

# Inspection report for Denby Dale & Skelmanthorpe Children's Centre

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Local authority	Kirklees
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Date of previous inspection	Not applicable
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Linked early years and childcare, if applicable	EY303105 Denby Dale Nursery School

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 maintained nursery and the registered Early Years/childcare provision was carried out at the same time as the inspection of the centre under Section 5 of the Education Act 2005 and Section 49 of the Childcare Act 2006. The report of this inspection is available on our website [<www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk).

This inspection was carried out by one additional inspector and one early years inspector.

The inspectors held meetings with representatives of Kirklees Borough Council, members of the advisory board and parents' forum, a broad range of users and a number of partners, including health and social care. They observed sessions at the centre, looked at the centre's work, and a range of documentation.

## Information about the centre

Denby Dale and Skelmanthorpe Children's Centre is a phase two centre located in a rural area of West Yorkshire in the centre of Denby Dale and serves the surrounding villages of Skelmanthorpe, Emley, Scissett, Clayton West, Cumberworth and Birds Edge.

The population of families who live within the reach area of the centre is predominantly of White British heritage with a small population of minority ethnic families. The centre serves an area with high levels of social and rural isolation with 833 children under five years of age in the centre's reach area. Of these children, 8.5% live within the 40–50% areas of highest deprivation. There are lower than average numbers of households where no member has any qualifications. The proportion of teenage parents is low. Families live in homes that are a mixture of private ownership, those in local authority control, and a mix of social housing and private rental accommodation. The area is not well-served by public transport, making it difficult for families to access services, employment, leisure and other facilities.

Governance of the centre is provided by the local authority and is supported by an advisory board that includes the headteacher of the local school, health and voluntary sector providers, members of the local community and parents. There is also a parents' forum. A range of health, social care, family support and education services operate from the centre and from other outreach accommodation across the area.

Sessions for children are provided through a range of activities at the centre including 'Stay and Play'. Crèche facilities are provided for the children of parents attending parent-focused sessions. Childcare provision is available from 8 a.m. until 6 p.m. for 48 weeks of the year and is delivered by Denby Dale Nursery which is co-located at the children's centre. Most children enter childcare and early years education with skills and knowledge lower than 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**

**2**

### Capacity for sustained improvement

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

**2**

## Main findings

Denby Dale and Skelmanthorpe Children's Centre provides a warm, welcoming and safe environment for all its users. Parents value the work it does and recognise the positive impact it has on their lives. One parent described the views of many and said 'The centre is a good and safe place to be'.

The centre is continually improving. A key strength is the good leadership provided by the centre manager in strong partnership with the local authority and advisory board. Leaders set high standards for others to follow. Safeguarding policies and procedures meet legal requirements and effectively underpin good practice. Users' views are heard through the centre's effective 'Parents' Forum' and parents play an increasingly important role in the running of the centre and its outreach provision. The local authority, advisory board and parent forum effectively support and challenge the centre to provide better outcomes for its users. The centre provides a wide range of stimulating activities that contribute to improving the lives of families in the reach area.

A good knowledge of the needs of the rural area and dialogue with users in the community have enabled the centre to secure improvements. Over the last year the centre has doubled the number of registered users, particularly targeting those who are hard to engage from the most deprived part of the centre's area. This has rightly resulted in the centre being considered a hub of the community by many users and services. However, those who access the centre expressed their concerns about the potential loss of this support due to the planned re-structure of the service. The lack of communication with them about how this might be implemented is creating further concern.

The strength and impact of the centre's provision has increased through effective collaboration with other professionals and the positive use of information from course evaluations and data. This leads to good outcomes for centre users. Self-evaluation and data are used effectively to identify the centre's priorities and users' needs. The local authority provides a clear framework of information which enables the centre to act quickly and respond to the needs of different target groups in its reach. Multi-agency partnerships are particularly strong and responsive to the needs of families. Parents and children benefit from the good range of services which promote healthy lifestyles and keeping children safe. Links with local schools are effectively established. The centre has identified a need to extend pre-school provision into local schools to better help all groups of children prepare for starting school.

Support for breastfeeding mothers is effectively promoted through the positive peer support. Through this support, and that provided by the midwives and health visitors, the numbers of mothers initiating and sustaining breastfeeding is improving. However, there is little provision in some areas for ante-natal classes to support parents' preparation for the birth of their child. Whilst the 'Child's Journey' pack is distributed by midwives before birth, there are no mechanisms in place to discuss the purpose with prospective parents.

The arrangements for referrals to Jobcentre Plus, to provide users with routes to employment are good. Referrals through centre staff ensure that those who need help and support are seen quickly. Increasing numbers of parents are participating in adult learning through the 'Fun creative crafts' programme which supports re-entry into learning by developing confidence and concentration. Several adults have achieved qualifications and progressed into employment, with some being self-employed. Support for teenage parents is effective. A well-structured programme provides opportunities for peer support as well as an understanding of babies' emotional and behavioural development.

The centre is an inclusive setting and promotes equality well by providing services that meet the needs of all users. Particularly strong actions are taken to support those families and children who are made vulnerable by their circumstances. The centre assesses the individual needs of children and their parents particularly well. Fathers and other carers attend 'Stay and Play', forest skills activities and story-sack sessions. However, there are no sessions specifically aimed at fathers and their children which some users have requested. Wider aspects of equality and diversity are promoted well through a range of displays, toys and

activities which are included in the planning of sessions, some particularly linked to celebrating different faith festivals.

## What does the centre need to do to improve further?

### Recommendations for further improvement

- Work with healthcare professionals to improve provision for information and support before birth, such as ante-natal sessions.
- Develop a programme of activities that have a special focus on fathers with their children.
- Develop a communication strategy to better inform and involve families in potential changes to provision throughout this current period of uncertainty and budgetary constraint.
- Provide school-based activities to prepare all groups of children well for starting school.

### How good are outcomes for families?

2
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Increasing numbers of users access the services provided by the centre and take-up rates are high. Evidence of impact shows that almost 100% of those children in the most deprived areas accessed services more than once. All groups that attend activities across the area, from a variety of backgrounds, work harmoniously together. The centre effectively addresses users' feelings of isolation and provides good opportunities for families to engage in a range of services and develop strong friendships, including families from minority ethnic backgrounds. A typical view is that 'I now have a circle of friends and we help each other, which wouldn't have happened if I hadn't been referred to the centre'. Users report that their confidence and self-esteem has improved since attending the centre. One parent commented that due to the rural nature of where she lives, she lacked confidence; the support and encouragement of centre staff prevented long-term depression.

Children are well-prepared for nursery and mainstream school due to the effective delivery of the Early Years Foundation Stage both at the centre and at the nursery. Data show that, whilst there was a slight decrease in the profile scores for 2010 for the achievements of children in this area, most remain above the local and national figures. Attainment for children in the lowest 20% has risen slightly and the gap in achievement with the rest is narrowing; however, outcomes for these children are still lower than the authority average. The centre is working with local headteachers to consider ways of extending pre-school provision into the schools to reach even more children. Parents report that they have developed a better understanding of early years education through good-quality learning organised by the centre in many of its outreach settings. They are able to discuss child development with professionals and feel more confident in speaking with school staff, where previously they would not have felt able to communicate with teachers.

Effective partnership-working between health professionals and family support workers results in positive outcomes for new mothers, particularly those considered to be most vulnerable, some having multiple births, some whose children are on child protection plans. Parents who have had multiple births are able to access fortnightly drop-in sessions. One of these parents said 'this group has been such a great support to share feelings and information with people who truly understand'. 'Infant Massage' sessions contribute towards early attachment and bonding between mothers and their babies. Cook-and-eat activities, with a clear focus on safety, take place and parents speak enthusiastically about how they now enjoy cooking at home as a family activity. Specialist services, such as speech and language development and behavioural management sessions are providing parents with skills to support their children more effectively.

All services offered in the centre effectively help to keep users safe. The centre's good-quality relationships with families and their children allow staff to identify any safety concerns within families and intervene appropriately. Access to good-quality parenting programmes has improved relationships, behaviour and home safety for users with their children. These programmes include wider health aspects, such as alcohol and drug awareness. Play sessions successfully engage parents by involving them in the running of the groups and in developing more formal volunteering opportunities. Parents contribute well to evaluations and development of the services offered.

Users benefit from the strong partnership with Jobcentre Plus and the children's centre. They are effectively signposted to relevant information and guidance, including benefits advice and debt management. As a result, some users develop good and relevant skills to prepare them for work, improving their life chances. Increasing numbers of families feel the pressures of the threat of redundancy; those who are redundant are well-supported by the adviser.

These are the grades for the outcomes for families:

<b>The extent to which children, including those from target groups, are physically, mentally and emotionally healthy and families have healthy lifestyles</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which children are safe and protected, their welfare concerns are identified and appropriate steps taken to address them</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which all children and parents, including those from target groups, enjoy and achieve educationally and in their personal and social development</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>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</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>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.</b>	<b>2</b>

## How good is the provision?

Outreach services are very effective having been targeted to meet the needs of the community in the area of highest level of deprivation. The large majority of families who are in need of further help have been identified and supported. Sessions and courses observed by the inspectors were of good quality with purposeful learning observed. For example, in the 'Stay and Play' session there were stimulating opportunities for many parents and their children to enjoy quality time together. The centre has yet to develop activities that have a special focus on fathers with their children.

Planning for delivery of activities and services is effective and enhanced by staff's consistent use of 'The Child's Journey' pack. Whilst this pack is issued to parents by midwives during pregnancy, its purpose is not explained. After the birth of their children, parents are offered many opportunities for support to help them understand the importance of play and how to plan this at home, particularly focusing on children's personal and emotional development, communication and language. Staff are good role models for parents and use much positive praise and reinforcement.

Childminders attend the centre regularly and the professional support extends their knowledge of educational concepts. These sessions provide a good opportunity for building relationships with each other and for children to make friends and use different equipment and play resources. This broadens their skills and contributes well to their development.

Adult development programmes have successfully led to some parents being trained to volunteer in a range of roles. For example, some parents have been brought together to carry out charity and fundraising activities, providing a strong sense of community. One volunteer supports teenage parents following her own achievements in overcoming personal difficulties and barriers to accessing support. Family first aid programmes develop confidence and ability to deal with minor injuries.

The quality of care for users and their children in the centre is good. Support for users' well-being is good across outcomes and families report that their lives have improved because of the centre's tailored work. The centre staff and their collaboration with other professionals ensure that a wide range of assessment tools is used to identify needs. The Common Assessment Framework (CAF) system effectively brings together a range of professionals from other services to provide sensitive, individualised support where needed.

These are the grades for the quality of provision:

<b>The extent to which the range of services, activities and opportunities meet the needs of families, including those in target groups</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which the centre promotes purposeful learning, development and enjoyment for all families, including those in target groups</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The quality of care, guidance and support offered to families, including those in target groups.</b>	<b>2</b>



## How effective are the leadership and management?

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Leaders and managers at all levels have a clear view of the provision and know where improvements should be made. Governance and strategic leadership are provided very effectively by the local authority through a well-constructed business planning system, which reflects local and national priorities. Evaluation and target-setting are good. All centre staff accurately contribute to well-co-ordinated evaluation. Ambitious targets to extend contact with those most in need in the area of highest deprivation have been exceeded. All sessions are planned and reviewed well, including the views of parents. Regular satisfaction surveys are carried out sampling different groups of users quarterly, and actions taken are effectively cascaded through advisory board meetings. The centre is fully aware of the concerns expressed by users regarding potential future changes and loss of service. It recognises the need to inform and involve families in potential changes to provision throughout this current period of uncertainty and budgetary constraint.

Policies and procedures are accessible to staff and Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) checks are completed as required. All staff and volunteers receive regular update training on safeguarding and feel confident in their knowledge of how to raise any concerns. Recruitment is managed by the local authority through effective human resource management policies and procedures. Regular and effective supervision supports the personal and professional development of staff well. The centre's advisory board is made up of a good cross-section of partners and parent representatives. There is good commitment to work together to support families in this period of austerity, and parents are volunteering well to support the continuation of services.

Resources, including a wide range of good-quality play equipment, toys and books, are used effectively to encourage learning and development. Whilst the centre accommodation and its team are small, there is access to a good range of accommodation across the wider reach area through schools and a youth centre which provide opportunities for those who would otherwise be socially isolated.

The centre is good at collaborative working, which is increasingly important within this dispersed area; their ability to work with partners ensures that a wide range of support is available. Partners range from major public services such as health and social care, and local voluntary organisations. All partners expressed their commitment to providing services for families in this area.

The strong focus on inclusion and equality can be seen in the good work that is taking place with young parents and those families suffering from domestic violence. This is because all services are designed to engage users from the whole community. The leaders continually look for new ways to reach into the local communities and include all groups of users effectively. For example, transport is arranged where necessary for families to enable them to attend health appointments and activities that would otherwise be inaccessible for them.

Some contact visits take place in the centre where relationships have broken down and neutral meeting places provide an opportunity in a safe environment to re-build contact with parents. Through its outreach activity and collaborative work with partners to build the provision, the centre provides good value for money.

These are the grades for leadership and management:

<b>The extent to which governance, accountability, professional supervision and day-to-day management arrangements are clear and understood</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness of evaluation and its use in setting ambitious targets which secures improvement in outcomes</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which resources are used and managed efficiently and effectively to meet the needs of families, including those in target groups</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which equality is promoted and diversity celebrated, illegal or unlawful discrimination is tackled and the centre fulfils its statutory duties</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness of the centre's policy, procedures and work with key agencies in safeguarding children and, where applicable, vulnerable adults</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>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</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>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.</b>	<b>2</b>

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

The findings from the concurrent inspection of Denby Dale Nursery School and its registered early years provision have contributed to this report and judgements.

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## Summary for centre users

We inspected the Denby Dale and Skelmanthorpe Children's Centre on 24 and 25 January 2012. We judged the centre as good overall.

We talked with many of you, your children, staff and a wide range of partners and members of the local authority linked to the centre. We observed the centre's work and looked at a range of documents. Thank you for making us feel welcome and for taking the time to talk to us about your centre. Your views were very helpful to the inspection. Many of you told us that staff are friendly, welcoming and supportive and this has had a truly great impact in improving your lives. You also expressed your concerns regarding the potential changes due to decreasing financial support that may have an impact on their ability to continue to support you. We have asked the centre to keep you better informed and engaged with planning of service delivery within its new budget, and how you might help in the future.

The main job of a children's centre is to ensure that all the services for children and families work together in your best interests. Your centre has done this well in the past, by working together with partners, such as health professionals and other organisations, particularly to bring support closer to you in this rural area in which you live. Some of you told us that you would like to be able to access ante-natal classes to better prepare you for the birth of your children, and to be able to review the 'The Child's Journey' pack with which you are issued. We have asked the centre to discuss with health professionals how this could be put in place. The activities help you to lead a healthy life and to be more confident. The partnership with Jobcentre Plus has provided opportunities not only to seek help with job search, but also to offer support on debt and benefits advice.

Some of you told us that taking part in the centre's activities has given you the opportunity to make new friends, learn new skills and not to feel so alone. Particularly helpful has been the support provided through programmes on developing your parenting skills, to support you to continue breastfeeding, and understand how to better ensure the safety of your children. Children who use the centre make good progress in their learning and development. Some of you commented how fathers would benefit from some individual sessions with their children, and we have asked the centre to consider how best they can provide these opportunities.

We saw how much you and your children enjoy the activities in all the locations in which you meet, including the opportunities to play, learn and have fun together. We found that the work of the centre in supporting children to develop their communication and language skills is good, especially in their knowledge of letters and sounds. Local headteachers commented how well you and your children were doing when starting school and they would like more activities for pre-school children and you to take place on their premises in order to continue this good work for more families in your area, and we have asked the centre to consider how they might develop this.

The full report is available from your centre or on our website [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk).