

Inspection report for Boothtown Children's Centre

Local authority	Calderdale
Inspection number	383388
Inspection dates	25-26 January 2012
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Date of previous inspection	Not applicable
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Linked school if applicable	Rawson Junior and Infant School 107477
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.

Report Published: February 2012



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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 junior and infant school was carried out at the same time as the inspection of the centre under Section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

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

The inspectors held meetings with senior leaders, members of staff and partner professionals from other agencies. Discussions were held with members of the joint governing body, members of the advisory board and parents. They observed the centre's work, and looked at a range of relevant documentation including the centre's development plans, evaluations, key policies and the centre's safeguarding procedures.

Information about the centre

Boothtown 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 on the site of Rawson Junior and Infant School. The centre provides crèche facilities on site. Early years provision is also made by private and voluntary organisations in the local area.

There are approximately 563 families with 528 children under five years of age living in the reach area. The centre is located in one of the most deprived areas of England. The centre's reach area encompasses the ward of Town. Virtually all of the reach population live within the top 30% of the most deprived areas of England. The majority of the population are of White British heritage. An increasing number of families are emigrating from Eastern Europe to the area.

Social issues affecting the families that live in the area include a large percentage of families on workless benefits and a high percentage of lone parents. Anti-social behaviour and street crime are prevalent in the area and a rising number of families are living in poor quality housing. Health issues affecting families include a relatively low number of women sustaining breastfeeding, women smoking during pregnancy and obesity. The number of

adults requesting support for domestic abuse is rising, as is the request for support with mental health problems. Most children enter early education with a range of skills well below those normally expected for their age.

The centre is part of a cluster model and is one of six children's centres and three satellite centres in the Central Halifax Area of Calderdale, led by an area manager. Halifax Opportunities Trust (HOT) and Calderdale Metropolitan Borough Council (CMBC) jointly govern the centre and both report to a locality area advisory board, which represents all six children's centres. HOT are a charitable organisation and a Development Trust, which deliver children's centre services commissioned by CMBC. The centre manager, with the oversight of the area manager, carries out day-to-day management of the children's centre. The area early years team and area outreach team, which include family support and link workers, are based at Jubilee Children's Centre.

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

The centre is becoming increasingly well established in the community. It is a satisfactory centre overall. The local authority provides the centre with a range of informative data about the population of the area it serves. The centre manager and her staff team work diligently to identify and register the majority of families with young children in the reach area. Families whose circumstances make them particularly vulnerable are supported well to engage with the services provided. However, data that the centre receives are not being used as well as they could be to target resources and activities appropriately. Although there are signs of good improvements in outcomes for some children by the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage, it is too soon for the centre to demonstrate that its actions are having a sustained positive impact overall. The capacity for further improvement is therefore satisfactory.

The local community recognises and values the staff as good role models. The work of the family link and support workers is effective. Staff are dedicated and committed to improving the home circumstances of many families that have complex needs. Adults are encouraged and supported in learning new skills, such as first aid, sewing and English Speaking for

Other Languages (ESOL), but they have very few opportunities to develop the basic skills and qualifications that they need to enter the workforce. In addition the support from Jobcentre Plus is minimal. As a consequence, many children in the area continue to live in disadvantaged households.

Some partnerships, such as the local social work team, community police officers, and health partners work collaboratively and effectively with the centre. All staff are trained to use the Common Assessment Framework (CAF) and required records are accurately maintained to ensure the safety and security of children. However, a small number of staff are unclear on the centre's safeguarding reporting procedures. In addition, while the centre has been sufficiently proactive in seeking out and engaging new families to the area, it has yet to fully ensure that the community is welcoming and celebrating the diversity of all newcomers. Local health teams work closely with the centre and increasing numbers of families are accessing their services. Health partners routinely share data with the centre to further increase the number of registrations and actively promote the centre in the community.

The centre's early years team has yet to establish fully effective relationships with the local schools and early years professionals in order to share the best practice. As a consequence, activity planning does not focus sufficiently on how children are to make progress and fulfil their potential; especially those whose needs or circumstances require particularly perceptive intervention. In addition the 'Little Learners' transition into school programme has failed to stimulate interest in the community and lacks the crucial involvement of local headteachers. The centre staff have worked solidly to encourage fathers to be involved at the centre but have yet to take a critical look at the work they are doing to analyse why so few fathers are engaging with their activities.

The centre receives good levels of support from both the local authority and the Halifax Opportunities Trust (HOT). However, the locality are advisory board, which links with six centres, is not as effective in providing advice, assistance or challenge in holding the centre to account for its work.

What does the centre need to do to improve further?

Recommendations for further improvement

- Improve outcomes further for children and narrow the achievement gap between the lowest achieving 20% in the Early Years Foundation Stage Profile and the rest by:
 - improving the quality of transition to school programmes
 - evaluating and supporting the quality of provision for the Early Years Foundation Stage provided at the centre.
- Improve the effectiveness of leadership and management in collaboration with the local authority and HOT by:

- using self-assessment, and qualitative data more effectively to record, evaluate and measure the full impact of the centre’s work and to target resources more efficiently
 - ensuring that the centres work is fully considered by the locality area advisory board
 - further promoting community cohesion so that all families feel safe and valued
 - improving the quality of safeguarding by ensuring that all members of staff fully understand and implement the centre’s policy.
- Improve adults' well-being and future employment opportunities by:
- increasing the opportunities for adult training courses that prepare adults for employment
 - evaluating the impact of the centre’s work with Jobcentre Plus and prioritising where further help is needed
 - increasing the involvement of fathers at the centre.

How good are outcomes for families?

3

The centre provides a broad range of activities across all of the five outcomes which are developed in partnership with other agencies. However, there is insufficient evidence of how these are making a difference and improving outcomes for families. For example, programmes such as ‘Upbeat Mums’, an antenatal nutrition course aimed at women who have a Body Mass Index of 30+ and ‘Cooking on a Budget’, are starting to increase users understanding of the benefits of healthy eating, but these have yet to have an impact on reducing the levels of obesity in young children. Anecdotal evidence indicates that the emotional well-being of mothers and babies is improved by learning baby massage techniques. Parents who attend the centre comment that they are more confident and aware of how to keep themselves and their children healthy through attending the centre. They say they find the recipe cards useful, and visits from the oral health team provide them with helpful information about oral hygiene. Leaders have identified smoking cessation, reducing obesity and promoting and sustaining breastfeeding as priorities, but as yet documentation does not outline clearly enough details of the actions to be taken, how outcomes will be measured and how the information will be used to improve services.

Children and families feel safe when accessing services at the centre because arrangements to help keep them safe are effective overall. This was epitomised during the inspection when a member of staff acted quickly to protect two children who were at risk near a busy road. However, not all families who met with the inspectors said they feel safe and welcomed in the wider community. Children respond very well to the established routines and settle quickly in the crèche as they have positive relationships with the adults. Children’s behaviour in the centre is good. Children subject to a child protection plan, are generally well supported through Common Assessment Framework processes. Staff have established trusting relationships with parents and carers who confidently share and discuss their issues.

Typical comments to support this view were 'I would be lost without this centre. I feel I am now a much better parent to my children' and 'this centre believes in me'.

Courses on offer are valued and used well but this is predominantly by mothers. Parents told the inspectors the activities are interesting and rewarding and give them confidence, help support their children's learning, and promote good parenting skills. However, opportunities for those seeking to improve their educational qualifications, undertake training or find paid work are limited and not promoted well-enough by the centre. Information about the work done by Jobcentre Plus is not effectively shared to enable the centre to prioritise where help is needed.

Some groups of children are entering school with skills and knowledge that exceeds those of their peers, but this is not the case for all groups of children. Whilst data show that the achievement gap between the lowest achieving 20% in the Early Years Foundation Stage Profile and the rest is narrowing from 34% to 21%, the centre has yet to break down this data to ensure that these promising signs are across all their target groups which include children of lone parents and children in workless households.

The 'FRIENDS' group, a support group for isolated parents dealing with stress, depression and anxiety, is helping parents to gain a wide range of skills. For example, by building confidence as they produce grant applications, promoting the work of the centre through community tree planting activities, and organising fund-raising events to support local charities. A parent has been appointed as the community's champion. This person has been a parent representative on the advisory board but after attending training for her new role said 'I am much clearer now on what I need to do on the advisory board and can't wait to get started'.

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	3
The extent to which children are safe and protected, their welfare concerns are identified and appropriate steps taken to address them	3
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	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?

3

Whilst there is some collation and use of centre-specific data, evaluations of activities and other local information is not systematic or rigorous enough. For example, the centre monitors which users are accessing different services is in place, but this is not used effectively enough to understand how successful the centre is in meeting families' needs. The result of this is that self-evaluation is too generous and activities are not necessarily targeted at the right groups of people. Nevertheless, there are early signs of an improving picture as the number of families registering and engaging with the centre is increasing. In addition, the centre is developing increasingly effective procedures with all partners to target services for individual children and families. The centre manager recognises that some target groups are not attending the centre and has implemented actions to try to overcome this. For example, a 'door knocking' exercise took place in the community which helped to identify and introduce several new families to the centre.

The family link and support workers attract new families through effective outreach services in the local community. Their work to target those who are thought to have the greatest needs is progressing well. Family support workers use their knowledge and influence to help families engage with other professionals. This helps to ensure the well-being of children and their parents.

The centre is a welcoming place. The staff use the limited space very well and are creative in the way they link with neighbouring centres to share expertise and resources. Many partners said they feel welcome and trust the staff at the centre. Partners particularly value the 'Referral Crèche' offered to parents who need some respite and children who need socialisation and stimulation. Partners, such as the local counselling team and social workers, use rooms for contact sessions which enable families to spend valuable time together to establish positive relationships and firmer foundations for family life. Resources throughout the centre are of good quality. The centre ensures that a wide range of information about many aspects of parenting, including advice about how to keep children healthy and safe, is freely available to parents. However, centre staff have not always considered whether their displays and leaflets offer advice and support to both men and women.

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	3
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.	3

How effective are the leadership and management?

The senior leadership team is committed to extending services and providing the very best life chances for local children and their families. Operational management is satisfactory and financial resources are carefully managed. There are regular performance management arrangements and supervisions in place. Staff feel valued and are able to develop their own professional expertise through training opportunities. Governance is effective and offers a suitable challenge to the centre manager. However, the locality area advisory board is not as effective as it needs to be in supporting the centre and holding the centre to account for the work that it is required to do. Taking this into consideration, the centre provides satisfactory value for money.

Careful consideration has been given to the design of the centre so that all users can gain full access. Centre staff and partners provide a very good and effective level of service for families with disabled children those who have special educational needs. The inclusion worker liaises closely with all health professionals in the area to ensure families are able to access and integrate into universal services. There are holiday activities for children with special educational needs and/or disabilities and all staff have received training in a wide range of tasks to ensure that all children who attend the centre are able play a full part in the activities. The promotion of equality and diversity is satisfactory overall, however, because the centre is not fully reflecting the diversity of all the community.

User engagement is satisfactory. The centre has sought the views of parents and children through regular questionnaires and surveys. While the response is generally quite low, the outcome of these surveys is shared in the newsletter that is sent to the majority of families in the area. For example, parents requested an activity for both adults and their children where physical exercise to a games console is followed by cooking a healthy tea together. This activity is well attended by families.

Partnerships continue to develop well with effective collaboration between the centre and most partners. Case study evidence indicates that families have received well-integrated and sensitive support in times of crisis. The centre's policies and procedures are generally well embedded in the centre and applied routinely. The procedure for the safe recruitment of staff and volunteers is sound and include obtaining enhanced Criminal Record Bureau checks. Safeguarding training is completed by all staff and updated every three years. However, procedures for reporting child protection issues are not understood by all members of staff.

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	3
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	3
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	3
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.

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Summary for centre users

We inspected the Boothtown Children's Centre on 25-26 January 2012. We judged the centre as satisfactory overall.

Thank you for taking the time to speak with us during the inspection. We spoke with a number of you about the centre's work and looked at the comments you made on feedback sheets and evaluations. We really enjoyed talking to you in your activities, around the centre and on the home visits. You expressed your opinions very clearly and they were very helpful to us. We were delighted to hear your positive views and how helpful and friendly you find all the staff.

We found the staff to be committed and keen to support children's development, to develop adults' confidence and to make being a parent more enjoyable and rewarding. We found that under the guidance of the centre leadership team, the staff work well to provide satisfactory care, guidance and support for all users. Some of you told us that the support of the centre is very important when you are having problems. We found the staff to be effective in providing individual personal support and determined to become even better at supporting families with the greatest needs. It was really 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. You told us that the centre is a very useful place for you to meet other parents and people who can help families. We were particularly impressed by the work of the 'FRIENDS' group who are busy seeking funding through the Boothtown Challenge to help establish an information and communication technology suite in the centre.

We have said that some elements of the centre's work need to improve. We have asked the local authority and HOT to ensure that everyone that works in the setting understands the centre's safeguarding procedures. While many of you told us that you feel safe and welcome in the community, this is not the case for everyone. 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.

There are many good partners working with the centre, but we found that Jobcentre Plus does not always share information and help the centre prioritise where further help is needed. While some children are entering school ready and keen to learn, this is not the case for all children. Therefore, we have asked the centre to look at ways they can work with the local schools and the wide range of early years professionals in the authority to ensure that the centre's transition into school course, 'Little Learners', is the right course for you and your children. In addition, while you all told us that you enjoy the activities that are held at the centre and your children enjoy attending the crèche, more attention needs to be given to the planning of the activities to ensure that you and your children build on your existing skills and knowledge. We also think the centre should provide more courses for adults who want help to find work, undertake training or increase their education and that more fathers should be supported and encouraged to access activities at the centre.

The centre manager receives some very good information from the local authority, but we found that this is not being analysed as well as it could be to ensure that the activities offered are targeted at the right people so that all the families that live in your area are supported to succeed in today's society. We have asked the advisory board to do more to fully understand the challenges that many of you face on a day-to-day basis. Once they do this, they will be in a better position to hold the centre to account for its work. We have raised these issues because once they are in place the centre will be in a stronger position to see how well they are meeting all of 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.