

Inspection report for Davyhulme Children's Centre

Local authority	Trafford
Inspection number	383663
Inspection dates	9 - 10 November 2011
Reporting inspector	Steve Isherwood HMI

Centre leader	Mrs Janet Barker
Date of previous inspection	Not applicable
Centre address	Davyhulme Library Hayeswater Road Davyhulme Manchester M41 7BL
Telephone number	0161 912 2880
Fax number	Not applicable
Email address	janet.barker@trafford.gov.uk

Linked school if applicable	Not applicable
Linked early years and childcare, if applicable	Davyhulme Day Care 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.

This inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and an early years inspector.

The inspectors held meetings with the centre manager, senior leaders, front line staff and representatives from the local authority. Discussions were also held with members of the advisory board and parents and carers.

They observed the centre's work, and looked at a range of relevant documentation.

Information about the centre

Davyhulme Children's Centre is a Phase two centre and provides the full core offer, including education, care and family services. The centre is located on the same site as Davyhulme Library and has an outreach room where staff from across agencies in the area can work for periods of time. The area served by the centre is economically and socially mixed being ranked as one of the 70% most deprived areas in the country. The centre also serves areas of less deprivation where high proportions of parents and carers are in full-time employment.

The vast majority of families are of White British heritages with a small number of minority ethnic groups. A very small minority of children in the area live in families on benefit. Most children enter early education with a lower range of skills expected for their age. A new centre leader, who also holds responsibility for another centre in the locality, has recently taken over the operational management of the centre. At the time of the inspection, she had only been in post for six months. The centre is governed and managed by an advisory board made up of representatives from the local community.

The centre's full day-care provision is provided by Davyhulme Day Care Nursery. The nursery is privately managed and is subject to separate Early Years inspection

arrangements. It was last inspected in 2008 and the inspection report can be found on the Ofsted website.

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

3

Capacity for sustained improvement

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

3

Main findings

Davyhulme Children's Centre is re-establishing itself in the local community and has made great strides in the last few months. As a result, it is now a satisfactory centre that provides good levels of care, guidance and support to all families that access its services. In May 2011, the local authority recognised that the centre was not sufficiently meeting the needs of the community and made changes to the leadership and management structure. Since then, under a new centre manager, the centre has increased its effectiveness and is beginning to reach out to more users. For example, growing numbers of families are accessing services, more parents and carers are committed to training opportunities and attendance levels are rising each month. In addition, the levels of engagement including those for target groups are beginning to advance although senior leaders are correct in recognising that much further work is required to increase the centre's contact with all users in the reach area, particularly teenage mothers, lone parents and fathers.

Parents and carers have noticed these improvements and can sense that things are changing for the better. 'There is a lot more going on now', 'We are getting far more out of the centre now' were typical of their comments. They particularly appreciate the dedication and commitment of staff to support them and there was strong praise for the way they feel safe and protected.

Staff are committed to inclusion and strive to improve the life chances of all families that are known to them, whatever their circumstances. As a consequence, outcomes are generally improving with increasingly tailored support. However, the centre's procedures for judging the impact of the services they provide are not fully in place. Some of the centre's evidence, although useful, is anecdotal and limited to attendance and participation rates. Detailed and specific information about the proportion of potential users in the community including those groups who are not currently accessing the centre is just beginning to emerge. Furthermore,

some of the centre's data on health is not up to date and is not sufficiently well shared with other professionals. As a result, at present it is not always possible for senior leaders to judge with accuracy whether the services they provide are as effective as they could be and whether the centre is targeting the right users and those in greatest need.

Safeguarding arrangements are good throughout the centre. All staff are well trained and are fully committed towards early identification and prevention strategies to support children's welfare.

Senior leaders are working together effectively to pinpoint areas where parents and carers can be more involved in the centre. They are aware of the need to strengthen the opportunities where the views of users are routinely used to inform planning through a parents' forum and appreciate the need to establish greater parental involvement in the governance of the centre.

Considering the recent advances made in provision and along with its other strengths, including the strong leadership of the centre manager and the commitment of staff, the centre is adequately placed to continue to improve.

What does the centre need to do to improve further?

Recommendations for further improvement

- Increase the level of engagement of children and families from across the reach area, including those in target groups, particularly teenage mothers, lone parents and fathers.
- Ensure that parents and carers are given further opportunities to contribute to decision making and the governance of the centre.
- Strengthen self-evaluation by:
 - developing further strategies to evaluate and demonstrate impact
 - with the local authority, improve information and data which demonstrates the proportions of relevant groups in touch with the centre and those who are not currently accessing the centre's services
 - strengthen procedures for the sharing of up to date information on health outcomes with other professionals.

How good are outcomes for families?

3

The outcomes for families using the centre are satisfactory and improving. The centre provides an increasing range of activities across all areas which are developed appropriately in partnership with other agencies and often in other locations. However, there is insufficient evidence of how some of these are making a difference to families and improving their outcomes, particularly for target groups. In addition, some of the data, specifically on health

is not up-to-date. Nevertheless, most parents and carers have a satisfactory understanding of the importance of leading a healthy lifestyle and growing numbers are beginning to take advantage of the services on offer. These include: breastfeeding support, baby massage, maintaining a healthy diet, 'Stay and Play' sessions, toddler gym and support for smoking cessation. As a result, parents and carers comment that they are becoming increasingly aware of how to keep themselves and their children healthy. For example, as one parent said, 'The baby massage sessions have made a big difference to us as a family because I have been able to involve the child's father as well'. Another commented that she finds the breastfeeding drop-in sessions to be 'Very child friendly and an extremely supportive group of genuine mums who have similar experiences'.

The centre is a safe environment and there is good attention to keeping users safe through regular advice and sign posting to other agencies. Practitioners are committed to promoting a range of safety issues with families including, initiating discussions about safety equipment in the home, advice on how to keep babies and toddlers free from harm and by encouraging parents and carers to remain vigilant at all times. This is having a positive impact in reducing the numbers of children requiring hospital treatment.

The potentially most vulnerable children are identified early and support programmes are put in place for the whole family. The Common Assessment Framework is used consistently, particularly where specialist intervention is required or when children require a child protection plan.

There are increasing opportunities for parents and children, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities to enjoy learning and playing together. There is regular information to parents and carers about how to support their children's learning at home as a result of skilled intervention from staff. This means that overall children make steady progress in their work and are adequately prepared for their transition to school. Links are being established with local schools to track the performance and identify gaps in attainment for children aged five who have attended the centre.

The centre is developing its procedures to extend the contribution that parents and carers make to the life of the centre. Plans to establish a parents' forum and moves to establish users' involvement in the governance of the centre are in hand following consultation and reviews of current arrangements. Support provided by the centre to develop economic stability is improving for example, more parents and carers are accessing local training courses, information regarding benefits is more widely available and links with local agencies are more productive.

These are the grades for the outcomes for families:

The extent to which children, including those from target 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 children and parents, including those from target groups, enjoy and achieve educationally and in their personal and social development	3
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	3
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.	3

How good is the provision?

3

Participation and attendance rates are beginning to improve. This is because activities are increasingly tailored to the needs of families and children. For example, in response to levels of obesity in the area, more attention has been focused on helping parents and carers promote healthy exercise with their toddlers. Elsewhere feedback from users has led to additional support for baby massage activities and confidence building courses. The centre is developing its understanding of its users in the reach area and can demonstrate some impact of provision. They are aware for example, that they are currently reaching around 40% of children aged nought to five registered in the area. Plans are in place to increase this figure further.

Services are being accessed by more families as the centre re-establishes itself in the community following its re-launch at the beginning of September 2011. However, senior leaders are well aware that some hard-to-engage groups within the community do not use the centre's facilities as frequently as others, especially teenage mothers, lone parents and fathers.

Opportunities for purposeful learning are developing steadily as improvements in the centre's provision gather pace. An increasing range of 'drop-in' sessions support families in a range of areas such as in the development of play activities and the modelling of good parenting practices. 'The children are always busy', 'The staff are so knowledgeable', 'Staff always remember the children which is lovely', are typical views from parents and carers and reflect their positive views.

The quality of care for children and their families is good and is down to the strong relationships and the caring and approachable nature of staff. They know well the families who use the centre and do all they can to support them, particularly in times of crisis. One parent's view was typical of many, 'The centre is really welcoming, there are loads of resources available and staff are always around to help'.

These are the grades for the quality of provision:

The extent to which the range of services, activities and opportunities meet the needs of families, including those in target groups	3
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The extent to which the centre promotes purposeful learning, development and enjoyment for all families, including those in target groups	3
The quality of care, guidance and support offered to families, including those in target groups.	2

How effective are the leadership and management?

3

The recently appointed centre leader has done sterling work in a relatively short period of time to re-establish the centre in the community. In a matter of weeks she has focused the work of the centre more clearly on improving outcomes and has prioritised the centre's action plan well. She has quickly gained an accurate view of the centre's weaknesses and realises that the centre needs to increase its level of engagement with children and families in the reach area, particularly those groups who are harder to reach. With increasingly effective support from colleagues, she is leading the centre in the right direction and is beginning to lay the foundations for further improvements in the centre's provision. As a group, senior leaders are committed to improving the life chances of all users who access the centre. There is clear attention to equality of opportunity and the inclusion of all children and their families is central to the centre's work. For example, staff are careful to remove barriers for users to activities and services on offer by lengthening opening hours, varying venues and by providing crèche facilities.

Senior leaders are not complacent and are aware of the centre's shortcomings. For example, they acknowledge that further work is still required to identify all potential users in the area including any groups or individuals that may find it difficult to access services. At present, they are not entirely sure whether the right users are coming to the centre and whether what they are providing is exactly what is required. In addition, they are also aware that at present, systems to evaluate the impact of their work are not as effective as they could be because some of the information on the centre's reach area is too general and some of the health data is out of date. The centre demonstrates satisfactory value for money.

The centre's safeguarding arrangements are good. Local authority procedures and guidelines are closely followed and have been personalised very well for centre staff. All staff have been subject to a Criminal Records Bureau check and are trained well in child-protection procedures. They work in close cooperation with colleagues to protect children and vulnerable adults through targeted early intervention, effective liaison with other professionals and through the Common Assessment Framework procedures.

Members of the advisory board are increasing their confidence in supporting the centre. As a group they are committed to see the centre improve further and realise the importance of strengthening their ability to hold the centre to account for its performance.

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	3
The effectiveness of evaluation and its use in setting ambitious targets which secure improvement in outcomes	3
The extent to which resources are used and managed efficiently and effectively to meet the needs of families, including those in target groups	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	2
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	3
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.	3

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

None

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Summary for centre users

As you know we inspected Davyhulme Children's Centre on 9 and 10 November 2011. Thank you so much for helping us. We really enjoyed chatting to you in the centre and over the phone. You expressed your views very clearly and they were very helpful to us. This is what we found out.

We judged the centre as satisfactory overall. This means that there are some things the centre does well alongside areas where further improvement is required. You told us that the centre has improved of late; we agree. We can see that there are far more activities

now for you to get involved in and how you are now getting more from the centre than before because of the strong leadership of the new centre manager to improve things for you. You told us that the centre staff go out of their way to keep you and your families safe. We could see this with our own eyes. It was very clear to us also that more of you are coming down to the centre and appreciate the friendly caring support you get from staff. You told us that how much you have gained from attending the 'Stay and Play' and baby massage sessions and how much more confident you are as parents through attending the confidence building courses.

The staff work very hard to make the centre as good as it can be. To help them we have asked if they can increase the numbers of families who use the centre including those harder to reach groups in the community. We have also suggested that that are clearer about the different groups and individuals who are not yet attending the centre by improving their information and making sure it is up to date. We have also asked whether they can look more closely at how they judge whether the activities they provide are making a difference to you so they will be clearer in their own minds to know how well they are doing. Finally, we have asked them if you could have more opportunities to make decisions and to have a say in how the centre is run. We hope that as many of you as possible will get involved in the parents' forum when the time comes. Perhaps some of you might like to become members of the advisory board as well at some stage in the future. We wish you well.

Thank you once again for your help.

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