

Inspection report for Wath Victoria Children's Centre

Local authority	Rotherham
Inspection number	383610
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Date of previous inspection	Not applicable
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Linked school if applicable	106887 Wath Victoria Primary school
Linked early years and childcare, if applicable	EY312976 Wath Victoria Children's Centre

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 the acting head of centre and staff, local authority, members of the advisory board, health professionals, statutory partner organisations and parents.

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

Information about the centre

Wath Victoria Children's Centre is a phase one children's centre. It was designated in 2006. The children's centre is based within the grounds of Wath Victoria Primary School. At present there are temporary management arrangements in place. A newly appointed primary school headteacher will take responsibility for the leadership and management of the children's centre in May 2012. There are three primary schools in the reach area all offering nursery education. In addition, there is one private provider of childcare and eleven childminders.

Wath Victoria Children's Centre serves children aged from birth to five years and their families. It offers family support, integrated childcare and early learning. There are significant levels of deprivation in the reach area. The centre serves families of which 80% live in one of the 30% most deprived areas of the country. The reach area comprises an ex-mining community, with a pattern of large extended families and has high levels of unemployment.

The strategic management of the centre is the responsibility of the governing body of Wath Victoria Primary School, which is commissioned by Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council to provide the children's centre service. An advisory board provides support and guidance to the centre. The board has an independent chair, who is also a member of the governing body. Other members include a local headteacher, parents and other professionals. The centre has one family support worker and two community outreach workers who deliver services from the centre and from other sites within the reach area. They work in partnership with other agencies to deliver a programme of family support.

In February 2012, 522 children from birth to five years live in the reach area, of which 92% are registered, and 52% are actively engaged with the centre, 57% from the most disadvantaged parts of the reach area. The number of children under five years living in households dependent on workless benefits is 27%. Most families are of White British heritage. Children enter the Early Years Foundation Stage provision with skills and knowledge below those expected for their age. The childcare provision on site is subject to a separate inspection. A maximum of 40 children may attend the centre with no more than 12 children under the age of two years and the inspection report is available 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

Wath Victoria Children's Centre meets the needs of its community well and delivers good provision. All outcomes for parents, children and users are good.

The centre is at the heart of its community and is a friendly and welcoming place. A wide range of services for parents and children are planned and offered in conjunction with partners. Growing numbers of families are being actively engaged in the centre. They are improving their skills in developing a healthy lifestyle and enjoying the activities offered.

Successful strategies have been employed to improve significantly both the use of the centre and outcomes for families. The community outreach workers and family support worker are particularly effective in meeting need through careful research, partnership and a

supportive programme of home visits. This approach has resulted in a 100% engagement with teenage mums. The next priority is to further improve the participation of dads and male carers, and other groups whose circumstances have made them hard to reach. Some increased activities at new venues are being offered to attract male parents. For example, the centre has begun offering one Saturday morning session aimed at this group to increase their involvement. Centre staff are planning to develop greater flexibility by running more sessions at various venues throughout the day to meet need.

An innovative programme to support and develop volunteers has resulted in many adults improving their employability and self-confidence and is making a considerable contribution to the life of the community. Currently 18 volunteers are involved in centre activities, gaining experience that leads directly to employment, further or higher education.

The centre provides a safe environment and good safeguarding arrangements are evident throughout the centre and embedded well into all practice. A high priority is given to safeguarding and staff have a good awareness through regular training and updates provided. The centre promotes an inclusive approach to children, parents and celebrates diversity. Children and parents with disability are particularly well supported through individualised activities and resources.

A multi-agency approach, especially with health professionals, is highly effective. Partners are very positive about the working relationship they have with the centre and contribute to the ongoing evaluation of joint activities. Parents' views are considered and parents are well represented on the advisory board. The centre has identified that it must continue to identify ways in which it can gain the views of all users including those from the hard-to-reach families in the reach area.

Centre staff use data well to identify need and set targets and priorities, in line with the strategic priorities set by the governing body and local authority. Detailed reports from the children's centre staff ensure that the advisory board is well informed and can set an appropriate level of challenge. Outcomes for families are good and improving and where targets have not been met, in relation to male parent involvement, some significant improvement has been made. The interim management team is ambitious and committed to further improvement. The centre's capacity for sustained improvement is good.

What does the centre need to do to improve further?

Recommendations for further improvement

- Build on the existing range of services to meet the needs of all groups by:
 - developing further activities at a range of venues and times
 - developing the provision available to male parents to increase their engagement with the centre.
- Continue to work alongside partners to understand the needs and requirements in the area in order to more actively engage with the most hard-to-reach groups

- Continue to encourage parents and carers to take an active role in the running of the centre by developing more ways of engaging parents to voice their needs, aspirations and interests

How good are outcomes for families?

2

All outcomes for centre users are good. There is good take-up and attendance at a range of activities and this is having a positive impact on parents' understanding of the importance of a healthy lifestyle for themselves and their children. In order to counter child obesity children are provided with fruit and healthy snacks. Exercise is successfully promoted through 'Buggy Walks' for parents and an attractive outdoor space provides challenging play opportunities for the children. A wide range of support services has led to improved outcomes in breastfeeding and engagement with young families with circumstances that make them vulnerable. These include pre-birth and new birth home visits, 'ante-natal fayres', baby clinics, weaning parties, a 'breast buddies' group and baby massage. All appropriate health partners attend the centre to provide a holistic and effective support network for families.

All centre users report that the centre is a warm and welcoming place, where they feel safe and their children can flourish. Children behave well and have a good understanding of how to keep safe. Outreach and family support workers undertake home visits and support families to ensure their homes are safe and hazard free. One parent said, 'I can't believe how it's changed at home, it's so calm'. The centre offers very good crisis support and works with other agencies to ensure that children and their families are kept safe with early intervention. The centre and staff make good use of the Common Assessment Framework (CAF) and work effectively with those children subject to a child protection plan.

Children and adults enjoy learning and achieve well. Parents improve their parenting skills and develop their self-confidence and self-esteem through programmes offered at the centre. Many families are clearly improving their economic skills and readiness for employment through the strong partnership with Jobcentre Plus. Children are well prepared for transition to school, with tracking and profiling systems demonstrating good progress, often from low starting points. An increasing number of children are achieving 78 points or more on the Early Years Foundation Stage Profile. A project focusing on two-year-olds has ensured that good improvements are made for children who have been identified as having particular needs or from disadvantaged backgrounds.

The children's centre plays a pivotal role in its community, offering a full range of integrated services in a non-threatening and welcoming environment. Many parents are undertaking volunteer roles and some are already using their skills within the centre to benefit themselves and their community. Parents are interviewed for the role, receive a full induction and undertake training. 'Staff are very supportive, they treat us as a member of

staff and we get the training we need' is a comment made by one of the parents. There is a real sense of ownership, with users talking passionately about 'their' centre and the difference it has made to their lives.

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

The centre meets the needs of its community well because centre staff have an in-depth understanding of their community, with 98% of families in the reach area being registered with the centre, and 52% being actively involved. Outreach programmes are particularly effective in identifying, supporting and securing the engagement of families most at risk. The programmes respond to assessed need and there is a very strong commitment from staff to ensure that all community needs are met. The centre staff are aware that it has been difficult to engage successfully with male parents and are developing clear strategies and activities to attract this target group. A range of strategies are being developed to meet the needs of the most hard-to-reach groups, including a small number of families from Eastern Europe. There is clear evidence of partners working very effectively to ensure that assessments, including those carried out under the CAF and assessments of disabled children and those with special educational needs are robust and well-informed.

The centre promotes purposeful learning well. Parents welcome the opportunity to come together in groups to learn about parenting in different and engaging ways. Parents have particularly enjoyed the parenting programme group which has helped considerably with addressing problematic behaviour. 'He got a bit bad with his behaviour; the course helped me a lot'. The baby massage and the imagination library, alongside visits to the farm and to the seaside, are fun and provide parents with the opportunity to get together and discuss their children's development in a comfortable and welcoming atmosphere. The centre celebrates achievement well and helps to raise aspirations of children and parents. Users grow in confidence and develop and extend their personal and social skills well.

The quality of care, guidance and support is good with a personalised service offered to families. The family support and outreach service is flexible and very responsive. This approach is particularly effective when meeting the needs of families and individuals in crisis. The delivery of toys and a food hamper at Christmas when money was very tight was a lifeline for one family. Good information, advice and guidance are offered by a range of agencies, which impact positively on users' outcomes. Jobcentre Plus has a presence in the centre and a mobile information unit has been developed to offer information when staff are not available. The centre displays information and guidance on a range of health related issues, including smoking cessation, alcohol and drug misuse, and more sensitive information regarding domestic abuse and sexual health is displayed confidentially in toilet facilities and washrooms within the centre.

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

Governance and accountability arrangements are effective. There are clear links between strategic planning and service provision. Comprehensive data now provide a basis for good target setting and monitoring. The advisory board is composed of a wide range of individuals with appropriate levels of skills and experience. The board is chaired effectively by an independent user and parents are well represented on it. The board reports regularly and appropriately to the school's governing body which has the strategic management responsibility for the children's centre. There are effective levels of scrutiny and challenge in place, with reports on performance being presented to each monthly meeting. The supervision of safeguarding and financial management is effective. The centre provides good value for money.

Managers and staff are enthusiastic, motivated and committed to improvement. A temporary management structure is in place but this has not prevented the acting head of centre being highly effective and ambitious to promote the centre. All staff receive regular supervision and a regular and supportive performance monitoring process is in place. Good professional development opportunities ensure that staff develop their skills and share experience effectively. The self-evaluation process is inclusive and the judgements made in the self-evaluation document are accurate with managers and staff knowing the area they serve well. Target setting has improved significantly and all staff are committed to achieving targets and securing improvement.

The centre is a pleasant and inclusive place where all users are treated with respect. The centre promotes equality and diversity well. Resources to support learning are good, especially for disabled children and those with special educational needs. Makaton is used to

support learning and visual timetables are on display to support those with literacy difficulties. Volunteers have developed an effective support group for parents of children with Asperger's or who are on the Autistic spectrum.

The centre's arrangements for safeguarding children and vulnerable adults are good and staff are well trained. The highest priority is given to safeguarding and all policies and procedures are consistently implemented. Effective risk assessment procedures are followed and there are good recruitment and vetting procedures in place. Strong partnerships provide an integrated approach ensuring that families, and target groups in particular, have more opportunities in life and improved outcomes. Families using the centre are able to influence the shaping of provision. Centre staff are strengthening consultation mechanisms to get the views of more users including those who have a more limited connection with the centre.

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	2
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

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

The Ofsted inspection for the linked school, Wath Victoria Primary School, took place concurrently and the findings were taken into consideration.

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Summary for centre users

We inspected the Wath Victoria Children's Centre on 23 and 24 February 2012. We judged the centre as good overall.

During our visit, we looked at the centre and resources and spoke to staff. We enjoyed particularly the chance to talk with many of you during our inspection of the centre. You told us how friendly and welcoming the centre is and how helpful and supportive the staff are. You told us that you now have a better understanding of how children learn, and you feel more confident in encouraging positive behaviour. You appreciate that your views are taken into account in developing activities in the centre and you are listened to. You also told us that you felt more confident in dealing with many of the issues facing you.

Your children are progressing well in their communication skills and personal and social development. The centre is a safe environment and there are many opportunities for you to make new friends and learn new things. You told us that you found some of the parenting programmes particularly useful. Above all you told us how much you and your children enjoy the activities.

You feel well supported by the centre. We know that you also appreciate that staff come and visit you in your homes to offer help and support. The centre is good at working with partners, particularly in health, so that you can get a full programme of support that meets your individual needs.

You appreciate the many activities offered at the centre. We were impressed with the information, advice and guidance offered at the centre. You told us how much you appreciated the opportunity to get health advice, support for breastfeeding, and information on job opportunities, all in the same place.

The centre itself is warm and friendly and you told us it makes a real difference to your lives. The opportunity to become a volunteer has made a real difference to a number of you and given you that first step into employment or into further or higher education.

The staff at the centre are very committed to making the centre even better. We have asked them to consider even more ways of attracting new groups to the centre, particularly dads. We asked them to offer activities at different times of the week and at other centres so more of you can become involved. We have also asked them to make sure that everyone can get really involved in the running of the centre.

Thank you very much for your welcome. We enjoyed talking with you and wish you all well for the future.

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