

Inspection report for Cuddesdon Corner Children's Centre

Local authority	Oxfordshire
Inspection number	361096
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Reporting inspector	Wendy Ratcliff HMI

Centre governance	The Local Authority
Centre leader	Jenny Martin
Date of previous inspection	N/A
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Linked school if applicable	N/A
Linked early years and childcare, if applicable	The Co-Operative Childcare Blackbird Leys Nursery

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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 two of Her Majesty's Inspectors and one Additional Inspector. The inspectors held meetings with the centre manager, senior leadership team, members of the advisory group, staff, a local authority representative and partner agencies, including representatives from the health service. They had informal discussions with parents and children, and visited the linked early years provision.

They observed the centre's work, and looked at a range of documentation including key policies, the centre's self evaluation documents, its development plans, evaluations of services and data about people who use the centre.

Inspection judgements

Grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Information about the centre

Cuddesdon Corner Children's Centre was designated in April 2006 and is run directly by the local authority. It is one of three centres serving the Blackbird Leys community. The local population is mostly White British with smaller percentages of other minority ethnic groups including Asian, Black/Black British and Eastern Europeans. The percentage of families where English is not the first language is increasing. Around 40% of children under five in the area are living in workless households. Blackbird Leys is one of the 30% deprived areas in the country. The Co-Operative Childcare at Blackbird Leys Nursery, which is run by The Midcounties Co-operative Society, provides childcare facilities for the children's centre.

Overall effectiveness

The effectiveness of the children's centre in meeting the needs of

2

and improving outcomes for users and the wider community

Capacity for sustained improvement

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

2

Main findings

Overall effectiveness of the centre is good with some aspects that are outstanding. This is because those in charge are demonstrating a clear vision and have an accurate understanding of the centre's strengths and areas for improvement. There are exceptional relationships with key partners and together they are taking steps to improve already good outcomes for users and reach more families. The centre collects a wide range of data. This includes data related to events, courses, and visitors to the centre, referrals from health and outreach workers, as well as data from the local authority. Staff use this data accurately to identify need and whether targets have been met. They are beginning to analyse it more precisely as they recognise more needs to be done to ensure all potential users are reached and where they can have an even greater impact on the outcomes for users. As a result, the centre's capacity to improve further is good.

Outcomes for users are good and improving. Many users are responding very well to healthy cooking courses, opportunities for exercise locally and trips to pick your own fruit. The centre openly encourages parents and carers to give water or milk while at the centre as a means of preventing tooth decay. Families are improving their understanding of keeping themselves and their families safe by preventing accidents at home through activities such as child safety week. Those using the centre thoroughly enjoy and are very appreciative of the extensive range of services on offer. They feel the centre is extremely responsive to their needs and cite many examples of how it has impacted positively on their own lives and that of their children. Children are making very good progress in their communication and language skills as a result of input from speech and language workers during 'Stay and Play' sessions and the 'Spirals' programme. One parent reports, 'My son has gained in confidence from meeting new friends and has enjoyed every week that we have come for almost three years. Stay and play is our lifeline'. Users are gaining recognised qualifications such as food handling as well as benefiting from many other courses, which builds their confidence and self-esteem. For some this has resulted in access to further training and gaining employment.

All users of the centre value the welcoming, safe environment it offers and the good range of services it provides. The centre provides outstanding care, guidance and support for users, reflected in one user's comment 'This is a fantastic place, a real sense of unity'. It has an excellent understanding of individual user's needs, particularly the more vulnerable and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities. The centre has established very strong links with other professionals such as health visitors and speech therapists to target specific support to those users who need it the most. Several case studies confirm the positive impact on outcomes this intervention is having. The centre meets all safeguarding requirements and staff

exemplify high quality practice as they see safeguarding at the heart of the centre's work. The centre knows its community well and is very knowledgeable about its vulnerable groups, taking proactive steps to engage them in the children's centre work, for example as volunteers.

The centre listens to and takes account of users' views about courses and activities as well as asking for suggestions. For example, mothers have been actively involved in the production of the leaflet 'Dads and Breastfeeding' in order to help them share the benefits of breastfeeding.

What does the centre need to do to improve further?

Recommendations for further improvement

Strengthen, and make more precise, the processes for gathering and analysing data in order to:

- further improve the good quality of provision and outcomes for all users
- ensure all potential users within the reach area are fully engaged in the centre's activities.

How good are outcomes for users?

2

Outcomes for the children and families who use the centre are good. Parents and carers are responding well to healthy cooking courses that are encouraging them to provide healthy meals for their families. Analysis of data indicates that the numbers of children under five who are obese are generally falling and the centre is starting to have an impact on smoking cessation but numbers are small. Take up of support for mothers at the breast-feeding café is good and improving. Children and families feel safe when accessing services at the centre. Children settle quickly in the crèche as they have positive relationships with the adults and are familiar with established routines. Parents confidently discuss and share their issues, as they feel secure in groups such as 'Family Links'. Courses available are valued by parents. They give them confidence, help them with parenting skills, supporting their children's learning and prepare them for the world of work. Users are gaining recognised qualifications such as food handling. The group for English for speakers of other languages (ESOL) is well supported and has seen accelerated progress. A proportion of users act as volunteers in the centre and many go on to further education or employment as a result, for example, one user is now employed by the centre offering a job matching service.

Ensuring the emotional well being of users is a high priority for the centre, particularly those with children with special educational needs and/or disabilities or subject to child protection plans. Outreach workers are key when working with such families and build trusting relationships so families feel able to engage with other professionals to access the required help. This is highly valued by users, for example in the words of one parent 'They saved my family and sanity'.

'Stay and Play' sessions are extremely well attended. A focus on language and communication has seen positive benefits in improving children's speech and by increasing parents' understanding of how they can encourage their children's language development. Initiatives such as the 'dummy fairy' have worked well and seen children exchanging their dummy for a toy. Evidence is building that, where children and families have benefited from contact with the centre, children have a better start to school life. The children's centre teachers work well with the early years provider and this is reflected within the recent good Ofsted inspection judgement.

Children's behaviour is excellent in the children's centre. They have positive relationships with adults and develop confidence to separate from their parents and carers as a result. Users' views are taken into account regularly and have an influence on provision. For example, following careful consultation, a code of conduct was written and adopted in order that the centre is a safe and welcoming place to be.

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	2
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 effective at assessing the needs of the children and families who use its services. Assessments cover the whole range of needs, including the needs of those most vulnerable. Understanding of need specifically with communication, language and literacy has led to focused programmes of work with children and to help parents/carers gain a greater understanding of how to support their children's language development. Excellent relationships are in place with a range of key partners including social care, health, speech and language therapy, Early Years Foundation Stage providers and organisations such as PEEP and OXPIP. The centre follows clear processes to involve these partnerships in targeting services for individual children and families. The crèche and outreach workers use their knowledge and influence to help families engage with other professionals ensuring

the well-being of children and their parents. This is encapsulated by one user who states, 'I couldn't have got through life without this children's centre.'

The children's centre recognises more needs to be done in engaging some harder to reach families and are working with partners to gain the information they need to target these families. For example, those who are subject to domestic violence and the small numbers of Asian families in the reach area. Senior leaders and staff constantly seek ways to identify the needs of specific groups and to tailor activities accordingly, for example a breastfeeding café and a Dad's group. The crèche and 'Stay and Play' facilities ensure equality of access to all users and particularly those from groups that are more vulnerable. Residential trips provide specifically tailored support for those who need it most. These provide a fantastic opportunity for families to have fun and engage in outdoor pursuits, whilst building confidence, relationships and parenting skills. Good links exist between the children's centre teachers and local early years providers and schools. They are establishing good transition arrangements as children progress into school.

The centre's extremely informative website is just one way that the centre advertises its services, which are well tailored to meet the needs of its users. In addition, a comprehensive range of relevant information is provided for all users in a wide range of formats including leaflets, and discussions with staff and outreach support. The quality of advice and guidance for those accessing benefits and those seeking to gain employment is excellent. Users are supported well to improve both their educational and personal development. The use of volunteers within the centre is a strong example of the commitment to developing users' confidence and to support them to move into further training, education or employment.

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

The leadership of the centre is good. The local authority provides a clear framework for the centre and effective oversight. The senior management group and advisory group oversee three centres and include representation from the key partners, including voluntary organisations and users. The advisory group provides the centre with support and challenge in decision making. They are beginning to look more closely at the evaluation of the centre's services to ensure there is appropriate attention to priorities, which are adequately resourced. The parent forum provides an

effective link between users of the centre and the management group, who listen to and take account of users' views. For example, users actively influence how the centre should use additional finances and identify which activities would be of most benefit to them.

The head of centre involves staff at all levels in the process of self-evaluation in order to identify strengths and areas to improve. The recent whole team day was a successful way of reinforcing the centre's vision and priorities; helping staff recognise the impact that their work is having on outcomes for children and their families; where more needs to be done and how the centre's work is 'taking root in the Leys'. The development plan sets out where improvements are needed and makes clear links with the local authority's Children's and Young People's Plan. The head of centre leads a team of motivated staff and line management structure is clear. Staff value the challenge and support they receive from their individual line managers and are improving their professional development with ongoing training.

The centre has a strong commitment to inclusion and removing barriers. All groups within the community are positively recognised and supported in the centre. Safeguarding is a particular strength as practices are rigorous and robust. Comprehensive risk assessments are systematically carried out to ensure the safety of all users when accessing services organised by the centre. Staff show a secure understanding and high commitment to ensuring the well being of children and their families and make effective use of the 'no name' referral system if they have concerns. Staff know the community well and have developed excellent relationships with partners and professionals in social care, health and education. They know their families well and quickly identify where additional support is needed. Staff are knowledgeable about the centre's vulnerable groups and take proactive steps to engage them in the centre's work, for example using volunteers as role models for others. They are establishing links with the police to reach families subject to domestic violence and working to ensure the consistency of health referrals across the reach area.

The centre is using innovative ways to evaluate its services with the use of university students to focus on particular areas, such as language development. Staff use these findings to inform practice, for example by recognising the importance of talking in a child's home language and restricting the use of dummies. The centre is collecting a wide range of data and this is developing. There is evidence to show the good impact of the centre's work on outcomes, and the centre recognises this as an area to improve further as their development plan accurately states 'ensure the excellent work we do is clearly recorded and measured'.

The extent to which governance, accountability, professional supervision and day to day management arrangements are clear and understood	2
The extent to which ambitious targets drive improvement, provision is	2

integrated and there are high expectations for users and the wider community	
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 this inspection

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Summary for centre users

We inspected the Cuddlesdon Children's Centre on 21 and 22 July 2010. We judged the centre as good overall.

Under the good guidance of head of centre, the staff work very well as a team to provide outstanding levels of care, guidance and support for all its users. Staff are committed and keen to support both children's development and to develop adults' skills and levels of confidence. They have established some excellent partnerships with other professionals and organisations to ensure users have access to a full range of support and guidance. They are providing good guidance to parents on how to keep their families healthy and safe, and have placed efforts on increasing children's speech development through the 'Stay and Play' sessions and the 'Spirals'

groups. Some parents told us that they found the support of the centre 'a lifeline' when in times of crisis.

Cuddesdon Children's Centre is a safe place for parents and carers to bring their children. The rooms are welcoming and allow children to play happily while they learn indoors or outside when attending the crèche. Parents said their children were happy in the crèche while they attended a variety of helpful courses, such as 'Family Links'.

The centre is a good place for users to meet other parents and people who can help them and their families. Some users said that resources such as the breastfeeding café offer good support and guidance. The centre asks for users views on activities and courses and some have been very involved in the production of the leaflet 'Dads and Breastfeeding' as well as the map of the area to encourage opportunities for parents and carers to play with their children outdoors.

The management group and advisory group meet regularly to ensure that the services the centre is providing meets the needs of the users. The parents' forum provides an effective link between users of the centre and the management group, who listen to and take account of users' views. For example, users actively influence how the centre should use additional finances and identify which activities would be of most benefit to them. The staff at the centre look at ways of providing interesting activities and courses that will have the most benefit to its users. They receive a lot of information from users and many others about how well they are doing as well as information about other families in the Leys community who may benefit from the services at the centre. They are looking to use this information more precisely to ensure they reach more families and look to improve outcomes even more.

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