

Inspection report for Holbeach Children's Centre

Local authority	Lincolnshire
Inspection number	383455
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Date of previous inspection	Not applicable
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Linked school if applicable	Holbeach Primary School
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.

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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 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 leaders, members of staff and partner professionals from other agencies. Discussions were held with parents and service users and representatives from the local authority. They observed the centre's work, and looked at a range of relevant documentation.

Information about the centre

Holbeach Children's Centre is a phase two centre which opened in December 2009. It is governed by the local authority and based on the same site as Holbeach Primary School. It provides services from the main site and one satellite site within the community to a population from a broad range of economic and social circumstances. A large majority of families live in areas within the 50% least deprived in the country.

The number of families attending schools in the area who are known to be entitled to free school meals is high and the proportion of children aged under four years who are living in households where no-one is working is high. The vast majority of families within the area served by the centre are of White British heritage, with a small minority from Eastern Europe.

The centre provides a wide range of supporting services, incorporating a crèche, outreach and home visiting, drop-in health support, parenting courses, volunteering opportunities and workshops. The centre has a partnership board made up of representatives from the local community, professional agencies and parents. Most

children enter early education with a range of skills lower than 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

Overall effectiveness of the centre is satisfactory. Recent changes in leadership of the centre have brought a clear vision for improvement. The centre has effective strategies to ensure outcomes for families improve. Leaders have a good understanding of the centre's strengths and areas for improvement and are making sure the centre is well established in the community.

The number of families using the centre, including those from targeted groups has been low since the centre opened, but is now satisfactory and improving. Increasingly effective work with key partners, such as health and social work teams, has increased the number of families who attend the centre. Families in the wider community also benefit from the work the centre undertakes to support other providers, such as childminders. However, the centre does not promote its services well enough.

Families attending the centre develop a good understanding of dangers and how to keep themselves and each other safe. Staff are experienced and have good skills and understanding of managing risks and safeguarding children, which they use effectively to provide a safe and secure environment within the centre. Parents have developed trust in the staff and know that they will receive effective help.

Children behave well at the centre and develop positive relationships with each other and adults. Families using the centre are listened to and feel they are included in making decisions about how the centre is run. They are encouraged to contribute positively to their community and the life of the centre.

Parents who attend the popular weekly sessions to improve parenting skills benefit because this helps to strengthen bonds with their children. Some parents who recognised they had little confidence and low self-esteem have developed greater self-assurance and improved their personal well-being. These parents are

encouraged to use their experience to offer support to other parents.

Children make sufficient progress preparing for school, and families attending the centre enjoy the activities on offer. However, activities are limited because the centre does not have an outdoor play area. Arrangements for the provision of opportunities and support for adults seeking help to find work, undertake training or gain accredited qualifications are limited. However, the centre refers adults to Jobcentre plus and supports them adequately in accessing services, and a small number of users have achieved recognised qualifications.

The centre has satisfactory capacity to improve because managers know what has to be done and are determined to make progress. The written plans used to help the centre develop and improve set out the centre's ambition and identify most of the improvements needed. However, actions for improvement are neither sufficiently detailed nor prioritised. The self-evaluation process is satisfactory and the centre has developed sufficient arrangements to gather the views of parents, staff and partners to help plan for improvements.

The local authority provides the centre with good data and information about the population of the area it serves, which the centre uses satisfactorily to establish local targets. However, the centre has been slow to develop a more accurate understanding of the needs of the community. Outreach provision is weak and the centre has been slow to identify target groups and increase the number of families registering with the centre.

There are satisfactory arrangements with a broad range of partner organisations. The effectiveness of partnerships has recently been reviewed by the new leadership team and are now more focused on ensuring better integration of services for families. The impact of these improvements is clear and families are already benefiting from the changes, such as health visitors and midwives encouraging more families to register with the centre and use its services.

Arrangements to ensure equality of opportunity and the promotion of diversity are satisfactory. Barriers to attending services are effectively overcome and there is a positive trend in the reduction of the achievement gap in Early Years Foundation Stage Profile. However, there are limited arrangements to engage some targeted groups, such as children with disabilities and young parents.

What does the centre need to do to improve further?

Recommendations for further improvement

- Improve the quality of services and performance of the centre by developing detailed written action plans which identify targets and priorities, and introduce more robust self-evaluation processes.
- Increase registration and user participation through better promotion of the centre's provision, more effective outreach work and by more precise identification and targeting of those most in need, including young parents and

- disabled children.
- Improve the level of service offered to adults, including better information and support for those claiming benefits, and opportunities for those interested in seeking paid work, training and education.
- Work with key partners to consider options for the development of an outdoor play and activity area.

How good are outcomes for families?

3

Outcomes for the children and parents who use the centre are satisfactory overall. Health outcomes are improving, with an increasing number of mothers commencing and continuing breastfeeding. Mothers who choose to breastfeed their babies receive good support and encouragement from staff and health professionals. Obesity levels for children are low for the area and a high number of children are known to participate in healthy activities such as swimming and physical exercise. 'Cook and Eat' sessions are effective because they help families concentrate on healthy choices and nutritious ingredients in a friendly and welcoming environment. The number of users who smoke is particularly high but support for those wishing to stop is not prioritised by staff. The centre is not yet having a significant impact on a sufficient proportion of the community, including those with greatest need. However, the centre is firmly focused on improving this.

Users benefit from the centre's good arrangements to ensure children and families stay safe. The centre is bright and attractive. Children and adults enjoy attending and they feel safe. Staff have a good level of expertise and the building is secure. Staff encourage children to explore and understand risks and dangers through play and experience, but these are limited to indoor activities. Families are encouraged to attend activities which best match their needs and interests. Children respond well to the established routines and settle quickly in the crèche because they have positive relationships with the adults. Children's behaviour in the centre is good. Close and effective working with partners who provide support for victims of domestic violence has been of great benefit for those who have used the service. Families remain safe because staff use the Common Assessment Framework effectively and the activities coordinator is trained and experienced in safeguarding vulnerable adults.

The centre has a satisfactory range of interesting and rewarding courses on offer, such as a 'Dads Group', and a 'Stay and Play' session held at a satellite centre in the community. A satisfactory language support service is provided for families from Eastern Europe. Families value the support they receive and make good use of the sessions because they recognise the benefits. This improves their children's learning and promotes good parenting skills. Children make satisfactory progress in the Early Years Foundation Stage and the centre is making a positive contribution towards narrowing the gap between the lowest attaining children and others. Children's personal and social development is satisfactory. Expert advocacy services for families facing legal, economic and immigration challenges are effective. One parent commented, 'We received a great deal of support and good advice just when we needed it'. Parents, including those from target groups, make a satisfactory contribution to decision making and governance of the centre.

Staff are supportive and build strong, trusting relationships with families who engage with centre activities. These relationships support the effective assessment of needs. Very close working with social workers is effective in ensuring children subject to child protection plans and those looked after by the local authority are prioritised to receive support. Tracking of individual progress in centre activities is at an early stage but where this works effectively it demonstrates how contact with the centre has enabled children to have a better start to school life. The children's centre teacher works effectively with staff and other early years providers to improve the quality of their work and so improve outcomes for children. A very small minority of adults achieve accredited qualifications because the centre has not focused on this as a priority.

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	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	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

The quality of provision is satisfactory overall. Although the centre does not target all groups most in need of support, the proportion of families using the centre is satisfactory and improving. Staff work effectively with the local authority and health partners to provide early intervention and support for families referred to them, such as those with a new baby. Families who are brought to the attention of the family support workers receive good support because staff use their knowledge and influence effectively. Staff are developing outreach work, but this is at an early stage.

Families using the centre receive satisfactory care, guidance and support. Assessment is generally used appropriately to plan individual support for families, although tracking progress is not yet fully established. The staff and the centre's partners are becoming steadily more effective at supporting those who use its services and are increasing the number registered.

Parents are actively engaged with a whole range of activities to help improve

outcomes for their families, such as healthy eating, breastfeeding support and programmes to help deal with the effects of domestic violence. Information about opportunities for further support with parenting, counselling and general well-being is satisfactory. Parents have fun at the centre and engage in exciting activities, while building their confidence, relationships and parenting skills. One parent told the inspectors, 'I have made many new friends here at the centre and have encouraged others to come along and try it'.

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?

3

Leadership and management are satisfactory. Recent management initiatives which have focused on improvement are leading to a steady increase in the number of families using the centre. Appropriate arrangements are in place for the governance and accountability of the centre. The centre leader is determined to improve outcomes for families who use the centre. Staff are well-motivated and recognise the strengths of the centre. In addition, the arrangements for monitoring and evaluating the quality of all services and addressing priorities promptly are satisfactory.

The centre has an established partnership board, which includes active and enthusiastic parents. Members recognise the value of negotiating protocols for partnership working and establishing meaningful targets for performance. They provide suitable support for the new centre leader. The centre provides satisfactory value for money because it uses its resources appropriately to meet the needs of families who use its provision.

The centre promotes equality adequately in its activities, some of which involves the celebration of different cultures and beliefs. The staff are representative of the communities they serve. Discrimination, where it occurs, is dealt with promptly and effectively. The centre is committed to inclusion and removing barriers, including those faced by users with the greatest needs.

The centre leader has introduced effective arrangements to ensure safeguarding requirements are met. Staff receive good training, have a good level of awareness and know what to do if action needs to be taken. Integrated working ensures staff have ready access to expert advice on safeguarding and protecting children. Arrangements for staff vetting are comprehensive. Staff have good understanding of arrangements for safeguarding vulnerable adults and supporting victims of domestic

abuse.

Satisfactory partnerships are in place with a range of key organisations including the linked schools, health, social care, childminders and voluntary and private sector organisations. However, partnerships with organisations that provide adult education, training and employment advice are limited. The centre is developing increasingly effective procedures with all partners to improve targeted services for individual children and families.

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 secure 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	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	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

The findings from the most recent inspection of Holbeach Primary School contain judgements for overall effectiveness of satisfactory, and this has been taken account in this inspection report.

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Summary for centre users

We inspected Holbeach Children's Centre on 8--9 February 2012. We judged the centre as satisfactory overall.

We enjoyed our visit to your centre and meeting so many of you. We would like to thank those of you who helped us with our work. The centre is a pleasant place for families to meet with staff and those from other organisations and to get more support and guidance.

The centre leader has introduced several changes in the last few months and these have been of great benefit in improving the centre. There is an interesting variety of sessions and activities which are well attended and increasingly popular. We found the staff to be committed and keen to support children's learning and development and to help adults become more confident and effective parents.

The centre is a safe place for you and your children. It is a bright and attractive place that is welcoming. The rooms and play equipment are of a satisfactory standard. We have asked the centre to plan and create an outdoor activity area for you and your children to use. Staff have lots of experience and skills to make sure your time there is well spent. The children we saw enjoyed what they were doing.

We found the staff to be effective at providing support for individuals. Some of you told us that the support of the centre is very important when you are having problems. The staff are determined to become even better at supporting families with the greatest needs. They are working to make sure that more families are involved in the life of the centre. We have asked the centre leader to tell more people about what the centre offers and to encourage more people to use it.

The staff have established partnerships with other professionals and organisations to ensure you have access to a full range of support and guidance. They are providing good guidance on how to keep families healthy and safe, and have placed great efforts on increasing children's development through many of the interesting and exciting activities.

We found that under the guidance of the centre's leadership team, the staff work well to provide satisfactory levels of care, guidance and support. However, we think the centre should provide more services for adults who want help to find work, undertake training or increase their education.

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