

Inspection report for Pomfret Children's Centre

Local authority	Wakefield
Inspection number	383353
Inspection dates	8–9 February 2012
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Date of previous inspection	Not applicable
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Linked school if applicable	Pontefract De Lacy Primary 136079
Linked early years and childcare, if applicable	Pomfret Children's Centre Nursery EY280625

The inspection of this Sure Start Children's Centre was carried out under Part 3A of the Childcare Act 2006 as inserted by section 199 of the Apprenticeships, Skills, Children and Learning Act 2009.

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Introduction

The inspection addresses the centre's contribution to:

- facilitating access to early childhood services by parents, prospective parents and young children
- maximising the benefit of those services to parents, prospective parents and young children
- improving the well-being of young children.

The report is made to the local authority and a copy is sent to the children's centre. The local authority may send the report to such persons it considers appropriate and must arrange for an action plan to be produced in relation to the findings in this report.

An inspection of the co-located/partner primary school was carried out at the same time as the inspection of the centre under Section 5 of the Education Act 2005. The report of this inspection is available on our website www.ofsted.gov.uk

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

The inspectors held meetings with senior managers, centre staff, parents, members of the advisory board and a number of partners including Early Years Foundation Stage and childcare partners; health, education and children's social care professionals.

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

Information about the centre

Pomfret Children's Centre is a phase one centre which is situated within the grounds of Pontefract De Lacy Primary in South Pontefract and was designated in November 2006. It provides the full core offer and the range of services includes health services, social care, family play sessions, parenting programmes, adult education and outreach services. Services are located at the children's centre as well as Pontefract De Lacy Primary School and other local outreach venues. The centre covers a large geographical area and serves a community that experiences high levels of social and economic disadvantage. There are 928 children under five years in the reach area and the area consists of seven 30% Super Output Areas and five 70% Super Output Areas. Within the reach of the centre there are significant issues surrounding teenage pregnancy, unemployment, substance misuse, domestic violence and low levels of literacy and numeracy. The population is mostly White British with smaller percentages of other ethnic groups, some of whom speak English as an additional language. Levels of unemployment are high and many of the existing jobs are low paid. Housing is mostly social or private rental with some small areas of high affluence and privately owned housing. Most children who live in the most deprived areas within the reach of the centre

enter early education with knowledge and skills that are significantly below expectations for their age, particularly in communication, language and literacy, and personal, social and emotional development. There are links to the seven local primary schools.

Governance of the centre is provided by Wakefield local authority supported by an advisory board that includes providers, delivery partners, voluntary sector organisations, members of the local community and users that attend the centre.

The centre's early years and childcare provision is delivered by Pomfret Children's Centre Nursery, which is situated next door to the centre and receives its own inspection. The report can be viewed at www.ofsted.gov.uk

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

Pomfret Children's Centre provides a good quality service for children and families. In particular, effective care, guidance and support and good safeguarding arrangements have a positive impact on the safety and well-being of families. The good quality and wide range of activities offered in the centre, such as 'Stay and Play', 'Walkers and Explorers' and 'Kitchen sink art' groups promote learning well and, as a result, enjoyment and achievement are good. Parent evaluations of these programmes showed that 96% had increased their understanding of their child's learning and development needs and the sessions had enabled them to develop new ways to interact with their child.

Outcomes for users are good and skilled parent support workers provide effective one-to-one care, guidance and support to families in times of crisis. 'I love coming here, it's like my second home', 'They make you feel like you are not on your own', and, 'I know I can talk to the staff in confidence and I feel safe', are typical comments expressed by parents. Staff are well trained and have a good understanding of child protection procedures. They work closely with partners and ensure they share promptly any concerns with relevant agencies. As a result, families improve their ability to stay safe and the number of children on child protection plans has reduced.

Adults' knowledge of parenting skills is developing very well because of the support they receive from staff and peers. They engage well with the learning opportunities provided and there is a sense of enjoyment in all the centres activities. However, only a minority of adults go on to gain relevant qualifications to help improve their future economic well-being. Case studies indicate that some adults return to work or training but the centre does not have complete records of all users' progress or final achievements. The centre successfully engages with the majority of its key target groups. However, the centre also recognises that too few fathers engage with the centre.

The centre provides a good range of opportunities for users to make a positive contribution to the community. Parents participate well in a range of evaluations and reviews that encourage them to contribute to the development of the centre's activities. A well-attended parent forum is also highly active in shaping provision and two members of this group regularly attend the advisory board and are parent representatives.

Leaders and managers are ambitious and motivated to continue improving the provision, building on its strengths and reaching the families whose circumstances mean they are most in need of support. The inclusion of all children and families is central to the vision of the centre manager. Because of the managers' very good knowledge of the reach area, the analysis of the centre's major strengths and areas for development includes the key target groups and the factors that may influence outcomes. However, self-evaluation and development planning does not yet make full use of all available data to support local authority and centre managers in setting specific targets that enable the staff to fully realise the impact of their work on improving outcomes for families. Nonetheless, effective leadership and management, good outcomes for users and quality provision combined with the clear vision and drive of the centre manager demonstrate a good capacity for sustained improvement.

What does the centre need to do to improve further?

Recommendations for further improvement

- The local authority should, in partnership with the centre manager, strengthen self-evaluation processes and development planning by making full use of all available data to set specific targets that will help the centre to demonstrate further the impact of its work on improving outcomes.
- Increase participation rates on adult learning programmes and progression into further education and employment and further develop procedures to track and measure the centre's effectiveness in this area.
- Develop further strategies to increase engagement with fathers.

How good are outcomes for families?

2

Families benefit from good support and advice and the effective promotion of safety by the parent support workers. Home safety assessments are carried out with parents and special 'safety events' are held in partnership with agencies such as a national first aid organisation, the fire brigade and safe at home organisations to raise their awareness of how to keep their families safe. One parent told inspectors, 'The centre means everything to me, without it I don't know where I would be'. Early intervention for families with children identified as at risk or in need is helping to keep children safe and is supporting their progress. The whole staff team demonstrates a very good understanding of the Common Assessment Framework (CAF) processes. Parents of all children, particularly those children who are subject to CAF assessment, looked-after children or those on a child protection plans, are seen as essential partners in the improvement in outcomes for families.

Children play and adults develop their skills in a welcoming environment with friendly and approachable staff. The good quality play and learning sessions make an effective contribution to children and adults' enjoyment and achievement. Children's progress and development of skills are good. This is evidenced by the improving achievements of children in the Early Years Foundation Stage Profile. Profile data show an increase in the number of children achieving 78+ points and at least six points in each of the scales for personal, social and emotional development and language, literacy and communication, which represents a good level of development. Data show this has steadily improved with 53.3% in 2009, 61.1% in 2010 and 76.9% in 2011. Adults enjoy courses to develop their parenting and life skills. One parent said, 'I have learnt a lot of skills in how to manage my child's behaviour'. Other users commented that 'I am now much more confident and can now say no', 'It's made me feel better about myself' and 'It's helped us become calmer parents and we can see it in each other'.

Users make a positive contribution to the centre and community through evaluations, a suggestion box, an evolving volunteer's programme and a parents' forum. Some users are very involved in the life of the centre, supporting activities and sessions, which lead to improvement in their personal development. Children behave well and are developing useful skills for the future such as cooperation and independence, and families have respect for each other.

Healthy living activities are well attended and there are a broad range of services and sessions, such as 'Baby Fridays', which consists of baby massage, yoga and signing and a 'Rhythm kids' programme of music and movement activities. Families receive good quality health information. The percentage of children being breastfed at six to eight weeks has risen from 29.7% in 2010/11 to 36.6% in 2011/12 so far. This is due to the very good links with health professionals, inter-agency working and carefully targeted individual support. Although a range of activities are in place to reduce the numbers of children at risk of obesity in Reception Year such as, 'Cooking on a budget' courses, weight management sessions and liaison with health trainer's evidence show only a slight improvement in this

area. The centre manager and staff are aware of this and are continually looking at ways to improve outcomes in this area.

The majority of adults, including those from target groups and those whose circumstances make them vulnerable, are helped to access good training and employment information and personal development courses. There are good and developing programmes to encourage parents to progress into volunteering at the centre. This effectively increases their self-esteem and confidence and secures emotional stability. The centre is aware that some users return to work or progress to education or training. However, there is limited evidence of increased participation rates on adult learning programmes and progression into further education and employment. In addition, the centre does not routinely receive progress information from its partners in adult education, or Jobcentre Plus, which limits their ability to track and measure their effectiveness in this area.

These are the grades for the outcomes for families:

The extent to which children, including those from target groups, are physically, mentally and emotionally healthy and families have healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which children are safe and protected, their welfare concerns are identified and appropriate steps taken to address them	2
The extent to which all children and parents, including those from target groups, enjoy and achieve educationally and in their personal and social development	2
The extent to which children engage in positive behaviour and develop positive relationships, and parents, including those from target groups, contribute to decision-making and governance of the centre	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.	2

How good is the provision?

2

Staffs' good knowledge and understanding of the community they serve lead to the delivery of good quality provision. Prompt and effective use of the Common Assessment Framework enables staff to provide good care, guidance and support and services to families. Feedback from users is used effectively to enable the centre to change the provision to benefit users' learning and development needs. For example, the 'Parenting plus' course was adapted to ensure it met the needs of young parents and the popular gardening group, 'Teeney tots and flower pots' is planned to start again soon. As a result, the flexible range of services provided meets the needs of most users who access it. Participation is good. The centre is focused on providing services for families with the greatest need and is successful in working with target groups, such as workless families, teenage parents and those experiencing domestic violence. However, although some fathers engage with the centre, others are proving more difficult to reach. The centre recognises the need to develop further

strategies to increase the engagement of fathers, particularly since the popular fathers group stopped.

The children's centre works closely with the co-located school's Early Years Foundation Stage leaders and the local authority early years teacher to ensure that play and learning opportunities are of a good quality. The 'Play with a purpose' and 'Families enjoy everything together' (FEET) groups support parents and children and enable a seamless transition from the centre's activities into nursery. The good support given to local childminders and private day-care providers is helping to raise local standards and outcomes for children. Data held by the schools show that the achievement gap between the lowest achieving 20% of children and their peers is closing steadily. For example, the gap in 2009 was 30.6%, in 2010 at 25.4% and in 2011 this had been reduced to 21.1%. The headteacher of De Lacy Primary School is confident that the work of the centre is having a positive impact on this outcome.

These are the grades for the quality of provision:

The extent to which the range of services, activities and opportunities meet the needs of families, including those in target groups	2
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?

2

Good leadership and management of the centre have a positive impact on outcomes for families. Governance and accountability arrangements are clear. There are clear links between strategic planning and service provision leading to improvements. Staff understand their roles and responsibilities and their performance is well monitored by leaders and managers. Good community and parent representation on the advisory board ensures a strong local voice in the life of the centre. As a result, the centre's identified priorities link effectively to those of the wider area. Leaders and managers have a good understanding of the key issues facing the centre. There are sound links between the centre's evaluation of its services and the priorities set out in its development plan because the manager and staff know the reach area very well. However, the local authority and centre leaders and managers do not make full use of all the available data in the evaluation process to set specific targets that would help the centre to demonstrate further the full impact of its work on improving outcomes. The centre seeks and makes good use of feedback from users to develop and improve the range and quality of its provision.

The use of resources has a good impact on outcomes for users, which means that the centre gives good value for money. The centre building provides a welcoming environment and outreach work is extending the services provided to enable more families to access

support. The work of the family support workers and family, play and learning worker is targeted effectively on supporting families in times of need.

Action to promote greater equality has resulted in the centre engaging most key target groups. For example, the 'SPACE' group is provided to support more effectively parents and children with communication difficulties. In addition, the 'Breastfeeding support' group and liaison with both a breastfeeding support charity and a well women's centre's counselling service are all highly valued by parents. The centre is effective in helping to narrow achievement gaps between different groups of users. There is a strong culture of respect and inclusion is well promoted.

Safeguarding is good and meets current statutory requirements. The centre has effective systems in place for recording information related to the vetting and recruitment of staff. Staff and partners have a clear understanding of policies and procedures to ensure the protection of users. They understand their role in identifying and reporting concerns and do so promptly. As a result, users' ability to stay safe is increasing. The centre collaborates very effectively with other key agencies to reduce the risk of harm to children.

Partnerships with other services contribute to good outcomes for users. Services are integrated and deliver cohesive provision for users. The effective partnerships with voluntary, community, social care and health professionals contribute to the good care, guidance and support for users. The good partnerships with private day-care providers and childminders enable good transition arrangements for children and are helping to improve outcomes.

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 secures improvement in outcomes	3
The extent to which resources are used and managed efficiently and effectively to meet the needs of families, including those in target groups	2
The extent to which equality is promoted and diversity celebrated, illegal or unlawful discrimination is tackled and the centre fulfils its statutory duties	2
The effectiveness of the centre's policy, procedures and work with key agencies in safeguarding children and, where applicable, vulnerable adults	2
The extent to which partnerships with other agencies ensure the integrated delivery of the range of services provided by the centre to meet its core purpose	2

The extent to which the centre supports and encourages families in the reach area to engage with services and uses their views to develop the range of provision.	2
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Any other information used to inform the judgements made during this inspection

The findings from the most recent inspection of Pomfret Children's Centre Nursery were taken into consideration during the inspection of the children's centre. This report is available on the Ofsted website at www.ofsted.gov.uk.

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Summary for centre users

We inspected the Pomfret Children's Centre on 8 and 9 February 2012. We judged the centre as good overall.

Thank you very much for talking to us and letting us come into your sessions. The information you gave and the stories you shared with us helped us to make our judgements. Many of you talked about how the centre has helped you and your children. You told us how accessing the children's centre has supported you to improve your lives and how you now have more confidence. It was clear that you are proud of your achievements. You told us how it has become easier to ask for help and support because of the friendly welcome and good quality relationships that you develop with centre staff. You also told us about the friends you have met and the things you have learnt as a result of your involvement in the centre's activities.

Many of you said how the involvement with the centre is improving your ability to keep your children safe and how much you appreciate the support and encouragement staff give you. We found that staff have a good understanding of child protection procedures and that they are well trained in meeting your needs. You said that you feel your children are safe at the centre and that advice from them helps your families stay safe at home.

You enjoy the sessions with your children such as 'Baby Group', 'Walkers and Explorers' and 'Stay and Play'. Those parents with children in the crèche, value the good care their children receive. We found that children benefit from accessing services at the centre and make good progress from their starting points. The centre is working with Jobcentre Plus and adult education services to give you good access to courses to help improve your own education and future employment opportunities. We have asked the centre to find ways to increase the number of adults who gain qualifications to help families go on to further

training or employment and to become financially secure. The centre is successful at engaging with the majority of families that really need some support but it still needs to find ways of engaging with more fathers from local families.

Your children behave well and you learn more about how to stay healthy and active. The centre listens to you and asks you what you think of the services and activities it offers. It changes how and when it does some things because of what you say. A good number of you are involved in making decisions about your centre through being on the parents' forum and advisory board.

We found that all the staff are keen to promote equality and diversity. Many of the families with the greatest needs are enjoying sessions to help them and their children. Families treat each other with respect. The centre works well for everyone in the community, irrespective of their background or disability, and in doing so it contributes well to community cohesion. The centre collects lots of information from you, the local authority and its partners and uses this information to make the centre as good as it can be. We have, however, asked it to use this information more effectively so that it can more accurately show how the centre is making a difference to you and your families.

Thank you again for taking the time to talk with us and we wish you and your families every success for the future.

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