

Leicestershire - Melton Group

The Cove Sure Start Children's Centre, Sysonby Street, Melton Mowbray, LE13 0LP

Inspection date 17–18 July 2013

Overall effectiveness	This inspection:	Good	2
	Previous inspection:	Not previously inspected	
Access to services by young children and families		Good	2
The quality of practice and services		Good	2
The effectiveness of leadership, governance and management		Good	2

Summary of key findings for children and families

This children's centre group is good.

- The children's centre group is well integrated across all relevant services within Melton Borough Council. As a result, the centres provide all of the information that parents and the wider community may need to improve their lives.
- Partnership working with a wide range of professionals is effective which ensures that services are well integrated and cohesive. The excellent partnership with health professionals is very successful in identifying the large majority of those in most need of early intervention.
- The centres are held in high regard by key partners and centres users. Management and staff working within the centres show high levels of commitment to the centres' work and morale is high.
- The centres promote good quality, individualised, purposeful learning for adults which helps move them on to further learning, education or employment. All users' achievements are acknowledged and celebrated.
- Experienced family outreach workers have a good understanding of the community and its needs.
- The educational outcomes for children at the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage are good.

It is not outstanding because:

- The children's centre group's tracking of its effectiveness does not include all children and parents in the reach area who attend centre services to show how their contact with the centres has helped them over time.
- The centres do not promote literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology (ICT) basic qualifications sufficiently well to parents who most need them.
- The parent 'Family Voices' forum is not clear about the part it plays in challenging the work of the centres.
- Health services do not provide information about mothers who are smoking in pregnancy early enough to provide successful interventions as soon as possible.

Information about this inspection

The inspection of the Childrens' centres was carried out under Part 3A of the Childcare Act 2006 as amended by the Apprenticeships, Skills, Children and Learning Act 2009. The centres that form part of this children's centre group are The Cove Children's Centre, The Edge Children's Centre and Fairmead Children's Centre.

This inspection was carried out by three of Her Majesty's Inspectors.

The inspectors held meetings with: the manager of the Childrens' centres in the locality and the locality co-ordinator; senior leaders and managers in the local authority at borough and county level; health, education and early help partners; parents; a customer services adviser; housing and benefits officers; family outreach workers; early years practitioners; volunteers; representatives from commissioned services; and representatives of the locality partnership board.

The inspectors visited the three centres.

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

Inspection team

Sue Crawford	Her Majesty's Inspector
Joy Law	Her Majesty's Inspector
Harmesh Mangra	Her Majesty's Inspector

Full report

Information about the group

Services for children and families in Melton Mowbray are delivered in three locality areas. The Melton locality children's centres service is managed directly by the local authority at both county and borough level. The locality partnership board, comprising key partners, assists in its governance.

There are three children's centres and one satellite centre in the locality that are managed by the locality manager:

- The Cove Children's Centre
- The Edge Children's Centre
- Fairmead Children's Centre
- The Vale of Belvoir Satellite Centre

The Melton locality covers the wards of Asfordy, Bottesford, Craven, Croxton Kerrial, Dorian, Egerton, Frisby on the Wreake, Gaddesby, Long Clawson and Stathern, Newport, Old Dalby, Sysonby, Waltham on the Wolds and Warwick. The group has been established since 2008 and all centres are phase 2. Services are shared across all of the children's centres and the centres are open five days each week.

There are approximately 2,766 children under five years of age living in the locality area. Data demonstrate that the population is mainly White British with a small Polish community who are a target group within the children's centre locality. Levels of deprivation are low. Low numbers of children under five years of age are living in families that are claiming benefits, but levels of obesity among children are high. Children's skills, knowledge and abilities on entry to school are at the levels expected for their age.

What do the centres need to do to improve further?

- Implement the planned tracking system to check the impact of the centre's work on all children's and adults' progress over time to clearly measure the longer term effectiveness of the centres' services.
- Promote further the range of activities and services offered to adult learners to support them in obtaining relevant qualifications in literacy, numeracy and ICT.
- Improve the governance and leadership of the centre by:
 - clarifying and strengthening the role of the parents who are on the 'Family Voices' forum so that they provide better challenge
 - gaining antenatal data from health at an early stage to provide timely interventions to support mothers who smoke during pregnancy.

Inspection judgements

Access to services by young children and families Good

- The centres are in contact with the large majority of families from target groups within the area. Staff including outreach workers develop and maintain a strong rapport and a trusting relationship with the families to ensure that they receive good support on a wide range of issues which meet their needs effectively.
- Good services meet the needs of most users because the centre group is so well informed about its demographics as a result of data gathering and needs analysis. This is greatly assisted by health services that provide information on new births every month and at 28 weeks of pregnancy. This is not early enough to meet the needs of those mothers who wish to stop smoking whilst pregnant.
- Parents and partners contribute well to establish, review and develop programmes and activities to

meet their needs and enrich their lives. Highly knowledgeable staff from many agencies share a common vision of improving the lives of vulnerable families. They work extremely well to identify and refer the most vulnerable families to the multi-agency 'Supporting Leicestershire Families Team' to ensure a multi-agency response for those families with the most complex needs.

- The centres closely monitor access to services, attendance and participation. Attendance and participation rates are good.
- The borough currently does not have an entitlement to nursery education funding for two-year-old children, this will change from September when some funding will be available. However, the centre is helping parents of disadvantaged two year olds to access early education by ensuring funding from other sources is provided. Data show that children at the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage are achieving the expected levels for their age. The centres support the providers of day care provision in the locality effectively; 96% have been judged as good or better.
- The centres are successful at reaching specific groups. For example, the Polish families have access to an interpreter through the centres and the group has organised 'Polish Stay and Play' sessions that are highly valued.
- Partnerships with Loughborough College and the local adult learning service are mainly good. Outcomes on a week-long 'Skills for Work' course are good. The users raise their aspirations well, as they are entitled to a guaranteed job interview with a local supermarket.
- Opportunities for parents to undertake courses of further education, training and personal development have improved. However, these are not actively promoted within the centres. Parents, at early stages of seeking skills for employment, are able to participate in, and complete introductory programmes that include 'Back to basic cookery', 'story sacks', 'Lifesaver baby and child' and 'What if'- managing risk courses to re-engage them into learning.

The quality of practice and services

Good

- Partnership working is a particular strength of the centres. The centres have excellent partnerships with health services and Jobcentre Plus. The group has good and improving links with early years providers and schools; these partnerships improve outcomes for children and families.
- Excellent multi-agency working by highly skilled professionals means that they identify the needs of the potentially vulnerable families at an early stage and intervene appropriately with provision tailored carefully to match families' individual needs.
- The centres offer a good range of opportunities for parents and children to learn about food, nutrition and healthy eating in a practical way. Parents are improving their cooking skills through planning and preparing well-balanced meals to eat with their children.
- Children and parents engage in a good range of well-planned and delivered sessions to support families' well-being, such as 'Structured Stay and Play', 'Messy Play' and 'Active Family Fun'. Parents spoke positively about the centres' services and how they are developing understanding of how to support their children's learning, particularly around the importance of physical activity and their communication and language skills.
- The centres provide good care, guidance and support to all parents, particularly those who are most vulnerable. This is achieved through effective one-to-one support, parenting programmes, and opportunities for parents to gain necessary skills and knowledge, building self-confidence. This has resulted in parents' greater resilience and support to their children. For example, in managing their child's behaviour, eating and sleep routines. The centres are less effective in informing parents about literacy, numeracy and ICT courses available to them.
- The centres consult widely with parents and local people and use the information effectively to ensure the services offered are what people want and need. The centres have enabled parents to make a positive contribution to the running of the centre. The centres has successfully engaged 30 parent volunteers who contribute towards delivering the centre's services, such as breastfeeding support, assisting at parent and toddler groups.
- The centres are successfully targeting and reaching specific groups. For example, the male outreach worker is increasingly reaching more fathers who engage in a comprehensive range of activities to play and learn with their children. Fathers report how much they enjoy spending time with their

children.

- The tracking of users' progress over time is good for disabled children and families facing domestic violence. It is less effective at evidencing this for other groups such as children who attend the 'Stay and Play' sessions and adults who benefit from parenting courses.

The effectiveness of leadership, governance and management

Good

- The local authority, at both county and borough level, has a clear strategy in place to improve the lives of families living in Melton. It sees children's centres as an integral part of this strategy to deliver success at a local level. This has secured real and sustained improvements for the large majority of families and represents an efficient use of resources.
- Governance arrangements are clear; the locality partnership board has a highly supportive chair and meetings are held regularly. Minutes and discussions show that there is a good level of challenge provided by the board to drive forward the improvements needed in the locality. Parents from the 'Family Voices' group fully support the work of the centres but are not fully aware of how they can link into the partnership board and help to influence the work of the centres.
- The high-quality data and information provided by the local authority and health services ensure that targets are accurate and ambitious in most cases. The data show that high levels of mothers smoke in pregnancy and, as a result, the number of low birth weight babies is high. Ante-natal data is received at 28 weeks of pregnancy. This is not soon enough to enable the centre to target mothers in the early stages of pregnancy.
- Self-evaluation by the centre's leadership team is perceptive and leads to the clear identification of key issues for on-going improvement which partners are involved in. As a result, links between self-evaluation and shared targets are clear, the evaluation across all partners is currently being streamlined so that it is consistent.
- Leaders have a clear focus on improvement. They are passionately committed to do whatever it takes to continually improve opportunities for safety, health and the well-being of all children and families, but particularly those in most need. Highly trained and skilled staff share their enthusiasm and morale is high.
- Safeguarding arrangements are secure and there is a good focus on keeping children and parents safe at all centres. Joint working and information sharing between the locality children's centres, Supporting Leicestershire Family Team, the early help team and children's social care are developing strongly. There is a very good understanding of the children's centres' contribution to the local authority's early intervention agenda.
- Barriers to families accessing services are successfully removed by schemes, such as funding for transport which helps families from the more rural areas of the reach to access the services of the centres.
- The centres provide an appropriate balance of universal and targeted services. The centres offer a wide range of good-quality services which have been commissioned in response to locally identified need and which are demonstrating improved outcomes for families. This has been achieved through effective partnership working, joint commissioning, creative thinking and the efficient use of resources.

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	Practice consistently reflects the highest aspirations for children and their families and as a result inequalities are reducing rapidly and gaps are closing.
Grade 2	Good	Practice enables most children and their families to access good quality services that improve children's wellbeing and achieve the stated outcomes for families.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	Performance is not as good as it might reasonably be expected to be in one or more key areas.
Grade 4	Inadequate	The needs of children and families in its area are not being met and/or the leaders and managers are not providing sufficient challenge to bring about improvement to the quality of services.

Children's Centre/Children's Centre Group details

Unique reference number	80366
Local authority	Leicestershire
Inspection number	423338
Managed by	The Leicestershire local authority

Approximate number of children under five in the reach area	2,766
Centre leader	Kate Parkinson
Telephone number	01664-502429
Email address	kparkinson@melton.gov.uk

This group consists of the following children's centres:

- 21131 Fairmead Sure Start Children's Centre
- 23175 The Cove Sure Start Children's Centre
- 23183 The Edge Sure Start Children's Centre

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