

# Inspection report for Mexborough Children's Centre

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| Local authority     | Doncaster        |
| Inspection number   | 384012           |
| Inspection dates    | 5–6 October 2011 |
| Reporting inspector | Sue Pepper HMI   |

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|-----------------------------|--|
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| Date of previous inspection | Not previously inspected                             |
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|---|----------------|
| Linked school if applicable                     | Not applicable |
| Linked early years and childcare, if applicable | Not applicable |

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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 of Her Majesty's Inspectors and one early years inspector.

The inspectors held meetings with the area manager, deputy centre manager, early years manager, administrator and monitoring coordinator, centre staff, members of the advisory board, parents, key partners and representatives from the local authority. They observed the centre's work and looked at a range of relevant documentation.

## Information about the centre

Mexborough Children's Centre was a former Sure Start local programme. It was designated as a phase one centre in 2006. The purpose built centre provides a range of universal and targeted services with the support of key partners.

There is significant deprivation in Mexborough some of which falls within the top 10 and 30% most disadvantaged within England. More recently, there has been a regeneration of housing in the area.

Almost all of the population in the area served by the centre is of White British heritage with a few families from minority ethnic backgrounds. Recent figures show that the population of children aged nought to five years of age is 982.

Traditionally, the local economy was based on mining. Despite some new developments unemployment is high. There is a high percentage of lone and teenage parents. A high number of families are in receipt of workless benefits. Adults leave school with few qualifications.

The Early Years Foundation Stage is delivered through various settings and groups. Children enter nursery and school with skills below those generally typical for their age.

The local authority has commissioned Rotherham, Doncaster and South Humber National Health Service Trust to run the centre. They employ the staff and also manage two other centres in the Doncaster area. The centre has an established advisory board. It is made up of representatives from the local community, professional agencies and parents.

The centre is open from 8am until 6pm, Monday to Friday, 52 weeks of the year. The centre is also open on occasional evenings and weekends as required to meet service user's needs.

## 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**

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| <b>2</b> |
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### Capacity for sustained improvement

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

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| <b>2</b> |
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## Main findings

Mexborough Children Centre is a good centre. It provides high-quality provision and services which promote good outcomes. Staff are passionate about their work and extremely well skilled at empowering parents. The good engagement of parents is a strength of the centre. Typical views of the parents are, 'I would be lost without the centre', and, 'Everyone has been brilliant'. Consequently, user satisfaction is high and the centre is highly recommended.

Staff are constantly looking for more effective and efficient ways of working. Effective strategies are used by staff to actively seek the views of families. The centre uses this knowledge well to continually shape services to meet families' needs, especially those of target groups. This demonstrates a good capacity to improve.

Obesity is high in the area therefore good attention is paid to promoting healthy lifestyles. The popular 'Cook and Eat for Adults' course is successful in encouraging healthy eating on a budget. Shocking images of the salt, sugar and fat contents of everyday foods enable families to make healthier food choices and reduce obesity. Attention to promoting emotional well-being is good. The 'Hear for You' listening service is popular and it provides parents with a responsive counselling type service. A typical comment was, 'I don't know what I would have done without it'.

The partnership with health colleagues is particularly good. It ensures the centre has an accurate knowledge of the health needs and issues affecting the community. High-quality

multi-agency work promotes effective early intervention and well-targeted outreach support for those families whose circumstances can make them vulnerable.

Due to locally high unemployment, the development of skills, which can help adults to join the workforce are well promoted. Over a third of those who use the centre are engaged in relevant adult learning. Positive relationships with parents ensure the centre knows the achievements of adults. However, the centre receives minimal information from adult learning services of the adults attending their courses. Good relationships have been developed with Jobcentre Plus and the centre receives regular information on job vacancies, however, no data are currently shared with the centre on the impact of this work.

The advisory board offers the centre good support but evidence of how it holds the centre to account for its work is less evident. The area manager and the deputy centre manager have a clear understanding of their effectiveness and have accurately identified priorities for the future. However, their service plan lacks clear success criteria which can be easily measured.

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

### **Recommendations for further improvement**

- Improve the use of measurable success criteria based on clearly defined targets to track and improve more aspects of the centre's work.
- Develop the role of the advisory board further to support the centre in driving improvement.
- Capture more fully the impact of key partners' work which can lead to greater economic stability and independence for families.

## **How good are outcomes for families?**

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A large majority of families are engaging well with the health service and attendance at clinic and drop-in sessions is good. Consequently, the uptake of immunisation is high. Advice regarding smoking cessation is prevalent due to a high number of smokers in the area. The impact of this work is gradually raising awareness of the health-related dangers of smoking. There are high levels of substance misuse in the area; families who are experiencing a range of difficulties, such as domestic violence are particularly well supported by the effective approach of the Common Assessment Framework. This prevents the escalation of some potentially difficult situations. Good liaison with other agencies ensures that the life chances of those on the child protection register are significantly improved. A parent said, 'Without this I would have been in a very different place now'.

The number of mothers who sustain breastfeeding is low but this figure is increasing. 'Breast Start' supported by a group of mothers is committed to reducing health inequalities.

Breastfeeding mothers are extremely positive regarding this effective work saying, 'Peer supporters are fantastic'.

The café and kitchen promote the enjoyment of eating fresh and nutritious home-cooked foods. Staff model excellent nutritional awareness and hygiene practice in terms of food preparation. This good interactive learning effectively helps parents to understand the benefits of making changes to diets. Children learn the importance of good dental hygiene through seeing the consequence of what happens if they neglect their teeth. Children are taught how to grow vegetables and which food choices will make their lunch box healthy.

Staff know their families well and many parents benefit from home visits. Good relationships encourage parents to commit to attending structured parenting programmes where they learn new skills, such as behaviour management and the importance of play to children's learning. Parents said, 'I think before I speak now, I have learnt coping strategies and I no longer lose my temper', and, 'I now spend quality time with my children'.

Children thrive in the safe and stimulating environment where they are encouraged to enjoy being active, inquisitive and independent learners. The Early Years Foundation Stage profile results for the centre community indicate that most children are making steady progress given their low starting points. Relevant data show that the percentage gap between the lowest achieving 20% of children is closing. The individual needs of children with special educational needs and/or disabilities are well met and as a result, they make good progress in their learning and development.

The centre has many success stories of voluntary work leading to further education or paid employment. Likewise, the achievements of young teenage parents who progress from one course to another are good. The majority of these groups improve their vocational and academic skills.

These are the grades for the outcomes for families:

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| <b>The extent to which children, including those from target 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 children and parents, including those from target groups, 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 parents, including those from target groups, 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, including those from target groups, are developing economic stability and independence including access to training and employment.</b> | <b>2</b> |

## How good is the provision?

The centre has an extremely secure, high-quality and relaxing environment. The bistro-style café welcomes the community and is a lively hub of activity. Clear glass screens not only let light flood in to the building but they make some rooms highly visible. This has a positive impact on user's feelings of safety and well-being. The quality and range of information is good. For example, staff provide interesting healthy recipes which families use at home. Services are very well matched to families' needs. The 'Dad's Drop In' is thriving.

Considerable effort is made to ensure the centre caters for families who most require its support. Free early learning places for two-year-olds are secured locally and respite crèches run regularly at the centre. No early years provision is directly linked to the centre, the centre works in partnership with private childcare providers and a network of good quality childminders. The early years providers have good support from a qualified teacher. The 'Childminders R Us' group, regularly meets at the centre for advice and support. A childcare sufficiency and sustainability report on this area is under constant review to ensure there are sufficient full day-care places available.

Strong links have been formed with all the schools in the reach area, which promotes careful tracking of individual children's progress and the uptake of funded childcare places. The 'Small Talk' groups help support children's communication, language and literacy skills well. Families learn fun and practical ways to help develop children's early speech and good transition into school.

'Drop In' sessions aid families' enjoyment of learning together through well-planned focus activities. Parents said, 'I have made some good friends and do not feel so isolated now'. Other groups such as, 'Baby Fun and Toddler Fun' and 'Play and Learn' encourage extending activities in the home.

Children have access to superb outdoor play areas. The sensory room has recently been enhanced and it is used well. The after-school club is popular and multi-sports programmes running during school holidays encourage children to be more active.

Adults access a good range of programmes of learning, which include basic literacy and numeracy skills; achievements are celebrated well. Volunteers are well trained and supported to develop their own skills and this strengthens the work of the centre. One said, 'I now feel that I have a role in the community'.

These are the grades for the quality of provision:

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

## How effective are the leadership and management?

2

The area manager and deputy centre manager work well together, they are both highly respected, reflective practitioners. Any change is embraced well; as a result, staff morale is high. Strategic oversight monitors and drives quality effectively. Governance and accountability arrangements are clear and understood. Professional supervision communicates high expectations. Staff development and training are effective in order to meet needs. Leaders of the centre use action plans successfully to address any weakness and the staff teams are committed to continual improvement.

The centre constantly strives to look for efficiencies in delivering services, which promote good value for money. The parents forum is now called the 'Parent's Voice' and it is led by an enthusiastic group of parents.

Equality and diversity are promoted well due to the centre's inclusive ethos and approach. The centre highly values and regularly celebrates the festivals of a range of different beliefs and cultures. The small Polish community has its own peer support worker and good relationships have been developed with local Traveller families who are now static in the area.

The centre has successfully registered a large majority of the families in the community, many of whom are from targeted groups. Strong partnership with 'Green Gables' who provide accommodation for young homeless mothers promotes regular attendance of this group. Staff are tenacious and sensitive in their attempts to engage families who are 'hard to reach' which has a positive impact on attendance.

The centre adopts good safeguarding practice across all areas of its work, and all parents are confident they are safe at the centre. Recruitment checks are robust. Protocols and practice for sharing information between relevant agencies within and outside the centre are good. The centre works well with all partners to create a climate of trust to reduce safeguarding risks to children and their families. Centre staff provide parents with good practical tips on how to become more fully involved in helping themselves and their child if they are subject to a child protection plan.

These are the grades for leadership and management:

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| <b>The extent to which governance, accountability, professional supervision and day-to-day management arrangements are clear and understood</b>                     | 2 |
| <b>The effectiveness of evaluation and its use of ambitious targets which secure improvement in outcomes</b>  | 2 |
| <b>The extent to which resources are used and managed efficiently and effectively to meet the needs of families, including those in target groups</b>               | 2 |
| <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> | 2 |
| <b>The effectiveness of the centre's policy, procedures and work with key agencies in safeguarding children and, where applicable, vulnerable adults</b>            | 2 |

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| <b>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</b>      | <b>2</b> |
| <b>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.</b> | <b>2</b> |

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

None

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance *Complaints procedure: raising concerns and making complaints about Ofsted* which is available from our website: [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://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](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk).

## **Summary for centre users**

We inspected the Mexborough Children's Centre on the 5 and 6 October 2011. We judged the centre as good overall.

It was a pleasure to hear how much you value the services the centre provides. You said, 'The staff and children's centre are fabulous', and, 'Staff are always friendly, kind and helpful, nothing is too much trouble for them'. It was apparent that the centre wants the very best for you and your families.

Good partnerships are in place with other agencies, particularly health, and in times of crisis they all work well together to support you. Typical comments from you were, 'I would be lost without the centre', 'they have kept me going through some difficult times', and, 'they have helped to save myself and keep my family together'. We agree the centre provides a safe place for you and your families where you can be sure to receive good quality care, guidance and support.

The centre is committed to promote good child and family health and life chances. We were impressed that some of you have been successful in sustaining breastfeeding. Many of you have learnt the importance of a varied, nutritionally well-balanced diet through good opportunities like 'Cook and Eat for Adults'. The inspectors thoroughly enjoyed the home-made food served in the popular café.

We can see you regularly attend the clinic and drop-in sessions. We know many of you enjoy meeting other families at sessions, such as 'Bump to Babies' and 'Play and Learn'. You enjoy 'Ready for Nursery' which helps prepare children for the next stage in their learning.

The centre has developed good links with local schools. You told us you look forward to and enjoy the popular day trips which encourage a good community spirit.

We understand you attend a wide range of different courses, such as 'Sugarcraft' which has helped develop your confidence and taught some of you new skills. The centre ensures that there are good opportunities for you to raise your aspirations through training or voluntary work which can place you in a stronger position to enter the workforce. We have asked the centre to monitor closely the adult learning it directs you to so they have a clear picture of how many of you are successful in coming off workless benefits.

The centre constantly seeks your opinions about what it should provide for you. The area manager and staff know what they do well and what they need to improve. We have asked the centre to improve its plans for the future so that it can clearly show you the difference it is making to your lives. This will help the centre improve how it shows everyone when it achieves what it sets out to do. We have asked the advisory board to use this information to continually promote further improvement of the centre.

We would like to thank everyone who was willing to speak to us. We are very grateful for your help and wish you every success in the future.

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