

Inspection report for Martenscroft Sure Start Children's Centre

Local authority	Manchester
Inspection number	362523
Inspection dates	8 – 9 March 2011
Reporting inspector	Janet Glover

Centre governance	Local Authority
Centre leader	Katharine Coates-Mohammed
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected
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Linked school if applicable	Martenscroft Nursery School
Linked early years and childcare, if applicable	EY294455 Martenscroft Nursery School and Sure Start Children's Centre, full day-care, out of school care and crèche

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 an additional inspector and an early years inspector.

The inspectors held meetings with centre staff, health professionals, local community partners, advisory board members, governing body representatives, local authority representatives, user groups and parents and carers who use the centre.

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

Information about the centre

Martenscroft is an integrated Nursery School and Sure Start Children's Centre, offering day-care provision and after-school club provision, alongside meeting the Sure Start core offer. Martenscroft Nursery School and Sure Start Children's Centre is situated in a diversely populated area of Central Manchester with significant levels of poverty and poor health. There are currently 947 children under five years of age in the Hulme area and 714 primary aged children on roll for 2009; 54.6% access free school meals and 75.4% of children are from minority ethnic backgrounds. Attendance data for 2009 is 94.1% compared to the Manchester average of 93.8%. There is a high level of ethnic diversity in the area and no one language, other than English, is prevalent.

The centre has very strong links with the local community and beyond, which offer a valuable dimension to its positive ethos. The centre is multi-disciplinary in its nature, offering a range of holistic services shaped around the needs of young children, their

families and the local community. Health services, such as midwives, speech and language therapists, health visitors and community nursery nurses are offered at the centre working in partnership with the local Primary Care Trust. Family support services are offered at the centre through partnership working between Manchester City Council and the Big Life Company. Training is offered for parents and carers to improve their chances of employment, working in partnership with a variety of agencies including Manchester Adult Education Service and Gingerbread.

The nursery school offers 52 full-time places; after-school offers eight places. The number on register is 52 in the nursery class, 49 in day care and six in the after-school club. The centre is a popular choice with parents, with a healthy waiting list for both nursery class and day-care. Thirty eight percent of children have English as an additional language. Many of these are children of overseas students.

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

1

Capacity for sustained improvement

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

1

Main findings

Martenscroft Children’s Centre provides outstanding provision for all the children, parents and carers who use it. Martenscroft is seen by local people as the hub of the community and is the place everybody comes for advice, guidance and support. They appreciate the friendly approachable staff who build high levels of trust among families. The view, shared by all who are connected with Martenscroft, that the needs of each individual child and their family are of highest importance, underpins the outstanding care, guidance and support it provides. Staff are all extremely flexible and responsive and the principal and her deputy head of centre go out of their way to ensure that all users are welcomed and respected. The centre is also utilised by a high number of fathers, partners and grandfathers. One parent’s comment, reflecting the views of many, was ‘We will always cherish the investment you have made in our child...this is a place for growth...everybody who comes in contact with Martenscroft is touched by the atmosphere here and enthuses about it...it saved me from drugs, drink and depression and it enabled me to keep my children against all odds.’

Relationships between staff and children, parents and carers, are excellent, promoting positive cohesion in the community. The child and their family are at the heart of the centre and this is evidenced by the wide variety of activities that families, particularly the most vulnerable, can access. The child is of paramount importance and the concept of 'the children's voice' is embedded in all centre planning and activities. The centre has outstanding leadership and is managed well, providing high quality activities for children and families.

The principal successfully shares her vision of how integrated services can improve lives. The result is a senior leadership team and staff who work tirelessly to provide very effective services. Morale is high and relationships between staff and users strong. Outcomes for users are excellent. Multi-agency partnerships are very well established and responsive to meeting the needs of families. The centre provides a wide range of services that are effectively raising the knowledge of parents and carers about healthy lifestyles and keeping their children safe. Relationships between agencies are highly productive and transfer of information between key partners is prompt and effective.

The centre is an inclusive setting and promotes equality very well. Provision is carefully adapted to meet the needs of all members of the community, including the most vulnerable, and is impacting positively on their lives. The centre is working very effectively to keep users engaged and increase the numbers of parents and carers who are taking advantage of the good range of opportunities. The outreach worker goes into the community for two afternoons a week, accompanied by a neighbouring worker, to 'door knock' on every family with a newborn baby, family or situation that has been identified through various data sources. This means every new family or mother will be given a personal welcome and introduction to the centre and its activities.

Comprehensive assessments ensure outstanding support is provided to vulnerable families and children and those who need support in times of acute need or crisis through this particularly effective form of outreach. Staff and other adults consistently give the highest priority to safeguarding all children and their families. Children themselves are very aware of the importance of safeguarding and one child in particular ensured that the inspector's credentials were thoroughly scrutinised before entering the day care room.

Senior leaders have an excellent understanding of the strengths in provision and how the centre could build on these even further in the future. For example, they are well aware of the current financial restraints being set on centres nationally and are looking at new and innovative ways of meeting the needs of the children and families that they serve. The centre continually evaluates the quality of provision and uses this information well to determine its priorities; staff effectively and consistently measure success. The centre knows and understands its reach area well and has ensured that activities and programmes run from the most effective venue. For example, there are high numbers of parents and carers for whom English is not their

first language. The centre has recognised that there is wide ranging and supportive provision for English for speakers of other languages (ESOL) provided locally through Manchester Adult Education Services and voluntary organisations and groups, and individuals are signposted to these successful programmes.

The centre has successfully improved outcomes for users since opening, has strong and dynamic leadership and an active governing body that is well supported by the advisory board. Both boards have full and effective membership from parents and local organisations/services. The local authority is increasingly providing robust quality assurance. This contributes to the centre's excellent capacity to build on these successes in the future and further improve outcomes for families and children.

What does the centre need to do to improve further?

Recommendations for further improvement

- Continue to provide outstanding services, evaluating and refining provision to meet the needs of those who live within the reach area, and to share this best practice across the city.

How good are outcomes for users?

1

Across all five areas, outcomes are outstanding. This is because the centre understands its locality and those who live in it and provides an extensive range of activities that are developed very well in partnerships with other agencies, parents and carers and children. Children's thoughts and feelings are gained at every opportunity and incorporated into plans and evaluations. Meal times are organised in a 'family environment.' Staff eat with small groups of children, talking to them and supporting them. A good and healthy attitude to eating is encouraged. A variety of fruits are on offer to the children for snack times to encourage them to taste more unfamiliar ones and develop an enjoyment for a range of fruits. Children are involved in preparing the fruit for snack times. Milk and water are on offer constantly during the day in the indoor and outdoor environment, for children to help themselves to and thus remain hydrated. 'Circle times' are used as forums for discussions about feelings, relationships and appropriate behaviours to enable children to maintain good mental well-being. Children have access to the outdoor environment for the great majority of the day in all weathers, allowing them freedom of movement on a large scale and access to fresh air. This is greatly appreciated by the children, many of whom live in flats. There are opportunities and resources for climbing, riding trikes and scooters and playing with balls.

Children's progress in physical development is very good. There are allotment areas in which the children are involved in growing vegetables; these are then used to prepare healthy meals and snacks in the centre. Children frequently take part in cooking healthy foods and snacks as part of the curriculum. Children are helped to understand the importance of wearing hats and sun cream in hot weather.

There is good partnership with health services to provide support for children and families at the centre; for example, the weekly drop-in baby clinic and information session, weekly booking-in sessions, ante-natal and parent education sessions with the community midwives. Health visitors, the clinical psychologist, physiotherapist, pre-school special educational needs team and community paediatricians work closely with practitioners from the centre in supporting families and ensuring children’s individual needs are met. The midwives and health visitors actively promote breastfeeding.

All services offered by the centre keep users safe. Children have well-formed, trusting relationships with key workers that help them grow with support and encouragement; parents and children value this. Children are listened to and are engaged in the planning process. A clear focus is put on observing and following the children’s interests when developing activities and the learning environment. There are excellent opportunities for children’s views to be heard and each child has access to more than one member of staff to offer support and guidance. Children are very happy to try new activities and experiences and take supported risks. Observations show children feel ownership of their rooms and access resources and activities independently. All statutory regulations for checking staff and others are in place and appropriate records are kept to ensure that all are fit to work with children and their families. There is excellent use of the Common Assessment Framework process to support children’s and families’ needs, with the early identification enabling prompt and proactive intervention. There is excellent partnership working with other agencies to signpost potentially vulnerable parents, for example, safeguarding with regard to teenage parents who are in relationships with older males.

Achievement is outstanding for most children. Almost all children, including vulnerable groups, make good to outstanding progress with a very large number achieving beyond typical expectations in most aspects of of each area of learning. Most children meet or exceed their personal development goals. The use of focused group and individual targets for Early Years Foundation Stage are ensuring that children are working on relevant and challenging targets to raise attainment, in line with their individual developmental needs. Lesson observations indicate that children are well focused and stimulated, and demonstrate an outstanding attitude towards learning. The children acquire knowledge, develop understanding and learn and practise skills exceptionally well. Children demonstrate good concentration and are keen to tackle challenges, showing good problem solving skills. Adults are encouraged to access the Connexions team and many sign up for training programmes within the centre. There is a large display of local jobs and training opportunities at the entrance where parents and carers congregate when waiting to pick up their children at the end of the day. Parents often go on to volunteer, which has resulting in two currently going on to undertake recognised child care qualifications.

These are the grades for the outcomes for users

The extent to which children, including those from vulnerable groups,	1
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are physically, mentally and emotionally healthy and families have healthy lifestyles	
The extent to which children are safe and protected, their welfare concerns are identified and appropriate steps taken to address them	1
The extent to which all users enjoy and achieve educationally and in their personal and social development	1
The extent to which children engage in positive behaviour and develop positive relationships and users contribute to decision-making and governance of the centre	1
The extent to which children are developing skills for the future and parents are developing economic stability and independence including access to training	1

How good is the provision?

1

A highly effective assessment process enables staff to identify the needs of all children at an early stage and helps to ensure that all children make excellent progress. The centre uses the data it collects effectively by reviewing new births and moves into the reach each week. This results in the outreach worker visiting parents and families in their homes each week to introduce themselves and the work of the centre. Assessment of individual cases is robust and the Common Assessment Framework is successfully ensuring teams can be gathered quickly to support children and families identified as in need.

The centre provides an excellent range of services. There are well planned drop-in activities, such as 'Stay and play', 'Rhyme time', baby massage, and 'Good grub,' as well as planned programmes to support parenting and dealing with children's behaviours. There is a specific sensory room where babies can be taken that offers a quiet but often supportive space for parents to use alone or in small groups. As one parent commented, 'Without this centre I would not know how to look after my child, would not leave the house and would not have found the supportive circle of friends that I have found at the centre...it has saved my life since moving here'.

The principal and staff constantly seek ways to identify the needs of specific groups and to tailor activities accordingly. The centre has an excellent relationship with the museums service. They have provided access to activities within the local museums for families to attend, bring objects into sessions to discuss and have installed 'artists in residence' to work with children and families each week. This resulted in a 'Doodle with Dads' session, which is run on a Saturday and is very popular. Fathers and partners requested that the sessions took place on a Saturday to give mothers a break and to accommodate fathers who only had weekend access to children.

Parents report that the quality and speed of support is both outstanding and

exceptional, and available for as long as it is needed. Careful strategies are in place to ensure that parents can build confidence, parenting skills, and be supported to independence, at a pace that is appropriate to them. As one parent said, 'the centre has turned my life around, I am truly grateful'. It very effectively supports those who may be lone parents, teenage parents, have drug or alcohol dependency, or be new to this country, many of whom are students at the university. Staff give parents the confidence to attend the centre where excellent relationships encourage them to take part in activities such as 'Confident parent, confident child' or parenting programmes, which gives valuable help and advice in childcare and behaviour management. For the families involved, evidence suggests the support makes the difference between improving life chances and an inability to cope. The teenage pregnancy group is very effectively run in conjunction with Connexions and a neighbouring children's centre.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The effectiveness of the assessment of the needs of children, parents and other users	1
The extent to which the centre promotes purposeful learning, development and enjoyment for all users	1
The extent to which the range of services, activities and opportunities meet the needs of users and the wider community	1
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?

1

The principal is highly experienced and with her deputy, run the children's centre and the nursery school as an integrated service to all who walk through the doors. They lead a well-motivated and enthusiastic team. They are all passionate about making a difference to children and families in the local area and beyond. Inclusion of all is central to the centre's vision. Positive role models and resources, reflecting all members of the community, highlight the centre's determination to include all groups who may be subject to discrimination. The centre effectively and actively promotes equal opportunities and has many established anti-discriminatory practices. The children themselves during the inspection demonstrated a high level of understanding of equality of opportunity and showed respect and concern for other children around them. This was particularly visible in the way children with special educational needs or multiple and profound disabilities are treated and included in all indoor and outdoor activities without adult direction. The centre itself is full of exciting and positive images, photographs and displays that embrace and highlight diversity. English is not the first language for many children, parents and carers and, therefore, the centre ensures that all the walls are full of photographs and images, giving them a visual display of activities and learning sessions in which children have

been involved. The children's individual learning journey books are a beautiful and visual display of the child's progress; this is done sensitively and provides a wealth of information about the learning and development of that individual. These 'learning journeys' are exemplary.

Safeguarding is embedded in all activities and planning undertaken in the centre. There are clear and robust protocols in place around selection and recruitment of staff and volunteers. There is use of a single register which is clear and accessible. There are clear management responsibilities identified, including those of a specially designated member on the governing body. Children are encouraged to voice opinions, express feelings and talk freely about what happens at home. When outside, children demonstrate an excellent awareness of how to keep themselves and others safe. Case studies show excellent staff awareness of potential abuse, careful, readily accessible recording and excellent multi-agency working. Risk assessments and accident recording are fully in place and well completed.

The centre's development plan addresses local and national priorities effectively and is based on a good analysis of local, regional and national data and information. It links to city-wide priorities in order to improve the provision and outcomes for its users and reflects high aspirations whilst ensuring realistic timescales and budgetary considerations. The quality of analysis and evaluation are very good, and is always linked to the impact of services on the outcomes for users in order to inform future planning and development. The management information system supplied by the local authority is beginning to provide useful information about the reach area.

Governance of the centre is very good. The Chair of the Governing Body and the chair of the advisory board play an active role in making decisions and contribute fully to the formation of the self-evaluation form. Parents and partners make up a good mix on both boards. The advisory board is chaired by a parent and the group feels that it can challenge and direct senior management in making the best choices for local children and parents and carers. The frequent visits to the centre made by advisory board members enable parents and children to feed back on the provision and any changes to ensure further improvements.

Partnership working is outstanding and excellent use is made of shared resources to develop services where needs are identified. There has been much work undertaken in building up support with local primary schools in transition for children. They are now using common systems, carrying out visits and have also produced 'transitional boxes'. These boxes contain photographs of teachers – 'all about me' statements and quizzes and general interactive opportunities to look at transition. The centre now has a common e-system for looking at baseline assessment which is shared with six primary schools and supports clear and transparent sharing of historical assessment data. The principal carefully uses the many budgetary strands across the settings to maximise provisions for children and their families. She and the senior team deploy staff and resources well across the settings to provide flexible and responsive provision and ensure that the centre is used well. As a result, the centre provides

exceptional value for money.

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	1
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	1
The extent to which equality is promoted and diversity celebrated, illegal or unlawful discrimination is tackled and the centre fulfils its statutory duties	1
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	1
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	1

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

Observation of the nursery and day care provisions were undertaken as part of this inspection and the supporting Section 5 inspection activity.

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 Martenscroft Nursery and Children's Centre on 8-9 March 2011. We judged the centre as outstanding overall. We visited a number of activities, looked at the centre's plans and documents and had discussions with some of you, your children, members of staff and other professionals who work with the centre. The children's centre provides an excellent range of services that are helping children and families in Hulme. Throughout the inspection, children, their families and other users were keen to tell us how the centre had helped them. We were particularly impressed by the case studies that showed the difference that the centre was making. We really enjoyed speaking to mums and their children who were in the sensory room with their babies and those accessing the 'stay and play' sessions.

The children in nursery and day care demonstrated a mature and independent attitude and are very clear about how much they all love Martenscroft. The centre has many strengths, including the actions taken to support you and your children's safety and well-being and the outstanding quality of care, guidance and support offered by all staff who work with you and your children. The centre is working very closely with many organisations, such as schools, health and social care professionals to improve the range of services that are available to you. Using these partnerships it is helping many families and children, particularly those who are most disadvantaged, to have a good start in life. Parents have given us many examples of how the centre has helped them to gain experience as volunteers and qualifications that are helping them get jobs; for some, the centre has totally and positively changed their lives.

The centre offers an excellent and increasing range of programmes and activities, including those aimed at improving the health of people in your local communities. We felt it was especially good at giving your children experiences of engaging in outdoor play which is so very much enjoyed by the children. Also the learning visits arranged to local museums, the Manchester Wheel and visiting the Royal Exchange theatre really helped children see and experience the wider locality. We thought that the early notification of pregnancy was good, particularly as it helps the centre let future mums and dads know about all the centre has to offer through its 'door knocking' policy. Children make good progress in the nursery where there is a wide range of activities. This helps them to be ready for their move to school. The centre staff make sure they check whether you have enjoyed any courses or sessions in the centre and they respond by making changes as suggested in your comments. Those of you who take part in courses such as 'Confident parent, confident child' say how good it is in helping you to understand your children's development, in building your confidence and self-esteem and in helping you to develop good relationships with your babies. More of you are able to take advantage of other courses that are leading to experience and qualifications that will help you if you eventually return to work.

Parents we spoke to describe the centre as providing a safe and welcoming environment; they are confident that their children will be secure and cared for well. The principal and the head of centre were particularly praised for their warmth and commitment. Some of you with children with additional needs felt that support from the centre has allowed them see new ways of working with your children and how, with the right support, they too can achieve highly. The principal has very strong procedures to make sure staff and volunteers are suitable to work with your children. Some parents explained just how important the centre is in their and their families' lives. They told us that staff listen to them and help them to get the right help and support. We found that the centre was excellent in helping families at times in their lives when they most need it. The support is provided quickly and professionals and others work closely together to support both families and children. This includes teenage mums and some of you who are fairly new to the country. The centre is respected in the local community because of the good leadership of the principal and her team. She is well supported by her Chair of the Governing Body and the advisory board. The principal and her deputy run an outstanding centre but they still want to ensure that they are continuing to meet the needs of all its local children and families. They would like to share some of this practice with other children's centres in the city. She and her team want to use your feedback, and that of the children to plan for more activities and also to ensure that even more people can use the good things that it is providing.

Thank you to everyone who took time to speak to us, we are very grateful and wish you every success for the future.

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