

Inspection report for Fox Hill and Grenoside Children's Centre

Local authority	Sheffield
Inspection number	383444
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Date of previous inspection	Not applicable
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Linked school if applicable	107074 Fox Hill Primary School
Linked early years and childcare, if applicable	Not applicable

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 senior managers and staff from the centre and the local authority, parents, members of the advisory board, local partners including health, Action for Children, the Multi Agency Support Team, Jobcentre Plus and a local voluntary organisation. They observed the centre's work and looked at a range of relevant documentation.

Information about the centre

Fox Hill and Grenoside Children's Centre is a phase two centre, located in the grounds of Fox Hill Primary School in the north of Sheffield. The centre was granted full core offer status in February 2008. The centre has four rooms including an office, community room, training room and room for health consultations. There are three childcare providers and eight registered childminders in the area. The centre is governed by the local authority and staffed by outreach and family workers provided through a contract with Action for Children. Fox Hill and Grenoside Children's Centre, along with two others, is covered by the same health visiting and midwifery teams.

The centre reach covers two neighbourhoods; Grenoside, which is more affluent with a mix of private housing and open green spaces, and Fox Hill which is generally more deprived, with a mix of private and council housing, with some green spaces. The two most deprived areas are closest to the centre itself.

The local community is mainly of White British heritage with less than 5% of families from a Black ethnic background. The number of children living in workless households has doubled in the last year and is currently 22% which is just below the city average. Most children enter early education with a range of skills below those expected for their age.

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

3

Capacity for sustained improvement

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

3

Main findings

Fox Hill and Grenoside Children's Centre is effective in meeting the needs of families and gives a satisfactory service overall with many good features including some good outcomes. The self-evaluation has not fully identified all of its weaknesses, partly due to some inaccurate or absent data, and there are no actions or targets set to secure improvements for some important groups. The systems for performance management have greatly improved recently and currently ensure a satisfactory capacity for sustained improvement.

The centre promotes healthy lifestyles well and is good at driving home messages about key areas for improvement such as dental hygiene in children and smoke free homes. There is good support for mothers who choose to breastfeed and the rate of sustained breastfeeding shows some improvement. A good range of well attended family learning activities develop parents' educational and personal and social skills. Children show good development in both their communication and independence skills. Sessions are of a good quality and give a great deal of enjoyment to children and their families.

Families are supported extremely well in times of crisis. The assessment of families' needs is good and partners work very effectively together to support families and ensure positive outcomes. Parents receive individual support to develop their skills and find employment but data are not used by the centre to measure the impact of these services. More needs to be done to target and support the families who will be experiencing problems due to the increase in worklessness in the area and reductions in benefits and tax credits.

Safeguarding processes and procedures are embedded well and given a high priority. Children are protected and partners work well together to ensure their safety. The centre itself is a very welcoming and warm environment.

The main target groups in the centre's reach area have been identified well and the registration levels of those families in the most deprived areas are steadily increasing. The centre focuses well on supporting families with mental health issues throughout the reach area. However, there is little evidence to show enough attention has been given to closing the achievement gap between boys and girls and ensuring the needs of fathers are being fully met. Staff have not had any recent awareness raising training in equality and diversity.

There is a great deal of change going on within the local authority and the performance management cycle is still evolving. There has been a concerted effort to ensure that data are easily available to managers to use for their evaluation. A good web based system has just come into operation so this can be used to set more effective and realistic targets for improvement. Parents meet regularly to discuss services and the new cluster based advisory board is chaired by a parent.

What does the centre need to do to improve further?

Recommendations for further improvement

- Make better arrangements to improve the economic and social well being of families by:
 - evaluating the impact of training and help with finding work to develop services further
 - supporting families where there is worklessness and experiencing changes in benefits.
- Improve self-evaluation and target setting by:
 - working with the local authority to make sure all areas for improvement are identified and data are used to set demanding and realistic targets.
- Improve actions to promote greater equality by;
 - ensuring all staff receive training and development for awareness and understanding of equality and diversity issues
 - completing an effective equality impact assessment to identify potential barriers for certain groups, such as fathers
 - closing the achievement gap between boys and girls
 - ensuring the needs of fathers are met.

How good are outcomes for families?

2

Overall, outcomes for families are good. Children are eating more healthily and parents are more knowledgeable about healthy lifestyles and the importance of dental hygiene. Obesity

levels are in decline. Children with disabilities make good progress through support from an array of coordinated services. The weekly midwifery service and health visitor presence for anyone to drop in or make an appointment is working well to ensure good health outcomes, such as decrease in low birth weight. Smoking at time of delivery has decreased and the emphasis is now on promoting smoke free homes. The use of a carbon monoxide detector at a home visit is helping to drive this message home. Baby massage is well attended and helps to develop bonds and emotional well-being. Mothers are particularly well supported to overcome post-natal depression.

Children and their families really enjoy the learning opportunities at the centre. Parents develop their parenting skills through group activities and individual support from staff. Some parents achieve accredited qualifications. Children progress in their skills and learning, and professional judgement by teachers is that they can identify the benefits to those children accessing the children centre's activities. Ninety per cent of families eligible for free early learning accessed a childcare place. Transition arrangements to school are effective and carried out on an individual basis to ensure teaching staff have an up-to-date knowledge of children's level of ability.

Children are kept safe in the centre and protected well. Parents demonstrate a good understanding of how to keep their children safe in the home. Safety activities such as road safety are promoted well at the centre. There are very few children with child protection plans and this number has not increased. Emergency admissions to hospital have decreased slightly. The warm friendly centre is preferred by many families to the larger centres they could attend and they feel very relaxed about approaching staff regarding any issues of concern. Typical comments by parents such as, 'It's a fantastic environment with trustworthy staff that make you feel very welcome', and, 'the staff are like my family', demonstrate this.

Children demonstrate positive behaviour and develop sound relationships. Those parents using the centre express their views and a small group meet regularly as a parent's forum. They help plan and organise activities such as the Christmas party and open days. There are currently no volunteers in the centre. Parents participate in developing employability skills and also have access to information about job opportunities but there are no data to show how much these services are used and the impact of this service. Parents are given good guidance and support regarding finance or debt but the worklessness rate has doubled in the area and there are no specific arrangements for help regarding changes in benefits or tax credits.

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	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 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	3
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

Provision is good. The centre knows its families well and overall has increased the engagement of the most vulnerable families, although the number from some of the target groups accessing the centre's services is lower than the original targets set. The services are continuously reviewed and changed to meet the needs of the families and these services are coordinated well with partners. The process for assessing a family's needs is very thorough and wide-ranging and these needs are met well.

The centre is particularly good at promoting learning and encouraging progression. Nearly all parents taking a National Vocational Qualification (NVQ) at level 1 in childcare progressed to an NVQ at level 2.. Parents are supported extremely well in finding work placements and given opportunities to further develop their skills. Achievement is celebrated and lots of colourful displays and photographs further promote the successes of parents and children. There has been a good response to the identified need for more learning opportunities to increase numeracy, literacy and computer skills. The learning opportunities in the weekly toddler group are good and there is good local private provision. Free crèche places are available while parents are learning and these have helped the personal development of children.

Families are supported especially well in times of crisis. Many case studies and individual interviews with parents show how well the different services are coordinated to give them the help they need and a comment such as, 'They gave me confidence to get out of a dark tunnel and I would never have got done what I did without their help', is typical. There is a great deal of good quality information and advice readily available in the centre and an appointment system or drop-in opportunities twice a week for families to get advice. This service is well used and appreciated by parents as shown by a comment from one user: 'One stop shop is fantastic at coordinating with health services and I'm very impressed at the level of support'.

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
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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?

3

Leadership and management are satisfactory. A number of positive changes have recently taken place to improve the governance of the children's centre. New ways of working have started to be implemented to ensure both value for money and to make sure services are targeted at the most vulnerable groups. The indications are that this is bringing about improvements but some targets for the current year have not been achieved and service provision is not fully in line with strategic planning. The Fox Hill and Grenoside advisory board is now part of a single board to represent a cluster of children centres. The board is chaired by a local parent and the membership is clearly focused on challenging and directing the children's centre and making good use of the new data system available. The first meeting of the new board is about to take place.

Managers are generally effective in coordinating services and maintaining a clear focus on key priorities and delivering a good quality service. There has been an increase in registration of the two most deprived areas with vulnerable families from 18% to 53% in one area and from 30% to 60% in the other in the last year. Over 40% of those registered have used the centre. Managers continue to work hard to improve these figures to reach the very challenging targets they have set for themselves. However, the self evaluation has missed some important areas for improvement related to engaging particular target groups and measuring the impact of this work.

Overall, the promotion of equality and diversity is satisfactory. The centre promotes the inclusion of children and families and children's activities also help children learn about different cultures and customs. The equality impact assessment is not effective in identifying potential barriers for certain groups, such as fathers. The centre does not have accurate data regarding the range of need of children with disabilities in the area but the service given to identified children is good and well coordinated.

Users of the centre give feedback on services and this is used effectively to plan further services. Children are also encouraged in different ways to express their preferences and activities they enjoy. Plans are in place to make sure the parent's forum can feed into the advisory board effectively. Two recent consultations have taken place to get more information from those currently not using the centre and these produced some useful information that the centre has been able to act upon such as ensuring the better promotion of services in different venues in the community.

Safeguarding arrangements are good. The centre works extremely well with the multi-agency support team to ensure an appropriate level and range of support for families. The Common Assessment Framework (CAF) is used well alongside Action for Children's own system to clearly identify actions and outcomes that ensure the protection of children. The contribution of early intervention workers and the sharing of information between partners make sure that there is a prompt and effective response to referrals from any source.

Managers have successfully prioritised the development of partnership working which is now good and there is a particularly good partnership with a local voluntary group which gives dedicated individual support to families based at the centre twice a week. This group is helping to develop volunteers and also ensure further training opportunities, with a free crèche to help parents who are developing their confidence and employability skills. Good partnership working with health professionals has led to better sharing of data and support for families.

Fox Hill and Grenoside Children's Centre is a small and compact centre but good use is made of the space that is available. They are able to also make good use of the resources of the primary school to which they are directly connected for activities such as the toddler group in the school hall and the information technology suite for family learning. The staff's experience of the area and neighbouring children's centre is used well to bring the service to the families that need them. The resulting good outcomes and provision indicate that the centre provides good 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	3
The effectiveness of evaluation and its use in setting ambitious targets which secures improvement in outcomes	3
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	3
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

None

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 the Fox Hill and Grenoside Children's Centre on 11 and 12 January 2012. We judged the centre as satisfactory overall.

During our visit we evaluated your centre's work and the quality of its resources, as well as its plans and documents. We talked to a number of you and the professionals that work with you. Your centre does some things especially well. For example, good quality care, guidance and support are offered to you. You and your children also experience good levels of achievement and enjoyment as a result of the good quality learning opportunities. Your centre works well with other services and partners such as health services and voluntary services. You told us how safe you feel in the centre and your centre gives safeguarding a high priority.

Your centre is also good at helping you to improve the health of your family. They give a lot of good support to those of you who choose to breastfeed. Your centre is putting on more activities about healthy eating as you have enjoyed and got a great deal from what has already been offered. They give good advice to those of you who are experiencing financial or housing problems but we feel your centre could do more for those of you that are looking for work as well as help you prepare for any decrease in benefits or tax credits that you may experience.

You told us that you feel your voice is heard, you have opportunities to give feedback to the centre and your comments are taken on board to make changes and develop services. You have a parent's forum that meets regularly and this group is effective in helping to plan the services you want.

The local authority is undergoing a lot of changes but your centre has done well in managing the cuts in resources and making sure the centre offers good value for money. The people in charge of your centre are working very hard to improve the service they offer and reach those of you who are most vulnerable and in need of support. They are also working effectively to link with local children's centres in order to give a wider choice of services. An advisory board has recently been formed to represent these centres and is

making effective preparations to make sure your views are included and that some of you start to take part in the actual meetings.

Your centre is very welcoming and friendly and many of you told us how you appreciate the family atmosphere. However, they have not fully recognised and planned for some of the needs of the different groups they serve, such as fathers. There are big differences in how well your children achieve depending on whether they are male or female. Your centre does not say how it plans to address the low achievement rates of boys.

Your centre has identified the main areas it needs to improve but there are some aspects of their service where they need to make sure there are clear targets for improvement. A new system for producing accurate data and managing the performance of staff is going to make this much easier for them.

We have asked the manager and the local authority to look at how they can make things even better. These are the most important things to do. First, to ensure that they help those of you who want to be more effective at finding the right training and job opportunities as well as making sure you are prepared for any decrease in your finances. Second, the centre should ensure that clear and demanding targets for improvement are set based on accurate data and third, to improve the reach and service to all groups in the community.

Thank you very much for your welcome and for your frankness with inspectors. We are very grateful and wish you every success in the future.

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