

Inspection report for Quarry Mount Children's Centre

Local authority	Leeds
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Centre governance	Leeds Local Authority
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Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected
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Linked school if applicable	Quarry Mount Primary School URN 107889
Linked early years and childcare, if applicable	Quarry Mount Children's Centre EY103260

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.

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.

This inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors.

The inspectors held meetings with centre staff, local authority representatives, family outreach worker, health professionals, social care, extended services, counsellors, parents and carers and representatives from Barnardos, Leeds City College, Jobcentre Plus.

They observed the centre's work and activities such as messy pups, the friendship group and English as second language classes, and the childcare setting and looked at a range of relevant documentation.

Information about the centre

Quarry Mount is an inner city children's centre in the Woodhouse area of Leeds which offers the full core services. The children's centre is a phase one centre which was opened in 2005. The centre is governed by the Leeds Local Authority and an advisory board is involved in decision making of the strategic planning of the centre. Surrounding the children's centre are areas of woodland, parkland and wasteland which mean that some areas are not populated. The children centre serves an area of high deprivation. Housing in the area serves a diverse community with a high proportion of people, 51% from black minority ethnic communities. Approximately 14 different languages are spoken in the area. The centre also serves a transient population, as overseas students arrive and leave for course or family requirements. Information from West Yorkshire Police note high levels of anti-social behaviour and burglary in the area.

There are 311 families claiming benefits and 307 children aged under 5 living in the Quarry Mount area, of those 173 are in the lowest 30% deprivation indices. The rate of worklessness in the city is 2.7% compared with that of the Quarry Mount area which is 6.3%.

Children enter the onsite 67 place nursery with skills, knowledge and understanding below expectations for their age and 48% of children leave the Foundation Stage achieving 78+ points in the Early Learning Goals.

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 users and the wider community

2

Capacity for sustained improvement

The centre's capacity for sustained improvement, including the quality of its leadership and management

2

Main findings

Quarry Mount Children's Centre offers a good service for its users and the care, guidance and support it offers is outstanding. The centre is welcoming and friendly and strong and trusting relationships have been forged. Good relationships, with a wide range of partners and users, enable the centre's work to be effective and valuable. The activities within the centre are well attended and users have a clear voice in shaping the services that are delivered. The majority of children in the Quarry Mount reach area access the centre and are well supported. Inspectors spoke to a number of parents and carers who were prolific in telling the inspectors how the centre had helped them and changed their lives.

The centre has undergone a number of staff changes in the senior leadership team over the last two to three years due to a number of maternity leaves and some long term sickness. The centre has a strong and committed manager who has ensured these disruptions have had minimum impact on the services the centre delivers. The centre has good management systems in place that feed down from the local authority. These systems use data and evaluations to shape the developments but are not yet fully and effectively in place. An Advisory Board and a Parents Forum are in their infancy and not yet fully effective. The centre has already started to consider its sustainability and this has had a direct impact on its economic stability, through budgeting and access to alternative funding. Many of the students in the reach area are unable to gain access to public funding which occasionally hinders the work the centre may do with this group.

The centre is a safe and welcoming environment. The centre ensures that all systems for safeguarding users in the form of checking visitors and staff, training, policies and procedures are robust in order to protect staff, children and parents and carers. Numbers of some vulnerable users in the area are low, such as teenage parents and

children with disabilities, but the centre is aware of their needs and makes efforts to contact them, such as through new birth visits.

The centre works well in partnership with a number of agencies to ensure that children who are in need of targeted support, through the Common Assessment Framework and child protection plans, receive the required support. The family outreach worker at the centre goes to great lengths to reach users and support them alongside other agencies if further guidance is needed. The issue of domestic violence and domestic abuse are prevalent in the area and the centre has made a real impact on parents, carers and children's lives by their timely and sensitive intervention.

The centre serves an area of high black minority ethnics and ensures that services meet the needs of these users. Classes for English for speakers of other languages are well attended at the centre and enable parents to improve their skills in language acquisition and their relationships with their children. The format of these classes is shaped directly by the needs of the users. The area around Quarry Mount serves a large number of parents who are currently without employment. The centre supports these users by providing and signposting them to support services and offering some form of training. This training is geared towards promoting personal development and for the needs of mothers. The centre is unable to demonstrate how its work is helping these users find employment and undertake accredited training which may lead to them being more economically stable. The courses offered at the centre are currently non accredited. The centre is aware that providing accredited courses may help users become better qualified and provide greater opportunities for their future.

What does the centre need to do to improve further?

Recommendations for further improvement

- The local authority should ensure governance and accountability arrangements are effective by:
 - embedding the new Advisory Board and Parents' Forum making sure they are challenging and supporting the centre management and the local authority and having a voice in shaping the provision within the centre. Ensure systems already in place maintain accountability at all levels by enabling line managers to be clearly challenged and answerable for their actions within the structure of the centre.
- The centre should improve economic stability and independence for families by:
 - developing employability skills for adults through the availability and signposting to accredited courses such as first aid, numeracy skills and literacy skills and by improving skills for the future for children by raising the level of attainment of children in key skills, such as literacy and problem solving.

How good are outcomes for users?

2

The centre goes to great lengths to give guidance and support to users regarding physical and mental health issues. Parents and carers with mental health issues have had support from the centre which has been life changing. Staff have undergone training and covered a number of programmes which have directly impacted positively on the lives of users. The centre has worked with parents of children with obesity and those with low weight issues. Parents note how the centre has been 'fantastic, easy to approach' and 'helped me a lot, if we didn't have this I don't know what we would have done'. Children within the centre are happy and well behaved and learn in a safe, welcoming and purposeful environment. They are aware of their own safety within the centre and act accordingly although; their knowledge of dangers outside the centre, such as road safety and stranger danger is less well grounded. Children enter the centre from low starting points and make satisfactory progress which the childcare element of the centre is beginning to address. Systems have been put in place to follow children's development more closely. The centre has had a positive impact on the safety of its users. ROSPA (Home Safety) checks have had a direct impact on improving safety at home with 30 houses being fitted with safety equipment. The centre helps develop users' understanding of safety by highlighting national issues, such as the seven deaths that were caused by cords from window blinds and by holding safety events that have helped inform parents and carers on issues of travelling in cars safely and safe internet use. Parents and carers have noted the 'staff are brilliant' and 'always have a smile'. There are case studies of parents being supported whilst being victims and perpetrators of both domestic violence and domestic abuse. Parents and carers note how the intervention of staff has 'changed my life'. They have been supported with help to re-home their families and other cases have shown how families have been guided to counselling which has reunited families. A women's refuge in the area means the centre work closely with some vulnerable women and their children. Children on child protection plans have been moved on to family packages as a direct result of the intervention of the centre's work with the families. Looked after children are able to have contact with parents at the children centre in an environment that is familiar and safe and non-threatening to all involved. The centre works closely with a number of agencies to support children and families through the use of the Common Assessment Framework.

Courses for parents and carers who speak English as an additional language are held on a regular basis and attendance for these courses is good. Seven of the users attending these courses have moved onto some form of further training at other centres and evidence shows the gains in personal development. Parents and carers attending these courses speak of feeling more confident when out in public and that they now sing to their children, read them stories and help them complete worksheets from the childcare facility in English. These courses are generally attended by mothers. There are few opportunities for mothers and fathers to attend courses that may lead to some form of accreditation. Support is available from Jobcentre Plus and Jobs Skills to help parents on the path to economic stability. However, there is little evidence that this is having an impact. Relationships within

the centre are good. Users are confident in telling the centre of their needs through a variety of formal and informal channels. The Messy Pups activity and International Day were instigated as a direct result of parental feedback and involvement. Parents and carers note that centre staff are 'easy to approach and welcome what we have to say'.

The extent to which children, including those from vulnerable 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 users 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 users contribute to decision-making and governance of the centre	2
The extent to which children are developing skills for the future and parents are developing economic stability and independence including access to training	3

How good is the provision?

2

The provision is good and the care, guidance and support outstanding. Staff have undergone a wide and diverse range of training providing sound knowledge in a number of areas. Training in the Common Assessment Framework enables them to work with a wide range of agencies to meet the needs of families and their children. Discussions with other agencies and parents and carers supports the good work the centre does with those children subject to Common Assessment Framework processes.

The centre takes a keen interest in the views of partnership agencies and its users to shape the provision. The Stay and Play sessions are a direct result of the views of parents and carers, partners and the centre's knowledge of its users. The system for referrals and causes for concern are firmly in place and all partners have a good knowledge of protocols to ensure families are protected and supported. Other agencies note how active the centre is in making referrals to appropriate agencies and embracing support when a referral is made to them. All users spoken to say that they are impressed with the quality of the provision provided. The centre is aware of the different vulnerable groups they serve and their needs. The outreach worker makes considerable efforts to join with other agencies, such as health services, to reach these groups, no matter how few in number they are. The centre concentrates its activities mainly with the larger groups of vulnerable users. The majority of activities are consistently well attended. A minority of activities, for example, the Friendship group and counselling have spasmodic attendance. The achievements of

its users are not routinely celebrated and initial achievements are not consistently built on to further users' learning.

The impact of the work the family outreach worker engages in alongside the centre and other agencies is outstanding. Inspectors spoke to a number of users who commented that the support provided by the centre was 'second to none' and that staff are always 'friendly and helpful'. The outreach worker has been instrumental in providing users with support in the home through safety home checks and home visits when babies are born. This contact has helped users feel confident and knowledgeable about what the centre has to offer. These visits provide a secure awareness of the specific needs of individuals in the centre's reach area and help determine the best ways to provide help and support to them. Two year funding places are allocated in consultation with carers and other agencies to make sure they are provided to those who need them most. The inspectors were able to gain numerous examples of case studies where the centre has been able to support families in crisis. Users who were; victims and perpetrators of domestic violence, experienced bereavement, have physical and mental health issues and who needed help with children's developmental delay and behavioural issues, note the support the centre gave them was excellent. The centre takes a very individual approach to the help it gives its users. It assesses the users' needs and gains support from appropriate agencies if the centre is unable to provide it. Parents note the support they receive as 'brilliant' that it is 'fantastic' and 'was so much appreciated'.

The effectiveness of the assessment of the needs of children, parents and other users	2
The extent to which the centre promotes purposeful learning, development and enjoyment for all users	2
The extent to which the range of services, activities and opportunities meet the needs of users and the wider community	2
The quality of care, guidance and support offered to users within the centre and the wider community	1

How effective are the leadership and management?

2

The leadership and management of the centre are good. Day-to-day arrangements are understood by all and long term absences have had little impact on the management of the centre due to the dedicated and committed centre manager and family outreach worker. Occasionally staff absences and new appointments have meant that staff skills are not always most effectively deployed. The whole leadership team, although some only just in post, are motivated and keen to seek further improvements in the centre and the work it undertakes. All managers are aware of the weaknesses of the centre and these are being addressed in action plans.

Systems are in place; supervision, reflective logs, challenge and support meetings and annual conversations to ensure leaders analyse the work they do. There are also a range of monitoring activities which relate to provision and outcomes and the centre works closely with the local authority to correlate all the information. Data has not always been readily available but is now becoming more so. A large amount of data is shared between the centre and the local authority to shape the services. The centre is still trying to access more centre focused data on certain aspects of its work, such as accidental and non-accidental hospital admissions for children aged under five. The centre routinely seeks the views of users via formal and informal methods and the family outreach worker engages well with the community to gain their opinions. There are clear links between the evaluations and the action plans which shape the centre's priorities. There is also clear evidence of evaluation shaping change, such as Messy Pups and adaptations made for the classes for those who speak English as an additional language. Parents note strong levels of satisfaction with the services the centre provides.

The advisory board is in its infancy and the parent's forum is in the process of being developed. Parents, carers and partners are keen to make the advisory board a working party which they anticipate will help shape the centre's provision. Partners already have a clear knowledge of the priorities of the centre and it is anticipated that the advisory board will strengthen this relationship further. However, the local authority has not ensured that the systems in place work well enough to hold all levels of management to account in their challenge and support of the centre's work to secure improvements.

The centre has worked extremely well with other partner agencies to provide users with a wide range of activities and advice. A number of case studies show how support from the centre and other agencies such as Barnardos and the health visitor have impacted positively on users. Partners are well aware of the priorities of the centre. The centre is committed to securing an element of sustainability and has already made an impact on this through careful management of resources. The accommodation of the centre is very well used with the use of rooms carefully planned so that the needs of users are most efficiently met. The centre keeps records of the participation rates of sessions so that they can be adapted to meet the needs of users. The policies, practices and displays within the centre celebrate and promote the diverse population the centre serves. Fun Feast and International Day events celebrate the diversity of the population and bring together all users to enjoy and celebrate each others cultures. These events were extremely well attended with all generations and genders of families attending. The centre is aware it needs to close the achievement gap by raising aspirations and providing opportunities for further accomplishments. Discrimination and complaints are tackled appropriately and effectively.

Staff are dedicated to ensuring that all users are safe. A range of training in child protection, Common Assessment Framework, domestic violence, Don't Shake the Baby, home safety checks and safeguarding give staff confidence and knowledge of how to address the sensitive needs of users. Criminal Record Bureau checks and

other vetting procedures are all in place and robust. Staff are very aware of the protocol for reporting any concerns they may have and senior staff are active in making referrals if required.

The extent to which governance, accountability, professional supervision and day to day management arrangements are clear and understood	3
The extent to which ambitious targets drive improvement, provision is integrated and there are high expectations for users and the wider community	2
The extent to which resources are used and managed efficiently and effectively to meet the needs of users and the wider community	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 evaluation is used to shape and improve services and activities	2
The extent to which partnerships with other agencies ensure the integrated delivery of the range of services the centre has been commissioned to provide	2
The extent to which the centre supports and encourages the wider community 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

None.

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaining about inspections', which is available from our website: www.ofsted.gov.uk. If you would like us to send you a copy of the guidance, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

Summary for centre users

We inspected the Quarry Mount Children's Centre on 27 and 28 January 2011. We judged the centre as good overall. There are some elements of the centre that are outstanding. Thank you to those of who came to speak to us, you were very happy to do so and made us feel very welcome.

Your opinions helped us to come to our judgments about your children's centre. Many of you commented how the centre staff have changed your lives. You were able to tell us what a real difference the staff make by helping you cope in times of crisis. Many of you spoke of how the centre has helped you cope with the behavioural challenges of your children, health issues, dealing with bereavement or domestic violence and of helping you seek employment. We saw that many of you took up the opportunity to improve your knowledge of English and the centre adapted these sessions to make sure your particular needs are met. You told us of how you are now confident enough to read to your children and sing to them in English following these courses. You also told us how your children enjoy attending the onsite childcare.

The centre works extremely well with a wide range of agencies, such as health visitors and Barnardos to make sure they are supporting you as individuals. We consider that following this partnership and the comments made from you that the care and support the centre gives you is outstanding. You commented how staff have been into your homes to help you provide a safe environment for your children. You also told us how they were available night and day to support you and without their help you would not be in the place you are today. We were given many examples of ways in which the centre helped you distance yourself from instances of domestic violence or at times work through these circumstances to help your family stay together.

The children's centre is aware that they do not give you enough opportunities to gain qualifications that will lead to certificates which may help you in your quest for employment. We recognise from your comments how much the courses on offer have helped you in your personal development. Many of you are supported by Jobcentre Plus and Job Skills which are available at the centre but none of you are able to tell us that this has helped you directly to be more economically independent. We have asked the centre to improve this aspect of their provision to support you in your economic stability in the future. We have also asked the centre to improve the standards the children achieve particularly in literacy and problem solving.

Staff work very well together as a team, are committed to improving the centre and determined to make sure the activities and support they provide is based on your needs and wants. Staff gain a great deal of information from you and from information about the area around the centre from the local authority. They use this information well to make sure you are receiving the support you need. There are a number of systems in place to make sure each level of management consider the needs of the centre. At the moment these systems work but are not fully effective in

making all levels of management accountable for the work they do. We have asked the local authority to look at this aspect of their work and improve on it.

We are aware that your advisory board has only just been formed and that you are in the process of developing a parents' forum. We have asked the local authority to support you in setting up these groups to make sure they work well. We hope that these arrangements will mean you are more involved in the children's centre work and you will have even more of a say of how it is organised. We know you are keen as parents and carers to make these committees work and you are as dedicated to support the centre as the centre is to support you.

We are very grateful for your help and we wish each of you happiness and every success for the future.

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