

Inspection report for Galley Hill Children's Centre

Local authority	Hertfordshire
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Inspection dates	1–2 February 2012
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Centre leader	Terri Burfield
Date of previous inspection	Not applicable
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Linked school if applicable	Galley Hill Primary School
Linked early years and childcare, if applicable	

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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 of Her Majesty's Inspectors and an early years inspector.

The inspectors held meetings with the centre manager, headteacher of the school and partnership board member, local authority representatives, health professionals, outreach workers, partner agency representatives and parents.

They observed the centre's work, and looked at a range of relevant documentation.

Information about the centre

Galley Hill Children's Centre is a phase two centre and one of five in Hemel Hempstead. The centre's reach area includes three housing areas, encompassing six primary and two secondary schools within Dacorum Borough Council. Managed by and located within Galley Hill Primary School, the centre is very small and consists of an office, a storeroom for a toy library and one small meeting room with sink and kitchen facilities. Three local community centres and church halls within the children's reach area provide venues for children's centre activities.

The ethnic profile of the area is predominantly White British with only 6% of families from minority ethnic groups. The families live in a wide range of local authority, social or private housing. Many families live in flats with no outside play areas. The number of children in the area aged between nought and four years was 896 in 2010 with a new birth figure of around 50 births per quarter.

The reach area comprises nine lower super output areas. Five of these are within Hertfordshire's 50% most deprived areas. Data show the area as having higher than average deprivation rates and 17% of children in the area live in workless

households. Within Dacorum, the claimant count of families on means-tested benefits in May 2011 was 20%, an increase of three percentage points over the last three years. At entry to early years provision, many children's skills, knowledge and abilities are 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

Health outcomes are satisfactory. Breastfeeding rates have increased but remain below the Hertfordshire average of 49%. The centre provides a good range of activities to promote physical development and healthy eating. However, the levels of obesity in the area are high. Arrangements to keep children safe are good. Children are safe and security arrangements are rigorous. Parents and children love coming to the centre. The achievements of children at the Early Years Foundation Stage are improving but there has been a widening of the achievement gap between the most- and least-able children within the area. Children are well behaved and are cooperative. Parents feel confident in expressing their views; however, very few parents get involved in the advisory board. Activities to promote economic well-being are satisfactory. Courses to promote parents' life skills are helpful and the centre signposts users to a range of local providers, but the centre does not have sufficiently accurate information to ensure that it is reaching its target groups or to measure its impact .

The centre, in partnership with other agencies, provides a wide range of activities, and attendance and participation rates are good. The centre works well with families. Staff are good role models for parents and demonstrate skill in extending their learning, but the progress in improving children's readiness for school is slow. Good parenting support is tailored to families' needs. The care offered to families at times of crisis is good and helps families to manage crises well. Significant support for parents through partnerships leads to positive outcomes for families.

Operational leadership is good. Staff receive good professional supervision and accountability is clear. Staff are supported and challenged to do well. Critical and

realistic self-evaluation clearly states the challenges the centre faces, although the accuracy of information available to ensure the centre reaches target groups within the area hinders the staff's ability to ensure they are helping those most in need. The few resources the centre has are used well and centre staff make the most of what is available in the community. Outreach workers are effective in supporting families from minority ethnic groups, although the promotion of equality and diversity in play materials, resources and activities is less well developed. Information on noticeboards and in leaflets is too text-dependent and difficult for parents with low literacy skills or non-English speakers to understand. Safeguarding arrangements are satisfactory. Policies and procedures, including a safeguarding statement for users, are comprehensive and detailed and clearly identify who parents go to for help; however, they do not refer to vulnerable adults. Partnerships are very effective. The routinely sought views of parents and children help to plan provision.

What does the centre need to do to improve further?

Recommendations for further improvement

- Improve the collection, collation and analysis of data on targeted groups within the reach area:
 - to better reflect the good work the centre does with those most in need
 - to ensure vulnerable families are accessing services
 - to help plan improvements that result in better outcomes for children.
- Incorporate into the safeguarding policy, procedures and statement, arrangements for the protection of vulnerable adults using the centre, to ensure the centre meets requirements.
- Implement the plans to ensure that all children given their starting points, make good progress in readiness for school, closing the achievement gap between the least- and most-able and to develop their skills to help them in the future.
- Develop a range of pictorial prompts and clues to accompany written information on noticeboards or in leaflets and handouts, to enable users for whom English is not their first language and those with low literacy skills to be signposted to appropriate services and support.
- Increase the parent representation on the partnership board to ensure they make an effective contribution to the governance of the centre.

How good are outcomes for families?

3

Outcomes relating to health are satisfactory. Through good engagement with parents, breastfeeding rates have increased by 10 percentage points over the last four years. The support for children's communication development through the provision of speech and language therapy is effective and leading to improvements in the communications skills of children. The range of activities to promote physical development, such as the 'Strictly Strollers' group and post- and antenatal Pilates classes is good. Parents report physical health gains from participating in these activities, although the levels of obesity in under-fives in the area are high and increasing. The centre is taking positive steps to address this through information giving, awareness raising, healthy eating courses and exercise activities.

Children are safe at the centre and security arrangements are rigorous. Resources are safe, and staff and users adhere to appropriate safe working practices. Parents who have completed parenting programmes report that they are better equipped to keep their children safe at home. Staff are using the Common Assessment Framework confidently to help identify welfare concerns and actions to remedy them. The centre keeps records of families and their participation in activities and events at the centre. However, data kept by the local authority on vulnerable families' participation in activities at the centre are not accurate, differing from the centre's own records.

Parents and children love coming to the centre, parents say they do not know what they would do without it. One parent said she loved the story sacks and believed her children's speech and language had developed well because of these. Outreach workers are proactive in reaching reluctant participants. Good initiatives involving links with other groups in the community, for example, activities organised for parents of children with specific learning difficulties, are highly valued by parents. There has been improvement in achievements of children leaving the Early Years Foundation Stage from 45% achieving 78 points in 2007 to 56% in 2011. However, there has been a widening of the achievement gap between the most and least able children within the reach area, showing an overall increase of nine percentage points over the last four years from 31% in 2007 to 40% in 2011.

The contribution parents and children make to the centre is good. Children demonstrate positive behaviour making good relationships with their peers. They share and show respect for the toys on loan from the toy library. Parents feel confident in expressing their views and staff and managers are approachable and flexible in responding to their needs. Evaluation information gathered on the type of activities offered, the take up of services and their value to the community helps staff plan future events. Parents become volunteers in the community, often when their children start school. Both formal and informal discussions with parents result in changes to provision, such as the development of the fathers group. However, parental representation on the advisory board is too low. Innovative methods developed to seek the views of children through, for example, digital recordings of interviews, have also been helpful in promoting speech and language development.

Activities to promote economic well-being are satisfactory. Courses to promote parents' life skills are helpful and the centre signposts users to a range of local providers. Job vacancy information from Jobcentre Plus is available although it does not offer a service at the centre. The centre is developing a financial literacy course. Good support for parents to access housing information and advice results in community grants being given for furniture and equipment to those who need it.

These are the grades for the outcomes for families

<p>The extent to which children, including those from target groups, are physically, mentally and emotionally healthy and families have healthy lifestyles</p>	<p>3</p>
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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	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	2
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

The centre provides a wide range of activities in partnership with other services in the community. Good use is made of provision in venues across the reach area ensuring activities are well located and are engaging families from the target groups, including families most in need of support. Particularly good relationships between outreach workers and vulnerable families, including one-to-one support and support in attending groups and activities, are effective in enabling families to participate fully in what is on offer. Attendance and participation rates at events and activities, for example the fathers' course, are good. The centre provides good purposeful engagement with parents and children and staff offer good pro-social modelling, encouraging parents to interact positively with their peers and their children. The centre promotes purposeful learning well and activities are of good quality. Good use is made of opportunities to extend learning. For example, staff demonstrate skilful interventions with parents within conversations. The teaching and learning in adult-focused courses are good. Provision to help children learn and develop is good, although the progress in improving children's readiness for school is slow. Good parenting support is well matched to family circumstances and ensures families' specific needs are met and concerns addressed. The centre celebrates success and encourages families to build on their learning and parents report an increase in their confidence to attend further courses following workshops and short courses run by the centre. Parents report positively about what they have achieved and the impact this has had on their immediate and extended family.

The care offered to families at times of crisis, for example due to illness, is good and helps families to manage crises well. Due to the very small space available at the centre, signposting to support services, such as the domestic violence team, works particularly well. All staff at the centre are completing the Common Assessment Framework forms and take on significant roles in child protection case conferences and Team Around the Child meetings. Significant support for parents through partnerships leads to positive outcomes for families; for example, facilitating access to a local private day nursery for a vulnerable child enabled the parent to receive support in parenting.

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	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

The operational leadership from the centre manager is good. Staff receive good professional supervision, and information is shared effectively through regular meetings. Accountability is clear and leadership from the headteacher of the school and representatives from the partnership board is helpful in supporting and challenging the staff of the centre. The centre manager has an effective brokerage role within the community, encouraging, supporting and enabling local professionals to meet, share information and support each other to improve early years provision within the area.

Targets for outreach staff to increase centre use are clear and well communicated. Outreach workers, to best-fit families' needs and circumstances, use good bespoke evaluation methods. Critical and realistic self-evaluation, with good evidence and impact assessments to support judgements, is an accurate reflection of the centre's provision and clearly states the challenges the centre faces. However, the accuracy of information available to ensure the centre reaches target groups within the reach area hinders the staff's ability to ensure they are meeting those most in need.

The few resources the centre has are used well, particularly staff resources, and centre staff make the most of what is available in the community to enhance the offer. The limited physical space available, particularly with no toilets available in the centre for use by children and parents attending, makes their ability to provide services more challenging and complex.

Outreach workers are effective in supporting families from minority ethnic groups through direct work with, for example, Turkish families in the area and signposting to specialist provision. The provision of crèches at all training events enables parents to participate in a range of activities. Evening courses to meet the needs of working families have been well received, particularly the provision for fathers. The promotion of equality and diversity in play materials, resources and activities is less well developed and attention to resources reflecting different groups in our society is insufficient.

Safeguarding arrangements are satisfactory. Clear policies and procedures including a safeguarding statement for users are comprehensive and detailed. The statement identifies who to go to for help; however, it is not presented in a format that would

enable parents for whom English is a second language or those parents with low literacy skills to understand. The school holds a good, clear single record of recruitment and Criminal Records Bureau checks for all staff at the centre. Staff complete a wide range of training and regularly update their knowledge of safeguarding including designated person training. Good early intervention activities provided by outreach workers support vulnerable families and prevent escalating child protection plans. However, the safeguarding policy and procedures do not refer to vulnerable adults using the centre.

Partnerships are very effective. Health professionals report that the children's centre has made a massive difference to the support they are able to deliver. A wide range of contacts with partner agencies is used effectively to enhance the centre's offer to families. Supportive and productive relationships with local groups such as private day nurseries, childminders and pre-school groups enable the sharing of training activities to maximise limited resources in the community.

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	2
The effectiveness of evaluation and its use in setting ambitious targets which secure improvement in outcomes	2
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	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

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Summary for centre users

We inspected the Galley Hill Children's Centre on 1–2 February 2012. We judged the centre as satisfactory overall.

The centre provides you with a safe environment where you feel welcomed and supported. You told us that you particularly value the support you receive at times of family crisis.

Many of you are choosing to breastfeed your babies and you find the provision for physical exercise at the centre very helpful, particularly the Pilates groups. Much good work takes place, but the number of children who are overweight for their age is increasing, despite the centre staff continuing to encourage healthy eating and exercise.

You said that your children do very well at the centre and there have been improvements in their readiness for school, but the gap between the least-able and most-able children is widening. We have asked the centre to gather information to ensure the good work they do improves the achievements of the least-able children.

The outreach workers at the centre offer you particularly good support and build positive relationships with you and your families. The staff have good links with other professionals and organisations in the area and are able to direct you to other support when you need it, but it is difficult for the centre to know if it is reaching the most vulnerable families in the area. We have asked the centre to collect more accurate information on the families most in need of help and to record the work they are doing with them to ensure they are doing the right things to help them.

Many of you are confident about expressing your views and identifying activities and events that you would like to see developed at the centre and within the community; however, you are reluctant to take on a formal role and join the advisory board of the centre. We have asked the centre to help you rise to this challenge.

The centre's manager, the school headteacher and the local authority work closely together with other organisations to ensure you have wider opportunities to help you and your children learn and develop. They are particularly good at making partnerships to extend these opportunities. The arrangements to safeguard your children are satisfactory and the staff at the centre take every step they can to keep your children safe when they are attending the centre and help you protect your children when outside of the centre. We have asked them to include the steps they should take for keeping vulnerable adults safe too.

The centre welcomes parents from different ethnic groups, with differing abilities and living different lifestyles, but the toys and activities provided at the centre do not

always promote these different groups and we have asked the centre to ensure they do this in future.

Information is displayed about services and the policies and procedures that centre users should know, but much of this information is in writing and is difficult for users who speak English as an additional language or those who have difficulty reading, to understand. We have asked the centre to produce more information in pictorial form with prompts and clues to the text to make it easier for everyone to understand.

Thank you to those of you who took the time to come and talk to us. We wish you and your children all the best for the future.

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