

# Inspection report for Sinfin Children and Young People's Centre

Local authority	Derby
Inspection number	365729
Inspection dates	11–12 May 2011
Reporting inspector	Christopher Moodie AI

Centre governance	Derby City Local Authority
Centre leader	Lindsay Difusco
Date of previous inspection	N/A
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Linked school if applicable	N/A
Linked early years and childcare, if applicable	Sinfin Community Childcare

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 an additional inspector and an early years inspector.

The inspectors held meetings with the children's centre leaders, staff members, representatives of the advisory board, the newly appointed chair of the advisory board, members of the parents' forum, local authority staff linked to the centre and a range of partner agencies and users. They observed the centre's work and looked at sessions in operation at the children's centre and in nearby locations. They also looked at a range of documentation including the centre's development plans and evaluations, local authority data, key policies and safeguarding procedures.

## Information about the centre

Sinfin is a phase two children's centre which serves a number of wards within the city of Derby, some of which are among the 30% most deprived within the country. It is situated adjacent to the Redwood Nursery and Infant School site. The centre offers a range of services including health support, adult courses, outreach services, regular 'Stay and Play' sessions, early learning intervention programmes, training courses, fathers' sessions, and provides access to a nursery provider and a childminder network. When children enter the Early Years Foundation Stage, their knowledge and skills are well below those expected.

The children's centre is run directly by Derby City Local Authority and has its own advisory board made up of partner agencies and community members. This board was reconstituted in 2010 and now oversees the work of several children's centres. A parents' forum actively supports the work of the children's centre. The proportion of families receiving state benefits is high, as is the proportion of users who live in workless households. Most families are from White British backgrounds. Leadership of the centre is currently under transition. The centre's current leader has been in

place for one year. A new centre leader, who will also manage four other children’s centres, is about to take up post.

## 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
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### Capacity for sustained improvement

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

3
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## Main findings

The centre serves the needs of its community satisfactorily. There have been significant changes in the centre’s leadership over the last year. Outcomes for users have improved in important areas. Although strategies to engage more families have been successful many families within specific areas of the centre’s reach are still not accessing its services. A key strength of the centre is the welcoming, caring and supportive environment that staff provide for all users. In all of the centre’s activities, children demonstrate good behaviour and sessions are calm and enjoyable for all who attend. In addition, safeguarding is given a high priority. Good steps are taken to assess the risk of activities, and procedures are robust and rigorous. As a result, children and their families feel safe and secure when they attend, and there is a strong bond of trust between staff and families. One mother told inspectors, ‘I rely so heavily on the centre – it is a lifeline for me and my child.’ Partnership work is another key strength, and centre workers are very effective in securing time, commitment and services from a range of other agencies.

The centre’s leadership is currently undergoing change. The new centre leader has a very clear vision for the development of the centre. She has worked well with the previous centre leader to accurately identify the strengths and weaknesses of the current practice. As a result of very effective community work, the centre has established a parents and carers’ forum. This group is very active and is determined to improve the community cohesion with the Sinfin area. It has successfully organised fund-raising community events that have paid for events such as theatre visits and day trips, all of which have been over-subscribed. Their voice is represented well at advisory board meetings and their views are highly valued.

The local authority provides useful data for the children’s centre but not enough has been done to evaluate their meaning. As a result, the centre has not identified the

most urgent areas of need that exist within its reach and has not deployed its resources strategically enough to address these needs. This means that some families in different parts of the centre's reach have not been accessing some of the services that are provided. Nevertheless, staff work well to promote positive outcomes for children and their families. Where resources have been specifically targeted at need, there have been significant improvements. For example, a very successful partnership has been developed with the infant and nursery school next to the children's centre. The headteacher and staff of the school have seen standards of communication, language and literacy rise considerably in their Early Years Foundation Stage, and they attribute much of this to the effectiveness of the work done through this partnership. Other local primary schools, which have yet to work in partnership with the children's centre, have not seen an equivalent rise in their standards and this is a priority for the centre's future work. The centre's leaders have an increasingly accurate view of their own performance and have been effective in bringing about improvements in key areas. This, combined with the positive impact that the parents' forum and advisory board are now having, means that the centre's capacity for sustained improvement is satisfactory.

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

### Recommendations for further improvement

- Make better use of data to identify the most urgent needs which exist within the centre's reach area, and ensure that leaders deploy the centre's resources more effectively to meet these needs.
- Increase the number of children who receive targeted support to raise their levels of communication, language and literacy before they attend full-time schooling.

## How good are outcomes for users?

<b>3</b>
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Users have access to a range of services which seek to improve their health. In regular groups, such as 'Stay and Play' and 'Tummy Time', parents and carers are encouraged to provide children with healthy food such as fruit and to engage in physical play both indoors and outside. The impact of this work has yet to be seen on reducing childhood obesity levels. Teenage mothers are targeted for support by the 'Teenage Mums' Champion'. This is a relatively recent development and, while all of this group have received individual home visits, they have yet to meet as a group. The centre can point to individual cases where its intervention has led to significant improvements in family circumstances. This is because of a cohesive and rigorous approach to sharing information and acting on decisions made at multi-agency meetings. Outcomes relating to smoking during pregnancy and breastfeeding are proving harder to improve. Revised strategies to promote sustained breastfeeding have been introduced but have yet to yield improvements.

Children enjoy coming to the centre and feel safe when they attend groups. Thorough risk assessments ensure that activities at the centre and trips out are safe.

Many parents and carers, in particular those who live locally, are confident in accessing the centre and drop in and check on dates and times of future events. Systematic registration procedures for those who enter and leave the centre reinforce the feeling of security that many voice. One parent/carer said that the centre was a 'haven' in her life, where 'everything is calm and straightforward'. Children behave well both in the centre and in the linked childcare provision, and are developing a clear understanding of how to keep themselves and others safe.

Users improve their skills and confidence through regular courses, training and activities, such as 'Strengthening Families, Strengthening Communities' and parenting courses for parents with babies. Parents report that the centre's story sacks and toy libraries have made a positive difference to their parenting. A parent/carer stated, 'I have learned how to use reading games and puppets as a way of interacting with my child.' From very low starting points, children make satisfactory progress in their learning. Children whose families live further away from the centre have not benefited sufficiently from the centre's input, which has proven effective in securing good progress among children who live very close by. Children with identified language delay have been well targeted to attend the 'Rhyme Time' sessions, although their individual needs have not been specifically identified and addressed.

The centre has worked effectively to encourage parents and carers to volunteer their time and skills. This is best seen in the parents' forum which contributes significantly to decision making and, through an enterprising approach, is adding considerably to the value that the centre offers. Users at both the children's centre and the childcare provider interact well with one another, and children's personal development is good. Effective transition work across the reach means that children are increasingly well prepared for school. The centre's advice and guidance have helped some users to access training and adult education programmes. Combined with the centre's partnerships with Jobcentre Plus, some parents have been successful in finding work. Families whose circumstances make them vulnerable have their needs assessed thoroughly through the Common Assessment Framework and, where child protection plans are in place, effective multi-agency work ensures good support for these children.

*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>3</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>3</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>3</b>
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### **How good is the provision?**

**3**

The centre provides a good quality of care, guidance and support for its users. All sessional activities, training and broader user engagements are underpinned by an ethos which is encouraging and celebratory. As a result, parents, carers and their children are receptive to advice, and attendance rates in key activities, in particular 'Stay and Play', are high. Advice and guidance, through leaflets and attractive displays, are plentiful and, because staff know the users well, users are signposted to the services that best meet their needs. Support for families in crisis is good and there are examples of where the centre has made a significant contribution to the welfare of families in times of great need.

The centre staff make good use of users' views and evaluations to shape their programmes, tailoring activities to small groups where necessary. The data provided by the local authority have yet to sufficiently inform strategies when assessing need. Consequently, the centre staff are not as well informed about users' outcomes as they could be. This has an impact on the extent to which activities are targeted at the areas of most urgent need. Services offered to users who live locally are effective in meeting their needs, and both engagement and improvement are clear for these users. The location of the children's centre means that those families with the greatest need are the furthest away from the centre. Only 28% of the families registered with the centre come from this area. The range and quality of services offered are, therefore, satisfactory. Those outreach services that have been offered in the past year have been successful, and parents and carers have appreciated not having to travel to access the services. One commented that some parents and carers have cars but 'those that don't simply can't push a buggy all that way'.

*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>3</b>
<b>The extent to which the centre promotes purposeful learning, development and enjoyment for all users</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The extent to which the range of services, activities and opportunities meet the needs of users and the wider community</b>	<b>3</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?

<b>3</b>
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The centre's leaders have provided stability and a clear vision for improvement during a period of considerable turbulence in which the local authority has restructured children's centres in the locality. During this time, outcomes for users have improved and the number of families registered with the children's centre has increased significantly. This is in part due to the nurturing ethos evident in all of the centre's activities and also to a commitment to providing essential services that users are keen to attend. The local authority has provided effective support for the centre leaders during the transition period, and has been careful to ensure that the new structure offers further opportunities to build upon the current good practice that the centre has developed in its work with other partners.

The centre has empowered the members of the parents' forum to become a central and highly influential element of its operations. Through this voluntary group, parents' views and needs are communicated effectively to the advisory board during their formal meetings, and on a day-to-day basis to the centre leaders. This is beginning to have a considerable impact on the deployment of the centre's resources and has the capacity to secure further fruitful partnerships. The advisory board is beginning to make a difference to the children's centre's strategic direction, as it is now holding the children's centre to account for its impact on users. The chairperson has been very recently appointed and brings a very secure understanding of how data can be used to plan improvements. Centre leaders have already begun to harness this expertise and a revised improvement plan is emerging that is based on measurable outcomes. This is identifying groups of users whose access to the children's centre is currently satisfactory, but whose outcomes, such as sustained breastfeeding, are not improving rapidly. Centre leaders have targeted specific groups for sessional activities, and inclusive practice and equality of access are currently satisfactory. Leaders have identified established and newly emerging ethnic groups and are active in engaging them in the centre's services.

Safeguarding arrangements are well managed. All of the necessary checks on the suitability of adults to work with children, including authorisation from external agencies, are made and recorded diligently. Staff are appropriately trained in child protection and health and safety, and are suitably qualified in administering first aid. Staff are conversant with the centre's key safeguarding policies and are vigilant about the importance of early intervention. Issues arising are resolved quickly through multi-agency work. Arrangements for fire safety are good.

The centre provides satisfactory value for money, and allocates its resources to a growing range of services. Its facilities are attractive and well maintained and effective use is made of the indoor and outdoor spaces.

*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</b>
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<b>3</b>
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<b>understood</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>3</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>3</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>3</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>3</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>3</b>

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

The inspectors considered information about Redwood Nursery and Infants School. This school's overall effectiveness was found to be good during a concurrent inspection.

Sinfin Community Childcare was found to provide a good quality of childcare at its most recent inspection.

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## Summary for centre users

We inspected the Sinfin Children and Young People's Centre on 11–12 May 2011. We judged the centre as satisfactory overall.

We would like to thank those of you who spoke to us during the inspection for your welcome and cooperation. All of you spoke positively about the centre. In particular, many of you recognised the impact that the centre is having on your children, especially with support for early education and parenting. You told us that the centre is a very welcoming place, and that you and your children feel safe and valued. Staff listen to you whenever you have a problem and that has made a real difference to some of you and your families. The recently formed parents' forum has quickly become a very effective way for your views to be heard. The centre makes good use of your feedback so that it can improve what it does for you.

The activities and groups that the centre provides are planned to meet the needs of the children and their families. The centre has not been making the best use of the information that the local authority provides, and we have asked the centre leaders to use these data to plan activities which meet your most pressing needs. Where the centre has been involved in early reading and social interaction among children, there have been real successes. One local school is full of praise for the way that the centre has worked with them to improve things for their youngest children. Other local schools who have not had this support have not improved as quickly. We have asked centre leaders to make sure that more children have access to their support.

The centre staff provide a high standard of care for you and your families. They treat everybody with respect and try hard to make sure that your time in the centre is well spent and worthwhile. The leaders work hard alongside a wide range of agencies to support many services and training opportunities. These are often popular and sometimes over-subscribed. Some of you have been successful in improving your chances of employment by taking on the challenges of training and courses. A number of you have become employed as a result of these opportunities.

The local authority is doing a good job in supporting the centre, at a time when they are changing the way that children's centres are organised across the city. A new centre leader is about to take charge, and she is inheriting a centre with lots of potential to do well. Part of the children's centre's leadership is a group of people from the local community called the advisory board. This recently formed group is very committed to making things better for the local area.

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