

Inspection report for Anfield Children's Centre

Local authority	Liverpool
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Linked school if applicable	All Saints Catholic Voluntary Aided Primary School 134250
Linked early years and childcare, if applicable	Anfield Children's Centre EY371856

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.

An inspection of the co-located/partner primary school 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 advisory board, partners, parents, centre staff, the local authority and head teachers of partner schools. They observed the centre's work, and looked at a range of relevant documentation.

Information about the centre

Anfield Children's Centre, a purpose-built phase two centre, was designated in 2007 and is co-located with All Saints Catholic Voluntary Aided Primary School. The school's governing body has delegated responsibility for governance of the centre which is managed through a subcommittee which acts as an advisory board. The advisory board includes representation from parents, the community and partner professionals. A centre coordinator manages the day-to-day running of the centre and development of the programme, under the direction of the headteacher of the primary school who is the designated head of centre.

The centre offers early education and care places within the co-located early years provision also known as Anfield Children's Centre. It is subject to its own inspection under Section 49 of the Childcare Act 2006. The report is available on our website www.ofsted.gov.uk. The centre also offers a range of universal early learning services and support for parents. More specific targeted services include family support, parenting programmes, outreach services and home visiting. A number of services at the centre are delivered through commissioning arrangements. The centre uses outreach centres for some of its activities, including local schools, a local library and a sports centre.

The centre is located in one of the most deprived wards in Liverpool, with many areas being

within the 10% most deprived nationally. Most children enter early years provision with a range of skills lower than those expected for their age. The ward has high levels of worklessness, families on benefits, households with no qualifications, lone and teenage parents, and health inequalities. There are rising crime and housing problems. The main sources of local employment are Liverpool Football Club, retail and small businesses, such as cafes. The ward is mainly populated by White British heritage families with small numbers of asylum seekers and refugees.

The most recent figures indicate that, in April 2012, of the 913 children aged under than five living in the reach area, 864 are registered with the centre. Around 58% of these are taking up at least one of the centre's services.

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

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 highly regarded by partners and the community and provides good services for local families. In most areas, outcomes are good and improving. A typical comment from users was 'The centre has had a huge impact on my child and my life. I am more confident and no longer feel isolated and afraid to talk to people.' Outcomes are good and the gap between those who achieve well and others narrowed between 2010 and 11 to below the average for Liverpool. Good support is appropriately targeted and incorporated into all activities to improve children's speech, language, social and emotional development skills. Well-planned initiatives to reduce child obesity rates, improve breastfeeding rates and discourage smoking have been positively promoted but it is too early to see the impact on outcomes. Programmes to help parents encourage positive behaviour in their children are particularly successful and families feel very safe in the centre.

The strong concentration on outreach activities and home visiting enables the centre to effectively engage the most isolated and deprived families. Through good collaborative working with partners, the centre has successfully increased participation rates of lone, parents, fathers, the isolated and children and families whose circumstances make them

vulnerable. Eighty per cent of centre users come from the most deprived parts of the reach area. Close working relationships with partner schools and early years providers are improving children's learning and development. Learning activities are evaluated well with good feedback from users. Parents previously enjoyed the benefits of good opportunities for further training and advice on benefits and employment. However, a reduction in resources has led to a considerable decrease in participation rates. The centre is actively seeking through referrals, job clubs, advice and guidance to increase activities in this area. Some parents successfully trained as active volunteers and used this experience to find jobs.

Services are delivered in a welcoming and highly inclusive environment and there is good promotion of equality and diversity. A high priority is given by all workers to establishing a safe environment for children and parents. Safeguarding arrangements are good and staff attend regular training and understand their responsibilities.

Good and supportive management through the school and the local authority has helped the centre to resolve staffing problems so that services for families have not been adversely affected. This is because highly-motivated staff worked flexibly to ensure that problems were resolved swiftly. The centre's performance and its self-evaluation are actively reviewed by the advisory board. Self-evaluation is mostly accurate and the use of good quality data is improving. The centre has shown good capacity for sustained improvement in improving outcomes for most users and in maintaining good provision for children and their families.

Attendance by nominated parents is sporadic and the vast majority of parents using the centre are not sufficiently aware of the role and operation of the advisory board, or fully involved in influencing decisions about the centre's direction.

What does the centre need to do to improve further?

Recommendations for further improvement

- Increase activities to improve health outcomes for families through a particular focus on initiatives to increase breastfeeding rates and reduce smoking and childhood obesity.
- Extend parents' opportunities to participate in further training to enhance their employability skills, and access to advice on entitlement to benefits and monitor users' participation and progression in these activities.
- Increase centre parents' awareness of the role and operation of the advisory board, to enhance their influence in decision-making about the direction of the centre.

How good are outcomes for families?

2

The centre offers a broad range of activities to promote all aspects of family health, in collaboration with health visitors and midwives. Families learn the benefits of healthy eating

and physical activity through short, motivational courses, such as baby massage or creative activities aimed at encouraging children attending nursery to try new vegetables. However, the numbers of children who are obese on starting the Reception Year remains 6% above the average for Liverpool. There is a positive decrease in the numbers of babies with low birth weights. Teenage pregnancy rates have fallen slightly. Programmes for new mothers on the benefits of breastfeeding have led to a small increase in the numbers starting, but figures for sustaining breastfeeding remain low. Increasing numbers attend ante-natal and baby clinics and parents attending weaning clinics are more aware of how to promote dental hygiene. Higher numbers of families sign up to stop-smoking pledges but the numbers of mothers smoking on delivery remains well above the Liverpool average.

The centre is a very safe place and security arrangements are robust. Children learn how to keep themselves safe and to recognise dangers through play. Parents learn how to protect their children from excessive exposure to the sun. Through parenting programmes, they develop the confidence to manage their children's behaviour. Children are very well-protected by the increasing use of the Common Assessment Framework (CAF) and workers identify potential risks and intervene early. Increased numbers of children are subject to and benefit from child protection plans. Families develop a good understanding of how to reduce risks to children in their homes through home visits and safety checks. The number of incidents of domestic violence affecting children is on the decline.

Outcomes for children and parents involved in learning, play and recreational activities are good. They have lots of fun and bond well together and parents discover how children learn through play. A typical comment from one parent was 'I discovered the fun in spending an hour at home playing with my daughter's doll's house rather than tidying up.' The numbers of children achieving a good level of attainment by the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage increased from 32% in 2009 to 51% in 2011. The gap between the lowest 20% and the average in the Early Years Foundation Stage reduced from 26% in 2009 to 23% in 2011, which is 10% below the average for Liverpool. The centre effectively promotes the development of children's speech and language skills through play and singing activities, such as 'Tiny Talk', the sensory room and 'Bookstart'. Parents now spend more time talking to and playing with their children. Children are well-prepared for transition to nursery or primary school. A smaller number of parents than in previous years take up adult learning programmes following reductions in services offered, but many of these achieve well and have successfully completed accredited programmes.

Children learn to take their turn, behave well and show respect for and make friends with others. They are encouraged to make choices about the toys they play with and the food they eat. Parents believe that the centre promotes a strong culture of mutual respect and inspectors agree. They are regularly encouraged to evaluate and suggest improvements to their learning activities. Changes are made to programmes in response to users' suggestions. For example, the weekend fathers' group has become family time so that all members of the family can attend. Actions from recommendations are reported back to users. The centre has a positive role in the community and good networks exist to promote its activities. However, families using the centre are not sufficiently aware of its governance arrangements.

The centre contributes well to motivating and building the confidence of hard-to-reach families who lack the skills needed to seek work. Family support workers actively engage with families to help broker better access to services to help their economic stability. There are some opportunities available for parents to engage in further training and seek financial or benefits advice. Numbers taking up adult training opportunities are reduced. However, new initiatives such as job clubs are used to refer parents to other agencies for initial advice on debt management and to check whether they are receiving their full entitlement to benefits and tax credits. The VIP Training Scheme successfully engaged 15 local parents but the centre recognises the need for greater use of volunteers to support its activities. The centre does not record the progression of users leaving the centre and is unable to assess the benefits of further training to their families.

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	2
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	2
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?

2

The centre, along with its partners, meets the needs of targeted groups well. It effectively assesses the individual needs of children, including disabled children and those with special educational needs, and provides for them well-coordinated support. Services in the centre are adapted well to ensure they meet the needs of children and parents. Parenting needs are assessed thoroughly. A high proportion of families are registered with the centre and over 80% of the 501 users attending in 2011/12 are from its most deprived areas. The centre is particularly successful in engaging fathers, black or minority ethnic families and lone parents.

The range of varied provision in different locations, including in the home, which meet the needs of the community and help children learn and progress is good. Activities are of a good quality and give parents valuable opportunities to further develop their confidence and parenting skills. Sessions are clearly targeted to attract children or mothers at particular stages of their child's development. There is a strong focus on supporting families who need

particular help in developing children’s speech, language, and social and behavioural skills. Good measures are used to recognise and celebrate the progress and achievements of both children and parents.

The quality of care and support for all centre users and in the home is particularly good. Parents are given confidential access to specialist information on topics such as sexual health, alcohol and drug issues. Families with children with special educational needs receive personalised support plans and help to negotiate care packages with other agencies. Families in crisis are strongly supported by multi-agency teams. Interpreters are used to help families who have limited knowledge of spoken English. Children and families receive good guidance on choices to be made and are signposted well to other services.

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

How effective are the leadership and management?

2

Strong strategic leadership by the headteacher of the school and also by the local authority has helped maintain good services for families at Anfield Children’s Centre in a time of financial constraints. Close collaborative working with local schools, early years providers, health services, and other agencies supports the centre’s targeting of families living in the most deprived areas. There is careful monitoring of progress towards targets set by the local authority, using accurate data. These data provide valuable information on trends but the centre is still developing models to identify key messages more fully. The advisory board successfully monitors the work of the centre, but it has yet to find appropriate ways to engage parents fully. Some parents attend the parents’ forum but many are not sufficiently aware of its function and that of the advisory board. The centre recognises the need to strengthen parents’ influence on the development of its activities.

All staff benefit from a range of high-quality training and support in their work. Self-evaluation is generally used well to determine priorities for further development and progress towards meeting these is carefully monitored. Outcomes in most areas of the centre’s work are good and improving. The centre and satellite offer high-quality resources and facilities for parents and children. The centre uses its resources well, fulfils all of its statutory duties and provides good value for money.

Equality is promoted at all levels and there is good inclusion of all children and their families. The centre’s home visiting and community engagement are leading to greater participation

by hard-to-reach families and groups. Centre staff work vigorously to help parents overcome barriers to participation.

Safeguarding of children and of vulnerable adults has a high priority and practice is robust. Local authority policies on safe recruitment are followed stringently. Criminal Records Bureau checks on staff are reviewed every three years. The centre works effectively with partners to protect children, including disabled children, and vulnerable parents. Latest figures show a reduction in the numbers of hospital admissions following accidental injuries to children. All staff have a good knowledge of safeguarding and child-protection procedures and are confident in applying them. There are good protocols for sharing information between agencies. Very good support and access to expert help and protection are given to parents experiencing domestic violence. The centre promotes the safety and welfare of all centre users. Parents are confident that any concerns they have will be listened to sensitively and in confidence.

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 effectiveness of evaluation and its use in setting ambitious targets which secures improvement in outcomes	2
The extent to which resources are used and managed efficiently and effectively to meet the needs of families, including those in target groups	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 partnerships with other agencies ensure the integrated delivery of the range of services provided by the centre to meet its core purpose	2
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

The findings of the school inspection and the registered early years provision were taken into consideration during the inspection.

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Summary for centre users

We inspected the Anfield Children's Centre on 24 and 25 April 2012. We judged centre as good overall.

We were particularly impressed by the commitment from the centre's staff and by its arrangements to keep children and families safe. Many of you commented on how safe and welcome the centre makes you feel, 'like being in your own home'. You particularly value the staff and the very good care and support they provide. You told us how the centre had helped you turn your life around when you were feeling isolated or having problems.

We would like to thank all the people who spoke to us during our visit. Many of you told us what you thought about the centre and its activities. Your views were very helpful. Everyone we spoke to was full of praise for the centre workers and their willingness to listen to and support you. These are some of the typical things that parents said: 'I used to feel so alone and find it difficult to talk to other people. Now I feel as though I'm part of a family of friends.' 'I know that when I come here people will listen even if I am having a bad day.'

So that more families can benefit from the services you are receiving, we have asked the centre to make more opportunities for parents to influence decisions made about what the centre does, the activities it offers and the way it is governed. The centre has done a lot to help parents stop smoking, to help reduce child obesity and to help increase the numbers of mothers who continue to breastfeed their children. We would like to see this work continue because there is still a long way to go for many families. Some parents have previously enjoyed the chance to develop employability skills which helped them to get jobs but these opportunities are now limited. We have asked the centre to develop ways of building these up again and making sure families can also get good advice on benefits and on how to manage their money.

The centre workers know your community very well and are very enthusiastic about helping you improve your lives. You told us how much you appreciate the stimulating and enjoyable activities offered to your children including those which help them to improve their speech and language skills. You particularly like the play sessions where you can join in and you also enjoy using the sensory room. We know that the centre's work in helping you improve the safety of your children at home is good. Through their work with partners, they have helped you improve your children's behaviour and you really enjoyed the 'behaviour matters' course. The weekend activities for dads are very popular. Health workers and staff from the primary schools work closely with centre staff to provide good services to meet all of your

family needs. The links with health professionals make it easier for you to attend ante-natal sessions and baby clinics. You value the advice you get on how to deal with your child's behaviour.

Some of the centre's work in the community and through home visiting is very successful in helping parents who find it difficult to come to the centre or who do not know who to ask for help. Your children have good opportunities to learn and develop through the wide range of activities available. Many children are making good progress in developing their skills for the future. The care, guidance and support offered by the centre are very good, especially for families who need extra help.

Thank you again for coming to talk to us. We enjoyed visiting your centre and wish you and your families our best wishes for the future.

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