

Inspection report for Hirst Wood Nursery School & Children's Centre

Local authority	Bradford
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Date of previous inspection	Not applicable
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Linked school if applicable	Hirst Wood Nursery School 107186
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 maintained nursery 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 centre staff and talked to parents, members of the advisory board, an external consultant, representatives of the local authority and partner organisations.

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

Information about the centre

Hirst Wood Nursery School & Children's Centre is co-located within a nursery in the village of Saltaire in Bradford. The centre originally opened as a phase two centre but in 2010 was re-designated as a phase three with a reduced reach area. Services offered include early years education, family support services, outreach support, learning activities for adults and employment advice and guidance. The area served by the centre is a mix of high and low level deprivation. Most families in the area live in privately owned houses. The percentage of children under four years within in the top 30% level of deprivation is about 42% compared with 69% for the rest of Bradford. The percentage of children living in households dependent on workless benefits is around 17.8%.

The majority of families in the reach area are of White British heritage. However, there are a small number of families from minority ethnic groups. The most recently available data suggest that the percentage of adults with high level qualifications in the area is above the rate for the rest of Bradford. Governance of the centre is the responsibility of the local

authority and it has the support of an advisory board. On entry to early years provision, children's levels are slightly below age related expectations.

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

'I'm extremely grateful to have such a wonderful resource on my doorstep' was the view of one parent. This same sentiment was expressed in different ways by other parents who think very highly of the centre. They were keen to share their views with inspectors. The centre serves its community of families well.

The core staff team of three part-time staff are highly committed, well managed and passionate about improving the lives of families. They have worked very hard to increase participation rates. Consequently, attendance rates are high with waiting lists for some activities. Outcomes for families are good and constantly improving. 'The centre played a vital role in the well-being of my children' was the comment from one parent. This illustrates well the positive impact of the centre. The needs of families, particularly in relation to their emotional health are well met through effective links with health professionals. Educational outcomes for children are good. Data show that children who attend the centre perform exceptionally well on exit from the Early Years Foundation Stage. The range of activities offered to parents is good and the centre promotes learning about child development well. A variety of workshops which cover topics such as 'encouraging positive behaviour' and 'learning through play', help parents better support their children's development. Outreach work is extremely effective in reaching families in the community whose circumstances make them vulnerable.

One of the impressive strengths of the centre is its focus on safeguarding. The promotion of home safety is excellent. Practical resources to ensure families can make their homes safer environments for children are excellent. Safeguarding messages are rigorously reinforced at the start of sessions and statutory requirements are exceeded. The centre has made an excellent investment in safeguarding training. As a result, staff have a wide range of knowledge and understanding of safeguarding issues that are relevant to their reach area.

The centre has excellent risk assessment systems for services and activities. These are well publicised to staff, families and visitors to the centre. Equality, diversity and inclusion are promoted well. Scores for children who are in the lowest 20% of achievement across the Early Years Foundation Stage are improving significantly. As a result, the gap between those children and the rest is narrowing.

Evaluation is an effective and rigorous process that leads to secure improvement. However, cumulative findings from evaluations of some activities are not always well documented. Performance management of the centre through the advisory board and local authority managers is a rigorous process. As a result of this and the good quality leadership and management, the centre's capacity for improvement is good.

What does the centre need to do to improve further?

Recommendations for further improvement

- Local authority to continually review the impact of increased demand for services on the level of resources.
- Enhance the existing good quality evaluation process by ensuring findings from all evaluations of activities are well documented.

How good are outcomes for families?

2

The centre works well with health professionals and also with a local health charity to promote healthy lifestyles. Families benefit from attending sessions such as 'Fit, Fun and Fruity' sessions and 'Healthy Happy Babies'. 'It's encouraged my child to try out food she would not normally touch at home' was the positive comment from one parent who attended healthy eating sessions. Parents learn how to prepare healthy meals for their children and to do so in a cost effective way. The centre offers good support to families for breastfeeding and this is contributing to the higher than average breastfeeding rates in the area. Furthermore, obesity rates in the area have reduced significantly and at a faster rate than Bradford, from 8.3% in 2009/10 to 4.8% in 2010/11.

The percentage of children in the reach area who achieve 78 points across the Early Years Foundation Stage is 73%. This figure is much higher than the average for Bradford and for England. The gap between children in the lowest achieving 20% across the Early Years Foundation Stage and the rest has narrowed significantly. Children enjoy their learning and develop good personal and social skills through attending activities such as 'Stay and Play' and 'Tuneful Tots.' Parents also make good progress in their personal development and many comment about their gains in confidence as a result of attending activities at the centre. They also use skills and techniques learnt from structured parenting programmes to improve their parenting skills. This has a positive impact on the behaviour of their children.

The centre's promotion of safety for families is excellent. During initial home visits from a family support worker, parents are provided with an excellent pack of home safety resources which includes a first aid kit, cupboard locks and safety plugs. Parents appreciate the resources and use them to make their homes safer environments. At the time of inspection, there were no children in the area subject to child protection plans. However, staff use the Common Assessment Framework exceptionally well to meet the needs of families when they arise. The outstanding impact of first aid learning for parents is well illustrated with the experiences of parents who have been able to apply their learning to emergency situations involving their children. Parents are actively involved in the governance of the centre. For example, a parent acts as chair for the advisory board. Parents are also involved in decision making through their roles on the active parents' forum. As a result, they influence the planning and delivery of provision. The behaviour of children is good and positive behaviour is actively promoted by all staff.

Unemployment rates are not as high in the reach area as the rest of Bradford. The most recently available statistics as well as local intelligence indicate that compared to other parts of Bradford, qualifications levels of adults are high. Due to the effective links with outreach workers from Jobcentre Plus the centre responds well to parents who need guidance and support about employment. As a result many parents have progressed onto training courses as part of their preparation for returning to work. The economic stability of other families has also been improved by personalised guidance about home budgeting.

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	1
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 assessment of needs of families and of the community is good. Centre staff use data and their links with a wide range of partners effectively to identify needs. Staff have a good understanding of the needs of a community that on the surface do not appear to be

affected by significant social issues. However, staff and their partners probe beneath the surface to identify areas of need and to locate families whose circumstances make them vulnerable. Working in partnership with a local charity organisation the centre provides effective and much needed outreach services. For example, they use a bus to take services out to areas where the needs are greatest.

Participation rates have risen significantly over the last year and are now at around 54%. The engagement of key target groups such as lone parents and fathers with the centre is good. Parents from all target groups have responded enthusiastically to activities such as 'Baby Yoga' and to 'Fun Days' which are offered during holiday periods. Photographic evidence captures well the sheer joy and fascination of children who attended a 'fun day' organised to allow them to see, touch and play with various animals.

The centre promotes learning well. Activities for children are well linked to the Early Years Foundation stage outcomes. Sessions, such as 'Stepping Stones', offer good quality preparation for children and their parents for the transition to school. Centre staff recognise the importance of developing parents' knowledge and skills so that they are better equipped to support their children. Activities such as 'learning through play' and 'heuristic play' help parents understand how to use play to promote learning. Additional activities such as 'baby massage' help parents learn how they can use different massaging techniques to deal with health problems such as colic and constipation.

'I don't feel alone as a parent' was the comment from one parent which illustrates well the impact of the good quality care, guidance and support offered at the centre. Parents feel safe to discuss personal problems with staff. When crises arise they receive either direct support from family support staff or are signposted to other agencies for support. Arrangements for support are well planned. Good quality initial and ongoing assessments of needs and effective action planning are used well to ensure families receive support that meets their individual needs. Staff focus on encouraging families to become independent users of services. Case studies demonstrate how many parents have progressed from needing home visit support to becoming independent users of universal services.

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

The quality of leadership and management is good at all levels. Advisory board members, managers and staff have a good understanding of their roles and responsibilities. They regularly use data to monitor performance. The self-evaluation process, peer review of the self-evaluation report, quarterly reviews and the 'annual conversation' are used well to help the centre identify its strengths and areas for improvement. Evaluation is a thorough process which is clearly linked to development planning. Ambitious targets are set for the centre and it is making good progress in meeting these targets, particularly in relation to increasing participation rates. Each activity is rigorously evaluated and linked to planning of provision. However, cumulative findings from evaluations of some activities are not always well documented to further enhance self-evaluation and planning of services. The centre works well with its wide range of partners from the private, statutory and voluntary sectors. As a result of this the centre, although small, is able to meet a wide range of needs within its community. The centre also recognises parents as partners and their views are highly valued. The 'You Said We Did' board reflects specific actions taken by the centre in response to parents' requests. As a result of good outcomes and good use of resources, value for money is good. However, as the centre has become more successful, increased demand from families has placed an additional strain on resources. This results in some families being placed on waiting lists for some activities.

Equality and inclusion are at the heart of the centre's work. The needs of families with disabled children and those with special educational needs are well met. For example, parents are trained to use the sensory room to add value to their children's play and learning. Good guidance and support is offered by the dedicated special educational needs co-ordinator who works across the locality. The centre's commitment to safeguarding is outstanding. Staff have received extensive training in a wide range of aspects linked to safeguarding of children and of vulnerable adults. They are well informed on how to support mental health issues, substance misuse, multi-agency working and domestic violence. As a result of extensive training and experience, staff are well equipped to deal with safeguarding issues when they arise. They prioritise early intervention to help improve outcomes for families. Criminal Records Bureau and other recruitment and vetting checks are rigorously carried out. The quality and use of risk assessments is exemplary.

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	1
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 findings from the concurrent inspection of the co-located nursery contributed to the centre judgements.

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Summary for centre users

We inspected the Hirst Wood Nursery School & Children's Centre on 13 to 14 March 2012. We judged the centre as good overall.

Many thanks, to those of you who went out of your way to meet with us or to write to us about your experiences. We appreciate your comments and the time you took from your busy lives to talk to us. We agree with you that your centre is a good centre. It offers a good service to families in the community and is making a real difference to many lives.

We like the range of activities that your centre offers to promote health and were able to sample some of the activities you enjoy such as the 'Fit, Fun & Fruity' and 'Tuneful Tot' sessions. We know from talking to you and from reading your evaluations, how much you enjoy these and many other sessions. We also know that many of you are learning much from the centre about how you can improve your own and children's health.

Sessions to help you develop your parenting skills are well attended. Some of you told us about different techniques you learnt from the parenting course that you now use at home. We also know from looking at statistics and other evidence that children who attend the centre do very well when they move on to school. This is something to be commended.

We were pleased to meet some fathers during our visit and we know that many of you are actively involved in activities at the centre. Some of you are also involved on the advisory board and help influence decisions. The way the centre promotes equality and inclusion for fathers and for families who have disabled children and those from a different culture is good.

You all told us how safe you feel at the centre and also how you feel safe to talk to staff about personal problems. Staff at the centre work very hard to support families and they do this in a variety of ways. For example, we know some of you have received home visits or have been referred to other professionals for support and guidance.

During our visit we could see that the safety of families is a very high priority for staff. They do everything they can to make sure families are not only safe at the centre but also safe at home. We were very impressed with the home safety packs that families receive and we know you like them too.

We know that space at the centre is limited and we also know that the staff team is a small team. That's why we've asked the local authority to keep monitoring how resources are being used. We were pleased to read the comments so many of you have made about sessions you and your children have attended. This helps the staff when they're planning activities. However, we'd like the centre to make sure they include findings from all the evaluations they carry out, in the reports they produce.

Once again, many thanks for giving up your time to talk to us during the inspection. We wish you and your families all the very best for the future.

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