provided through partnership working with Jobcentre Plus. Specialist staff are often used to deliver services, ensuring accurate learning takes place. Data collected by the centre indicate there is good take-up of services by those living in the centre's reach area. Families appreciate the arranged day trips to Bournemouth and Drayton Manor. The Thrift Club helps them to make regular savings for Christmas and special events. Users' responses show that the centre is not yet fully meeting needs in the provision of adult literacy courses and activities at weekends to involve more fathers.

The quality of care for young children is excellent throughout all the activities they attend. Families express high levels of satisfaction with the level of care, guidance and support offered at the centre. The open-door policy provides a listening ear to support children and families all year round. Visits to the baby-weighing clinic give parents and carers excellent opportunities to seek advice from health staff, including a health visitor. Very good specific personal advice is provided to reduce smoking and the amount of alcohol and drug abuse. The benefits support and legal support are particularly appreciated by families. Families finding themselves in crisis are confident to ask for family support. They are promptly referred to appropriate services that provide effective support.

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	1

How effective are the leadership and management?

2

Governance and accountability arrangements provide high quality supervision of the centre's activities. Effective performance management sets challenging targets for improvement. High levels of commitment to the centre's work are evident at all levels. Priorities are adapted successfully to meet users' changing needs. The centre promotes equality and diversity well to extend the inclusion of all, regardless of gender, ethnicity, background or need, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities. However, it does not currently evaluate the impact of its work on promoting equality and diversity in terms of the provision and outcomes for different minority ethnic groups.

Highly effective prioritisation of safeguarding ensures all users are safe. The Criminal Records Bureau checks are very well maintained and accurate. Staff are fully vetted before appointments take place. Robust procedures are in place with regard to suitability checks for new workers, and stringent safe recruitment procedures are implemented. Thorough risk assessments are in place. Very effective multi-agency working ensures children and adults are fully protected and safeguarded. Robust procedures and referral mechanisms ensure that concerns are followed up and support, where needed, is offered. All staff are fully trained in child protection to levels that are appropriate to their responsibilities. This extends to all volunteers who are required to complete a safeguarding qualification. All staff are aware of a range of procedures relating to child protection issues. They have excellent knowledge and understanding of their roles and responsibilities.

Outstanding partnership working enhances opportunities for users and has a very positive impact on improving outcomes. For example, the work with families of prisoners has been particularly successful in keeping the families together. The links with recreational health partners provides excellent year-round sports and recreational activities for families. The centre's resources are managed effectively to improve outcomes. It represents good value for money.

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	1
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	1
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 the inspection

None

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 Sunshine Children's Centre on 24 and 25 February 2011. We judged the centre as good overall.

We are very grateful to all the parents, carers and representatives from the centre's professional partners who took the trouble to come in to tell us about the work of

the centre. You gave us a very positive picture of the centre, and what you had to say was very useful in making our final judgements.

At the core of the centre's success are the strong leadership provided by the centre manager, the excellent governance, the very good teamwork of the centre's staff and its highly effective relationships with professional partners. This means that the workers at the centre communicate well with each other and their feedback provides a good knowledge and understanding of the community's needs.

Those of you who use the centre are much better now at staying safe and healthy and looking after your families. We know this because many of you told us of what you had learnt. We agree with you, the centre is a very welcoming place to come to. Staff have worked hard to make it very safe for you and your children. The centre is excellent at working closely with other agencies, such as the health service and social services, particularly to help children and families who need extra help and support. Adults who engage in courses and education opportunities are empowered to improve their own lives.

Parents, carers and children are benefiting from the good provision provided by the children's centre. Some of you are keen to attend classes to improve your skills. These must be enjoyable because we noticed that attendance on these courses is good. Good quality sessions are prepared for you to improve your parenting skills and for your children to develop basic skills. This means that you gain more confidence and expertise and your children are well prepared when they start nursery school.

We have found a few areas that require improvement and the centre and managers are already aware of these. We are recommending that managers provide more opportunities for adults to develop literacy skills and for fathers to be more involved in their children's learning. We are also suggesting that managers improve the way they analyse how effectively they cater for people from a variety of ethnic backgrounds and use this information to improve future planning.

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