

Inspection report for Farnham Road Children's Centre

Local authority	Bradford
Inspection number	366421
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Centre leader	Shafiq Ahmed
Date of previous inspection	Not applicable
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	Horton Grange Primary School 107205
	Brackenhill Primary School 107250
Linked early years and childcare, if applicable	Margaret McMillan Children's Centre 301968
	Dracup Lodge Nursery EY290205

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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.

This inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and one early years inspector.

The inspectors held meetings with the centre manager, centre staff, three local headteachers, users, key partners and a local authority officer linked to the centre. They observed the centre's work and looked at activity sessions taking place at the centre and in the satellite sites. They also looked at a range of documentation including the centre's development plans, evaluations, key policies and the centre's safeguarding procedures.

Information about the centre

Farnham Road Children's Centre is a phase two centre which was established in 2008 and received its full core offer status in September 2009. The centre is co-located with two primary schools, Farnham Primary School and Horton Grange Primary School. Also on the site is Margaret McMillan Children's day care, a community centre and a sports hall. The centre provides crèche facilities and part of the building is used by the two schools to provide meals.

There are approximately 851 children under five years of age living in the area. Farnham Road Children's Centre is located in one of the most deprived areas of England. The centre's reach area encompasses the wards of Bradford City and Great Horton. Virtually all of the reach population live within the top 20% of the most deprived areas in England with one Super Output Area ranking within the top 5% of the most deprived areas nationally. The majority of the population are of South Asian heritage. There is a large transient population in the local area, with a number of families emigrating from Eastern Europe. In addition, a growing number of families are refugees and families seeking asylum. There is a large population for whom English is not their first language.

Social issues affecting the families living in the area include a high percentage of families on workless benefits and adults with no qualifications or skills to enable them to enter the workforce. There is a high incident of anti-social behaviour and street crime in the area and a rising number of families live in over-crowded households. Health issues affecting the area include women suffering isolation and depression, smoking during pregnancy and poor dental hygiene. The number of adults requesting support for domestic abuse is rising and the centre is noting an increase in drug and alcohol abuse in some communities.

Family support, early years advice, education and crèche facilities are offered at Farnham Road Children’s Centre. Margaret McMillan Children's Centre Nursery provides full day care provision onsite. The centre also works closely with Dracup Lodge Private Day Nursery. Early years activity is also provided by private and voluntary early years organisations in the local area. When joining the early years provision, the majority of children have social and physical development skills well below that expected for their age.

The governing body at Farnham Primary School has established a children’s centre management committee, at present this consists of members of the school governing body and representation from Margaret McMillan Children's Centre Nursery.

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

4

Capacity for sustained improvement

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

4

Main findings

Farnham Road Children’s Centre, despite the best intentions of managers and staff, is not effective in meeting the needs of, and improving outcomes for families. The centre has failed to take into account the changing demographics of the area it serves. The area has had an established South Asian community for many years, but this is rapidly changing. The centre has not been sufficiently proactive in seeking out and engaging new families to the area. As a consequence, the centre has not ensured that it is genuinely inclusive of newcomers as well as more established communities. The centre leaders do not use sufficiently the data they receive to target activities on families requiring additional services and focused interventions. Many activities are programmed without due consideration for improving outcomes and breaking down long-standing and emerging social, economic and

health barriers that affect many families in the reach area. An insufficient number of families engage with the centre's activities. The centre's development plan fails to show how it will address this acknowledged weakness and encourage more families with young children to benefit from the centre's services. In addition, the small number of staff already struggle to meet demands that have been placed on them. As a result, the centre has an inadequate capacity to improve.

The centre together with all education and early years partners in the area has improved children's skills and knowledge. While children in the area are still below their peers from similar backgrounds, local headteachers report that more children year-on-year enter school ready and keen to learn. The dedicated children's centre team work tirelessly, and against many barriers, to try and help families improve children's outcomes. The local community recognises and values the staff as good role models. Adults are encouraged and supported in learning new skills, such as learning the basic skills of the English language and using information and communication technology (ICT), but too few adults take up these opportunities. Therefore, while outcomes are improving for some families, many children in the area continue to live in disadvantaged households.

Some partnerships, such as the local social work team, work collaboratively and effectively with the centre. However, while there is close attention to child protection, and all staff are trained to use the Common Assessment Framework (CAF), safeguarding is inadequate. Required records are not accurately maintained to ensure the safety and security of children. Some local health teams work at the centre and increasing numbers of families are accessing these services. Health partners do not routinely share data with the centre to further increase the number of registrations, or actively promote the centre as well as they could to engage more families. In addition, Jobcentre Plus has only just started to run weekly surgeries at the centre. In the past, Jobcentre Plus did not inform the centre's users of job vacancies in the area. As a consequence, the number of children living in workless households remains high.

Leadership and management are not effective in meeting the needs of families within the area. The governance of the centre lacks a strategic overview of the centre's purpose and wider role within the community. The school governing body has established a sub-group to act in an advisory board capacity. However, the group has no representation from users of the centre or any of the key partners. As a consequence, families' views, opinions and expectations of services are not communicated at a strategic level. Furthermore, partners do not share the impact of their work or explain how they address the numerous issues affecting many families in the reach area.

What does the centre need to do to improve further?

Recommendations for further improvement

- The local authority and Farnham Road Children's Centre to ensure that:

- accurate records are maintained to safeguard and protect children
- community cohesion is promoted effectively
- local needs are identified in order to engage purposefully with groups within the community who do not currently access the centre’s activities, particularly those who are most disadvantaged and vulnerable
- development planning sets realistic, measurable targets for improving outcomes for children, young people and families in the reach area
- data are used efficiently to evaluate and measure the impact of the centre’s current services and to inform planning to address and support the needs of the community
- accountability arrangements are developed by increasing membership of the centre management committee, particularly to include key partners and users to act as critical friends in challenging and holding the centre to account for its work
- all partners, in particular health, Jobcentre Plus and surrounding children’s centres, work with the centre to consistently capture, evaluate and measure the full impact of the centre’s work on improving outcomes for families in the area
- the views of parents, carers and children contribute consistently to the centre’s governance and in determining and shaping future services
- the centre has the necessary resources to meet the core purpose.

How good are outcomes for families?

4

The centre provides a range of activities generally delivered by the children’s centre team. Uptake of all courses is usually good and attendance is sustained. Many of the activities are focused on helping adults understand the importance of play in the early years. Children and families attending the centre make the most of an appropriate range of activities such as ‘Gym Jams’ where parents and children have fun singing, dancing and exercising together as well as improving their fitness. ‘Stay Talk and Play’ is helping children to prepare for school life and building their communication skills.

Throughout the inspection, some users were keen to share their experiences of how the provision has benefited their children and themselves. A parent attending the ICT course commented how learned skills help her support her children at home. The dental oral hygiene team attend many sessions to help educate parents and children on the importance of looking after their teeth and gums. Despite this support, many children are not weaned off bottles containing sugary drinks when they are ready. As a consequence, dental decay remains high and many children do not regularly visit a dentist. Information and data demonstrating emerging health issues are not effectively shared between health professionals and the centre. The centre manager was not aware that smoking during pregnancy is on the increase in the reach area. As a consequence, this rising trend was not addressed.

Infant mortality rates in the area are high but the centre has not identified the families concerned. All partners who spoke to inspectors reported rising levels of domestic violence

as well as drug and alcohol abuse. Such disclosures are a positive indication that users feel secure with centre staff. However, there were no sessions to help parents understand the long term psychological damage that young children experience when they are exposed to violence in the home, or the adverse effects of watching their carers suffer from drug and alcohol misuse. The centre, while being aware of these issues, has not taken effective action to tackle them.

All users spoken to reported they felt safe in the centre. However, not all children and their parents living in the reach area feel safe in the community. Parents who use the centre trust the staff to help them in times of crisis or personal difficulty. The centre supplies home safety equipment at a reduced cost and offers advice on fire safety. Centre staff visit all known families to help them understand the importance of an escape plan in the event of a fire.

During informal coffee meetings users are encouraged to suggest and request activities they feel will benefit their children. However, there is no system to feed back how these ideas have been considered or action taken. Users’ views are not represented at a strategic level.

Interviews with users, and an examination of case studies, provide evidence of how some previously vulnerable families were helped to access training and future employment. However, these are few in number and the lack of meaningful support from Jobcentre Plus results in a high proportion of families remaining dependent on workless benefits. As a consequence, self-esteem for many adults remains low and many children are still living in poverty-bound households.

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	4
The extent to which children are safe and protected, their welfare concerns are identified and appropriate steps taken to address them	4
The extent to which all children and parents, including those from target groups, enjoy and achieve educationally and in their personal and social development	3
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	4
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.	4

How good is the provision?

4

Centre staff know the children and parents and carers who use their services and generally meet their individual needs effectively. Joint home visits are often made with staff from a

referring agency ensuring that family support is carefully focused on users' needs. Families approach staff with confidence and recognise the centre as a place of safety. Typical comments include, 'I know there is someone I can talk to here' and, 'this place has given me a whole new lease of life'. Nonetheless, the centre is engaging too few users to ensure that a greater majority of families feel this level of support. In addition, the centre is not in a position to assess the individual needs and circumstances of families in the reach.

Leaders are quite rightly proud of the fact that the centre is accessible to all, with a number of families from outside of the area using their services. However, leaders from Farnham Road and the surrounding children's centres do not work together to look at joined-up priorities and agreed direction to measure the impact of their work with families using their services.

The close working relationships between the schools and the centre's early years staff ensure that the children in the area centre move seamlessly into the school environment. Users value groups, such as 'Stay and Play', where they play alongside their children and staff from the centre. During these sessions parents and carers are able to see good practice in action across a variety of child development perspectives. Some adults access the 'English for speakers of other languages' (ESOL) courses and know improving their English can help them get more out of their life in the United Kingdom.

The centre provides a very welcoming environment. There is a good mix of consultation and training rooms which are used by a wide range of partners. The resources throughout the centre are of good quality. The centre has recognised a growing population of Eastern European families moving into the area. They know that language is a barrier for some of these families and have translated some information to help them understand the centre's activities. However, this practice is not consistently applied. For example, the centre knows that domestic violence and drug and alcohol are significant issues across the community, yet all the information and signposting in the centre is in English. As a consequence, some adults in these communities are unclear who to turn to for support in times of crisis.

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	4
The extent to which the centre promotes purposeful learning, development and enjoyment for all families, including those in target groups	3
The quality of care, guidance and support offered to families, including those in target groups.	4

How effective are the leadership and management?

4

The leadership and management of the centre are not effective in meeting the needs of the community it serves. The centre manager has developed an enthusiastic team that has

benefited from a range of professional training. Resources are generally managed well on a day-to-day basis. However, the centre is failing to provide value for money because it is not narrowing the gap in the overall health and well-being for all young children and their families in the reach area including the most disadvantaged. Supervision arrangements are not robust. Staff absence and changing roles at local authority and centre level have had a detrimental impact on the centre’s determination to effectively deliver the core offer. Development planning is weak and does not make use of realistic targets to drive improvement. In addition, the centre does not track or evaluate the level of local need and the effectiveness of their partners in combating disadvantage.

The safeguarding of children and vulnerable adults using the centre is inadequate. The centre fails to keep clear and accurate factual recording of all child protection concerns. In addition, the CAF files lack measures of accountability and in some cases, action review meetings have not taken place. As a consequence, vulnerable families are still waiting for necessary support and children remain at risk.

The centre has yet to take the diverse nature of its reach area into account when securing new provision. Secure links with local churches, mosques and community groups have not been established to build trust and ensure that all families living and moving into the area feel welcome, safe and valued. The promotion of equality and diversity is inadequate and some groups within the community experience discrimination and bullying. However, staff in the schools and day care centres work well with centre staff to provide an integrated package of care and support for children with special educational needs and/or disabilities.

The centre management committee is largely ineffective. There is a lack of representation from users in the community and key partners who are not members of the school governing body. As a consequence, there is no-one holding the centre to account for its work or acting as a critical friend.

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	4
The effectiveness of evaluation and its use in setting ambitious targets which secures improvement in outcomes	4
The extent to which resources are used and managed efficiently and effectively to meet the needs of families, including those in target groups	4
The extent to which equality is promoted and diversity celebrated, illegal or unlawful discrimination is tackled and the centre fulfils its statutory duties	4
The effectiveness of the centre's policy, procedures and work with key agencies in safeguarding children and, where applicable, vulnerable adults	4

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	4
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.	4

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

None.

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Summary for centre users

We inspected the Farnham Road Children's Centre on 7-8 December 2011. We judged the centre as inadequate overall.

We met a variety of users during the inspection and they are all strong supporters of the centre and its work. Our thanks go to everyone who shared their views which helped us to appreciate how important the centre is for so many of you. You told us about the very caring staff. You clearly appreciate the guidance and support on offer and you gave examples of how the centre has helped to change lives for the better. It was encouraging to hear that some of you feel less isolated in the community and have been able to socialise more by attending courses at the centre. We were particularly impressed by how much the centre has done to raise the knowledge and skills for children in your area as they enter their first year in school. We were pleased to see that some of you are learning new skills such as understanding the importance of how your young children grow and develop in their earliest years, developing your skills in information and communication technology (ICT) and gaining confidence in speaking English. We particularly enjoyed watching the DVD some of you have made with the centre. We were pleased to see that your views are respected but too few of you are sharing your opinions about how the centre operates and what activities are needed to help improve the quality of life for your families.

We have said that some elements of the centre's work needs to improve. We have asked the local authority and the governing body to increase membership of the centre management committee to encourage more of you, and partners, such as health and Jobcentre Plus, to become members. This is crucial as currently the committee is not challenging the centre nor has all the information it needs to make good decisions on your behalf. We have also asked that the centre has adequate resources to identify local needs

and better support all those families whose circumstances make them more vulnerable. The centre receives some information from the local authority. We have asked that this is used more effectively to ensure that leaders understand the local community and plan activities to meet these needs and monitor whether what they are doing is actually helping to improve your home circumstances. While there are many good partners working with the centre, we found that they do not always work sufficiently together to share information and help the centre prioritise and identify where help is most needed.

Those of you we spoke to told us you felt safe in the centre but some community groups did not feel safe within the area. The centre has not kept detailed records of their work with some children who are at risk. We have asked that these matters are given urgent consideration so that children are well protected and the community works together to understand and respect each other's cultures and beliefs. We have asked the centre to address these issues so it will be more able to meet your needs.

Thank you to all that we met for your contribution to the inspection. 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.