

Inspection report for Weoley Castle Children's Centre

Local authority	Birmingham
Inspection number	366435
Inspection dates	17–18 February 2011
Reporting inspector	Anna Coyle AI

Centre governance	The governing body of Weoley Castle Nursery School
Centre leader	Lesley Harris
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected
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Linked school if applicable	Weoley Castle Nursery School
Linked early years and childcare, if applicable	Little Builders Day Care

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.

An inspection of the maintained nursery was carried out at the same time as the inspection of the centre under Section 5 of the Education Act 2005. The report of this inspection is available on our website www.ofsted.gov.uk.

This inspection was carried out by one additional inspector and one early years inspector.

The inspectors held meetings with the centre leader, the senior leadership team, the community, site and health and safety manager, the family support and integrated services manager, groups of parents, teachers and other staff, health workers, family support workers and representatives from the governing body and the advisory board. They observed the centre's work, and looked at a range of relevant documentation.

Information about the centre

Weoley Castle Children's Centre is a phase two centre situated in the district of Northfield in south-west Birmingham. It is in one of the five most deprived wards in the area. The super output areas are in the 30% most deprived areas, with a third of them in the highest 10% according to multiple deprivation indices. The centre is housed in a two-storey building with a new off-site day-care facility and a developing family support and outreach base at the Jervoise Primary School site. The community is characterised by high levels of unemployment and social deprivation. Families are predominantly White British, and there is a mix of minority ethnic groups, including those of Asian and Black heritage. Local authority data indicate that a significant proportion of children in the reach area live in poverty, and many families in workless households are dependent upon benefits. Most children enter the Early Years Foundation Stage with skills that are lower than those expected for their age. The centre provides the full core offer and is overseen by the governing body of the nursery school. It also has an advisory board which is made up of representatives from the local community, governors, parents and centre staff. The centre has achieved accreditation in Healthy Eating.

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 centre is led and managed exceedingly well by an inspirational and energetic leader. She is supported very well by an excellent team of professionals who are committed to providing good opportunities for the children and families in the reach area. The views expressed by parents and carers reflect the exceptionally high standard of care, guidance and support provided by the centre. One parent summed the views of many by saying: 'My child has been to the crèche and the staff were lovely. I felt confident leaving her with the staff as I was used to seeing them around the nursery and in "Stay and Play" activities.' Parents and carers particularly like the co-location of the maintained nursery and wrap-around care because this contributes well to their needs by providing easily accessible facilities.

Children and their families benefit from the centre's wide range of integrated provision and outreach services because staff work hard to ensure that the centre meets users' needs effectively. As a result, children achieve well in their personal, social and emotional development. Many increase their confidence and basic skills when attending the enjoyable activities at the centre and its two other sites. The centre's strong focus on promoting equality and diversity ensures that all users feel valued. This means that parents and carers receive plenty of good practical advice and support within a very welcoming, friendly environment. Staff are readily available to support pregnant teenagers, new mothers, fathers and carers, especially when families are in crisis. The centre works very closely with those who are referred by external agencies. Families who are made vulnerable by their circumstances receive outstanding care from health professionals and outreach services. Good links with Jobcentre Plus and local providers have a strong impact on adult users' access to employment opportunities. Data are collected regularly to record and track users' progress, and the information is used well by staff so that they can adapt services where necessary.

Safeguarding arrangements are good, from the safe recruitment of staff and safe working practices to the support provided for families to help them understand

home- and road-safety. The governing body maintains good oversight of the centre's provision and provides effective governance on behalf of the local authority to ensure good value for money. The advisory board provides good support for the staff and regularly seeks the views of users. However, the roles and responsibilities of the governing body and the advisory board are not sufficiently well defined to ensure clear lines of accountability. Nevertheless, based on the centre's strong leadership and effective action planning, there is good capacity for sustained improvement.

What does the centre need to do to improve further?

Recommendations for further improvement

- Strengthen the governance of the centre so that there are clear lines of accountability by defining the differing roles and responsibilities of the governing body and the advisory board.

How good are outcomes for users?

2

Health outcomes are good for users, and stem from effective partnerships with health professionals and family support workers. Improving trends in sustaining breastfeeding and the reduction of teenage pregnancy rates have been the result of carefully targeted support and strong links between health, social and inter-agency working. Midwives, keyworkers and health visitors encourage pregnant and new mothers and their families to give up smoking during home visits and the centre holds smoking-cessation classes. These are helping the centre to increase the proportion of children living in smoke-free environments. Children eat healthy fruit and snacks at the centre, and parents attending healthy-cooking sessions speak highly of staff and how they have helped them change the eating habits of their families. This is helping to reduce obesity rates. Immunisation rates are very high because this aspect of health is promoted very well through visits to new mothers when staff also encourage healthy lifestyles and physical activity, and signpost the services available.

The centre provides good support to parents, carers and childminders. This leads to good development and enjoyment among children in their personal, social and emotional development. Early communication and social skills are developing well. Children settle quickly because the adults working with them are very friendly and caring, and they provide excellent nurturing for the youngest children. For example, the centre's 'Baby Signing' sessions further enhance children's communication skills through eye-contact, facial expression and body language. These activities, baby massage sessions and 'Messy Play' strengthen the relationships and bonds between mothers, fathers and children. Parents and carers say that they also enjoy playing with their babies and toddlers in the 'Little Builders' playgroup which is held at one of the centre's nearby partner schools. Staff help them understand how to manage children's behaviour effectively at home through courses such as 'Promoting Happier Parenting'. The centre's data confirm a steady trend of improvement in children attaining the expected level in all areas of learning by the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage.

Children and adult users are aware of how to keep themselves safe and comment on how the centre provides a safe environment for them and their children. For example, one parent commented that the centre is, 'a safe, happy environment with attentive staff.' Staff effectively promote parents' and carers' knowledge about how to keep their families safe. Aspects of safety are introduced in the new parents sessions, 'Stay and Play' activities and through individual support. Fully trained staff focus on safety when they conduct home visits and new-birth visits. Through the Common Assessment Framework (CAF) and team meetings, users' individual needs are discussed thoroughly, including the needs of those who have mental health issues and families who are made vulnerable by their circumstances. These are followed up diligently and support is provided to help children and their families, including looked-after children and those who have child protection plans.

Many parents and carers have become volunteers, which enable them to become actively involved in the centre's activities. This is because the staff encourage users to become involved in the centre's warm and welcoming ethos. This enables users to express their views and contribute well to decision-making processes and the governance of the centre. The centre signposts users to relevant courses at local colleges and to job vacancies. In addition, its strong links with local providers and Jobcentre Plus, which is based on one of the centre's partner sites, benefit users by providing them with good access to employment opportunities.

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	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

Children and adults learn and develop well because the centre staff have good insight into the needs of families. Their knowledge is effectively based on a wide range of assessment information gathered in users' records and in the diligent tracking of children's progress in the areas of learning. Individual needs are identified carefully and regularly assessed and reviewed so that staff can adapt activities accordingly. This means that users have good opportunities to participate in well-

organised activities that are tailored to their needs. Lively sessions for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage help prepare them well for starting school. Parents and carers greatly appreciate the centre's provision and comment that, 'We have a lot to thank the children's centre team for.'

Good links with outreach services enhance the centre's provision so that it caters effectively for the community it serves. This is because the family support team and health professionals work together closely to provide a good range of fully integrated services to support the welfare needs of all groups of users and the wider community. For example, adults enjoy outreach health promotion programmes, such as healthy eating workshops and 'Healthy Eating in Pregnancy'. They have good opportunities to attend sessions for home safety and 'Weaning Training'. The provision for pregnant teenagers and new mothers is good. Midwives provide plenty of advice and medical checks during antenatal and postnatal clinics in the doctors' surgery next door. Parents and carers especially like the 'Promoting Happier Parenting' sessions held at the centre. The centre makes good provision for supporting fathers, which is much appreciated by users.

The centre's outstanding care, support and guidance provided for children and adults have a positive benefit on their well-being. Staff signpost parents to good-quality support for smoking cessation and also benefits and tax credit advice. Very caring keyworkers build trust with children, parents and carers, and they are especially sensitive to families who are most in need of emotional support. Users say that activities such as 'Stay and Play' and the 'Friendship Club' provide them with valuable opportunities to make friends and feel less isolated. The centre provides lots of useful information and advice to parents and carers who are seeking work, particularly lone parents and those who are keen to increase their basic skills prior to their return to work. Good links with Jobcentre Plus increase users' employment opportunities and help build their confidence in preparation for the world of work.

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

Leadership of the centre is well focused on driving improvement and maintaining high expectations for users and the wider community. Self-evaluation is accurate. The centre leader's inspirational and energetic leadership has led to ambitious

targets and a clear vision for the future. This has had a positive effect on staff who liaise in excellent teamwork to ensure a great sense of enthusiasm and enjoyment in all that they do.

Governance is good overall, and the advisory board provides effective support for the centre. Members of the two groups give their time willingly and bring a wide range of expertise to the centre. However, the roles and responsibilities of the governing body and the advisory board are not made sufficiently clear to them. This limits the governing body's ability to hold the centre to account for the services it provides. Even so, the dedicated and conscientious approach of leaders and senior managers and the flexible deployment of staff help to ensure good value for money.

Safeguarding arrangements are good and records are up to date. Leaders ensure the safe recruitment of staff, and all adults who work with children are checked carefully before taking up employment. The work of external support agencies is integrated effectively into the centre's day-to-day activities. Regular referrals of children and families in need and the good cooperation between multi-agency groups contribute well to improving the mental and emotional health and well-being of users.

The centre effectively celebrates diversity and it values all children and their families equally. The views of users are sought regularly to help the centre develop its provision and meet the needs of the whole community, including users who are made vulnerable by their circumstances, those with disabilities and users who are hard to reach. Good professional relationships with external agencies ensure that expertise is readily available for families who require help and support. The nursery school, which is co-located on the same site, contributes very well to the effectiveness of the centre.

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	2
The extent to which ambitious targets drive improvement, provision is integrated and there are high expectations for users and the wider community	1
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	2
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	2

integrated delivery of the range of services the centre has been commissioned to provide	
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

The inspection of Weoley Castle Nursery School took place at the same time, and the findings were taken into account. The Nursery school was judged to be outstanding. The judgement of good provision from the 2009 inspection for Little Builders Day Care was also taken into account.

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 Weoley Castle Children's Centre on 17–18 February 2011. We judged the centre as good overall.

We really enjoyed talking to you and finding out about all the things you are involved in. We visited a wide range of activities during the inspection, such as 'Stay and Play' sessions and the 'Little Builders' playgroup. You told us that you enjoy coming to the children's centre and that you value its work.

You told us that you particularly like activities such as healthy eating workshops and sessions about 'Healthy Eating in Pregnancy' and 'Weaning Training'. These help you to ensure that your families receive a healthy diet. We were pleased to see that the sessions provided at the centre are well planned and of good quality. As a result, your children are making good progress and developing well in their communication, personal and social skills. There are good opportunities for new mothers and fathers to receive helpful advice and guidance on how to look after young children. The staff also provide good support for dealing with children's behaviour at home through the 'Promoting Happier Parenting' sessions.

We were very impressed with the outstanding quality of care, guidance and support which you receive from the centre. You told us that the staff are very sensitive to your needs and help you willingly, especially in times of crisis. They make sure that

you get the support and help you need because there are strong partnerships with a wide range of professionals who contribute to the centre's activities.

The centre supports those of you who are looking for employment by providing useful information about jobs in the locality and through its good partnerships with Jobcentre Plus which is based on the centre's outreach site at Jervoise Primary School. We know that the centre asks for your views and opinions and we are aware that many of you are actively involved with the centre, either as volunteers or as members of the governing body or the advisory board.

The centre is led and managed extremely well by the centre leader who is inspirational and energetic. She has a very clear vision for the future of the centre. The excellent teamwork of the senior managers and staff means that the centre provides a safe environment for all of you and your children, and all staff are checked so that they are suitable to work with children and families. The governing body of the nursery school and the advisory board provide the centre with good support and advice. To strengthen governance, we have asked leaders to make clear the differing roles and responsibilities of the governing body and the advisory board.

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