

# Inspection report for Parklands Children's Centre

Local authority	Leeds
Inspection number	366401
Inspection dates	2-3 February 2011
Reporting inspector	Rachael Flesher HMI

Centre governance	Leeds City Council
Centre leader	Kay Kendall
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected
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Linked school if applicable	Parklands Primary School
Linked early years and childcare, if applicable	512425 Parklands Children's Centre and Creche

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.

This inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and one early years inspector.

The inspectors held meetings with parents and carers, centre staff, representatives from professional partnerships, representatives from the advisory board and the local authority.

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

## Information about the centre

Parklands Children's Centre is situated on the first floor of a building on the site of Parklands Primary School, in the outer-city suburb of Seacroft in the east of Leeds. The centre is accessible to all by stairs and a lift. The early years provision is situated on the ground floor of the building.

The centre serves a community living in the nought to 17% most disadvantaged areas in the country. Families face issues of poor housing conditions, low basic skills and high levels of worklessness, social deprivation, drug and alcohol misuse, crime and domestic violence. The large majority of families in the centre's reach area are White British with a small but increasing percentage of families from minority ethnic groups who are often transient. The proportion of children who speak English as an additional language is rising but currently below the national average. There is an increasing population of Eastern European families in the area and most of these children are at the early stages of learning English. Tensions and conflicts are evident within the community, both within and between families.

Children enter the early years provision with skills that are much lower than those typically expected for their age.

Parklands Children's Centre has its own advisory board, which is made up of representatives from various professional partnerships and the local community,

parents and carers and centre staff. The children’s centre is governed by Leeds City council. The centre provides the full core offer.

The centre has an early years provision previously inspected by Ofsted in 2010. The report can be accessed at [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://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 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

The overall effectiveness of Parklands Children’s Centre is good leading to positive outcomes for users. Safeguarding is given high priority. Effective systems, policies and procedures are in place and adhered to by all concerned to assure the safety and well-being of children, other users and staff. Staff receive regular, good quality training and updates and are confident to carry out their roles and responsibilities to protect children. They are skilled in identifying any issues and referring to other agencies where necessary. Risks are assessed thoroughly and minimised accordingly. Some parents and carers have shared concerns regarding the safety of children when walking with them through the centre car park to the school but plans are in place to install a walkway in the very near future.

This is a very welcoming centre where the inclusion of all children and families is central to the centre’s vision. The centre has taken concerted action to promote equality and community cohesion and tackle discrimination. The centre articulates and pursues ambitious strategies for its particular groups of users who may be subject to discrimination and is effective in removing barriers to access. Working towards the Stephen Lawrence Award, and working in partnerships with other professionals has supported staff to develop their skills and understanding in this area. Users enjoy coming here and the centre has established itself at the heart of the community.

The relatively newly established advisory board has begun to provide support and challenge to the centre. The board consists of a wide range of representatives from partner agencies, however, parents and carers are low in number. There are some opportunities for parents and carers to contribute their views and be involved in the

decision making of the centre and in developing the range of provision. However, these are not yet fully developed.

Leadership and management are good. Self-evaluation provides the centre with an accurate understanding of strengths and weaknesses of the provision and clear plans for improvement are in place. However, a range of data and other sources of evidence provided by the local authority and partner services are not yet fully integrated into the self-evaluation process to help demonstrate the impact of services and activities on the outcomes for users, and to subsequently shape and improve services and activities.

The quality of care, guidance and support for young children, parents and carers and other users provided by the centre is excellent. There is very effective personalised family and parenting support for users, particularly through outreach visits, to develop the well-being of their families, particularly vulnerable families, across all outcomes. In times of crisis, families feel confident in turning to the centre and are exceptionally well supported.

The centre has taken an extremely active role in developing highly effective partnerships and information sharing systems with other agencies. This ensures a robust and appropriately coordinated approach to service delivery and contributes to improving outcomes for children and their families.

## **What does the centre need to do to improve further?**

### **Recommendations for further improvement**

- Improve evaluation procedures by further utilising all available evidence to fully demonstrate:
  - the impact of services and activities on the outcomes for users
  - how this is used to shape and improve services and activities.
  
- Ensure users are more involved in the decision making of the centre and in developing the range of provision by:
  - increasing parent and carer membership onto the advisory board
  - developing consultation methods to seek the views of users and the wider community
  - establishing a parent and carers forum.

## **How good are outcomes for users?**

<b>2</b>
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Effective arrangements are in place to ensure the safety and health of children and

other users. A strong emphasis is placed on promoting safe and healthy lifestyles and so children, as well as parents and carers, are developing a good understanding of how to keep themselves safe and healthy. The centre demonstrates good practice by providing healthy food, encouraging physical activity and active play, offering information on diet and nutrition and promoting breastfeeding in order to tackle obesity. One parent stated, 'The cookery group helped me cook meals for my family from fresh. I now cook 50% of the meals from fresh and from meals learnt on the course'. The wide range of on-site services provides easily accessible health services integrated with other support for families to promote good outcomes. This includes the highly valued and utilised counselling service, speech and language therapy, health visitor and the 'Mind, Body and Soul' programme. This particular programme positively supports the mental and physical well-being of vulnerable women in the area who face barriers to living healthy lifestyles and accessing health services. It also has a positive impact on the outcomes for these women.

Children using services at the centre are effectively safeguarded. Users state they 'feel safe and supported and very welcome' and that 'the centre is a safe haven. Staff have created a safe place for the community'. Families are confident to turn to the centre in times of crisis and the centre has supported many vulnerable families very well, including those facing issues of domestic violence. Profiles and case studies show the positive impact the centre has on outcomes for children subject to the Common Assessment Framework (CAF) process, looked after children and children subject to a child protection plan. It is reducing the number of those needing child protection plans, and preventing situations reaching crisis points, due to the early intervention and support provided by the family support team and outreach workers.

Home safety assessments, carried out by the family outreach workers, are an extremely well utilised and effective service. These visits are helping prevent accidents in the home through installing relevant and much-needed safety equipment. Parents and carers are well supported to develop their parenting skills, for example, through home visits, stay and play and toddler group sessions and training. The 'Managing and understanding children's behaviour' course has had positive impact on outcomes for users. Parents and carers state that their confidence and skills as parents have developed and they are learning how to play with their children and support their development. Children engage in positive behaviour and are developing positive relationships.

Children, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, make extremely good progress from their starting points in developing their skills for the future. Parents and carers report that their children have thrived and have 'come on in leaps and bounds'. The centre has been successful in raising the communication, language and literacy levels of children through the 'Every Child a Talker' programme and partnership working with the speech and language team as well as with parents and carers. Schools report that children arrive from the centre 'so eager to learn' and come well-prepared for school. Very strong transition arrangements are in place to ensure continuity and progression in children's learning and development as they move onto school.

Many users are developing their skills and confidence and achieving personal development goals, with most going on to access further learning. Some of the users stated that the centre 'builds self-worth', 'empowers' and 'raises aspirations'. Another said 'it's about changing our lifestyles and giving our children more chances'. Parents and carers are improving their economic stability and independence through the good range of information, advice and guidance provided by a range of services. Many are accessing training and some go on to secure employment. Families are beginning to develop high aspirations to achieve in the future with one parent stating 'I want to be financially independent and to provide for my children'. As a consequence, their children's well-being is improving.

Some parents and carers are engaged in the governance of the centre and participate in decision-making through their membership on the advisory board. The centre has some consultation methods in place with users to establish satisfaction levels and to identify the needs of the community. However, these are not yet fully developed to ensure all users and the wider community can communicate their views, for example, through a parents' and carers' forum. There are very good opportunities for meaningfully listening to children and encouraging them to share their views.

All children and families using the centre treat each other with respect and develop positive relationships. However, there are tensions and conflict between some families living in the community, the centre is aware of this. The centre is working hard to develop community cohesion, and through their work towards the Stephen Lawrence award, staff are becoming more confident in responding to racial and discriminatory incidents.

*These are the grades for the outcomes for users*

<b>The extent to which children, including those from vulnerable groups, are physically, mentally and emotionally healthy and families have healthy lifestyles</b>	2
<b>The extent to which children are safe and protected, their welfare concerns are identified and appropriate steps taken to address them</b>	2
<b>The extent to which all users enjoy and achieve educationally and in their personal and social development</b>	2
<b>The extent to which children engage in positive behaviour and develop positive relationships and users contribute to decision-making and governance of the centre</b>	2
<b>The extent to which children are developing skills for the future and parents are developing economic stability and independence including access to training</b>	2

## How good is the provision?

2
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The needs of families are assessed sensitively and tailored to individual needs. The centre works extremely well in partnerships with other agencies to ensure that assessments, such as those carried out under the CAF process and assessments of children with special educational needs and/or disabilities, are robust and well-informed and secure early intervention. The centre ensures parents and carers are involved at every stage when assessing, planning for and supporting the individual needs of children resulting in a coherent and consistent approach.

The centre has the highest success rate in Leeds for regular face-to-face contact with families on outreach visits. The family outreach workers are extremely tenacious and spend considerable time and effort establishing relationships with families, particularly the most vulnerable, to gain their trust and encourage them to share any issues they are facing. As a result, needs are identified and well-targeted support is provided through the highly effective partnership working to improve outcomes. This approach has been extremely effective in engaging and sustaining contact with often 'hard to reach' groups and home visits are highly valued by users. One parent stated 'they've been brilliant', and another, 'I've been able to discuss my concerns, problems and feelings without being judged'.

The quality and range of services offered by the centre, or on their behalf, are good and meet the needs of users, including target groups, well. This is due to the centre and partner services sharing an in-depth knowledge and understanding of the changing needs of the community and the location of vulnerable families. The centre has successfully balanced the provision of universal and targeted services with good and improving participation rates, resulting in improved outcomes for children and their families. The centre is flexible to the individual needs of families, ensuring equality of access for all users, for example, by providing flexible childcare arrangements and a crèche facility.

The centre promotes purposeful learning, development and enjoyment for all users well. Personal developments are celebrated and users show pride in their achievements. The outstanding quality, coordination and range of guidance and support empower parents and their children to improve individual and family outcomes.

*These are the grades for the quality of provision*

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

## How effective are the leadership and management?

2
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Governance and accountability arrangements and clear roles and responsibilities at most levels of leadership and management are very well established and understood by all. Safer recruitment procedures are followed and all relevant checks are made to ensure that all staff are suitable and safe to work with children. Staff are effectively deployed. Good professional supervision and management arrangements are in place to monitor the performance of staff and ensure ongoing professional development. The local authority checks on the performance of the children's centre through their annual conversations and ongoing monitoring. Staff and leaders routinely reflect on their practice and provision and have a good understanding of what they do well and what they need to improve, with clear plans in place to bring about improvement. However, systems for monitoring the impact on outcomes are not fully developed. The local authority and a range of partner services provide thorough data to support evidence of impact of the services and activities on the outcomes of children and their families, and also to identify the needs of the reach area. However, this information is not fully utilised by the centre management team in their evaluation and monitoring processes to provide rigorous evidence of impact, particularly in the long term.

Excellent information sharing systems with parents and carers are in place to ensure children are supported to develop to their full potential, both at home and at the centre, to promote continuity and progression. The centre places great importance on listening to children and seeking their views, although consultation methods are not as effective with adult users and the wider community.

Strong partnership working ensures an integrated approach to service delivery. The centre has actively encouraged partners to deliver their services on site, which has greatly improved partnership working, particularly in relation to early intervention and prevention work. The centre has the ability to work effectively with other agencies, sharing information to ensure all are informed and families receive the support they need swiftly, and this contributes to better outcomes for children and their families. One professional stated 'the children's centre is one of the best centres for communication links'. Partners are dependent on the excellent relationships the centre has established with the community, particularly the most vulnerable, to promote and encourage user engagement and break down barriers to access. Outcomes for key target groups are improving and gaps in engagement and achievement between groups of users are narrowing.

The centre uses and manages its available resources well to meet the needs of users and the wider community thereby providing good value for money. Resources are of high quality, particularly those used to support the development and progress of babies and young children. Space is extremely well utilised by a variety of partners who greatly value the high quality of the provision and facilities and the centre's



flexible approach to ensure the needs of the users are met. For example, the crèche and nursery facilities ensure that users are able to engage fully with the centre's services. Partners all state they feel part of the centre team, are supported extremely well and feel welcome.

*These are the grades for leadership and management<*

<b>The extent to which governance, accountability, professional supervision and day to day management arrangements are clear and understood</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which ambitious targets drive improvement, provision is integrated and there are high expectations for users and the wider community</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which resources are used and managed efficiently and effectively to meet the needs of users and the wider community</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which equality is promoted and diversity celebrated, illegal or unlawful discrimination is tackled and the centre fulfils its statutory duties</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness of the centre's policy, procedures and work with key agencies in safeguarding children and, where applicable, vulnerable adults</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which evaluation is used to shape and improve services and activities</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which partnerships with other agencies ensure the integrated delivery of the range of services the centre has been commissioned to provide</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>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</b>	<b>2</b>

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

Childcare is provided on site and an integral part of the children's centre. As the provision was not inspected at the same time as the children's centre the previous inspection report was taken into account.

The children's centre is on the site of Parklands Primary School. The school was not inspected at the same time as the children's centre therefore the previous inspection report was taken into account.

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](http://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](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk).

## Summary for centre users

We inspected Parklands Children's Centre on 2-3 February 2011. We judged the centre as good overall.

Thank you to those of you who contributed to the inspection. Like you, we found your children's centre to be very welcoming and friendly. Your children's centre has established itself at the heart of your community and everyone understands the needs of your community very well. The centre is fully aware of the tensions and conflicts within the community and has taken concerted action to promote equality and community cohesion and to tackle discrimination. You told us that you feel safe and supported and that the centre is a safe haven where staff have created a safe place for the community. Some of you shared concerns regarding the safety of children when walking through the centre car park to the school but plans are in place to install a walkway in the very near future. High priority is given to safeguarding your children and staff are skilled and knowledgeable in making sure children and families are safe and protected.

The children's centre provides some opportunities for some of you to contribute your views and be involved in the decision making of the centre and in developing the range of provision. However these are not yet fully developed. The centre has been asked to improve this, for example by establishing a parents and carers forum.

Good systems are in place to engage you in the centre and its services and to sensitively assess your family's needs. The family outreach workers are crucial to this success as they invest considerable time building trusting relationships with you where you feel confident to share any issues you are facing. Other professionals, such as health visitors, have found this invaluable to enable them to also visit you in your homes, or to encourage you to access services at your children's centre, to ensure you are provided with all the support you need to meet your needs. The staff at the centre and the partner services work extremely well together, sharing information and resources to make sure you get the right support when you need it.

The leadership and management of the centre are good and the centre evaluates how well it is doing and has a good idea of its strengths and weaknesses. However, we have asked the centre to improve its systems to demonstrate the impact it is having on improving the outcomes of your community to ensure it has good evidence of this.

The quality of the care, guidance and support you and your families receive from the centre is excellent and contributes to the well-being of your families and achieving good outcomes. In times of crisis you told us you feel confident in turning to the centre and are exceptionally well supported. You told us that you found staff to be friendly and approachable and it 'feels like coming to see a friend'. You also us that

the advice and support you have received has given you more confidence to do things you would never have done. You told us that staff 'build self-worth', 'empower' and 'raise aspirations' and it is clear to us that the centre has made a significant impact on the way you view the future. As one of you told us 'it's about changing our lifestyles and giving our children more chances'.

The children's centre is providing your children with an extremely good start in life and is preparing them very well for school. It is also supporting you to secure better outcomes for your families and is narrowing the gap between the most disadvantaged families and the rest. It does this with great determination and dedication. We wish you all the very best for the future.

The full report is available from your centre or on our website [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk).