

Inspection report for Hadley PFI Children's Centre

Local authority	Telford and Wrekin
Inspection number	362491
Inspection dates	6–7 October 2010
Reporting inspector	Graham Sims AI

Centre governance	The local authority
Centre leader	Mark Ferguson
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected
Centre address	Crescent Road
	Hadley
	Telford
	TF1 5JU
Telephone number	01952 387183
Fax number	01952 387007
Email address	mark.ferguson@telford.gov.uk

Linked school if applicable	Hadley Learning Community
Linked early years and childcare, if applicable	ABC Nursery

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 the centre manager, the outreach coordinator, the community involvement coordinator, other staff based at the centre, the manager of the ABC Nursery and chair of the advisory board, a wide range of professionals who work in partnership with the centre, parents and users of the centre, and representatives from the local authority. They observed the centre's work, and looked at a range of relevant documentation.

Information about the centre

Hadley Children's Centre is a phase 2 children's centre which opened in January 2007. It is based on the site of Hadley Learning Community, which comprises the children's centre, two nurseries, three schools, a library, sports facilities and community services. Nursery provision is provided by the privately run ABC Nursery. The centre operates as the hub for the operation of four children's centres and provides the office base and administrative centre for all outreach and community involvement staff. All four centres share the same centre manager and many of the same staff. Also co-located on the same site is the integrated services team. The centre manager is answerable to the local authority for the running of the centre. The centre receives the advice and guidance of a local advisory board. The centre offers a full range of integrated services.

Around 15% of the families in the centre's reach area are from minority ethnic backgrounds, the largest group being of Pakistani heritage. Two-thirds of the children in the reach area live within one of the 30% most deprived wards in the country. Levels of unemployment and the proportion of families on benefits are above the national average. Evidence indicates that the skills and knowledge with which children enter the local Early Years Foundation Stage settings are well below those expected nationally for their age.

Inspection judgements

Grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Overall effectiveness

The effectiveness of the children’s centre in meeting the needs of and improving outcomes for 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

‘I really enjoy coming to the centre.’ ‘The centre has really helped me and my family.’ ‘The people are always friendly and they often have interesting speakers.’ These comments are typical of the views expressed by parents and carers to members of the inspection team and reflect the very high standard of care, guidance and support which is evident in everything which this good children’s centre offers to its users. The centre manager and his staff have worked hard to put the vision of a centre which provides a wide range of integrated services for members of the local community into practice. Through the establishment of excellent relationships and cooperative working practices, they have developed an outstanding partnership with a very wide range of service providers. This means that for parents, carers and their families, the centre really does provide a one-stop shop where they can receive advice and help, educational opportunities and friendly support. The attractive, modern and well-designed accommodation, the co-location with the nursery, primary and secondary schools, and the availability of public services such as the library undoubtedly contribute to the success of the centre in meeting the needs of very many users.

Whatever it turns its hand to, the centre does well. For example, high-quality, sensitive advice is available to smokers through the Help2Quit programme. Childminders find an invaluable and much appreciated source of help and advice through their weekly session. Asian parents, pregnant ladies and mothers with young toddlers all find groups which support them through difficult times. For the most vulnerable, the care which professionals from health, educational, social and other services provide is outstanding. Through the common assessment framework and ‘team around the child’ case-study meetings, individual needs are discussed, solutions proposed and support provided by a team which has a passionate desire to help children and their families to improve their circumstances and educational opportunities.

The centre is led and managed well. Meticulous attention is given to all aspects of safeguarding, from the recruitment of staff, to the establishment of safe working practices, and the support provided for families to help them develop their

understanding of safe practices. The local authority maintains careful oversight and provides good support and challenge for the centre's leaders. The centre evaluates its own work well and is diligent in seeking the views of users. It does not, however, analyse the available data closely enough to quantify the impact its various activities are having on outcomes for users or to ensure that activities are targeted at the areas of greatest need. The centre deals extremely well with all who choose to use the centre's facilities and any who are referred to the centre by external agencies. However, there are still many people from vulnerable groups who do not yet access the centre's services. Although development plans identify areas in which the centre would like to improve its offer to the local community, they do not specify clearly enough how the centre will reach the hard-to-reach. Despite this, the high quality of the centre's work, the level of commitment from the staff and the excellent cooperation with so many different agencies indicate that there is good capacity for sustained improvement.

What does the centre need to do to improve further?

Recommendations for further improvement

- Analyse available and relevant data more effectively to ensure that the centre's activities are:
 - targeted at the areas of greatest need within the reach area
 - having maximum impact on improving outcomes for the centre's users.
- Develop strategies to engage with the most disadvantaged and vulnerable groups in the community who do not currently access the centre's activities.

How good are outcomes for users?

2

Data indicate a varying picture within the centre's reach area. A few key indicators, such as immunisation rates and the percentage of mothers sustaining breastfeeding, are above average. However, most key indicators for health, education and employment are below average. For example, the proportions of obese children, children who are subject to child protection plans and children living in households dependent on workless benefits are all above the national average. Children's attainment at the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage is below average and the gap between the lowest achieving 20% and the rest is higher than in other parts of the country.

The centre's systems for collecting data are not yet sophisticated enough to pinpoint the extent to which its activities are improving outcomes within its reach area. However, for those individuals who access the centre's services or who are visited by the centre's staff, it is very evident that the centre is making an important contribution to improving outcomes for children and their families in many areas.

The excellent partnerships with a wide range of specialists in health-related services contribute significantly to the education of adults and children on how to keep healthy. Imaginative programmes to help children and their parents understand the importance of a healthy diet, ante-natal and post-natal support groups for mothers, a

programme to help people to stop smoking and a group for teenage mothers are part of the rich offering which is appreciated by the centre's users and is having a positive impact on their lives.

Users comment on how the centre provides a safe environment for them and their children. The centre supports children who are subject to common assessment framework processes very well indeed through rigorous case study meetings involving a wide range of professionals. Similar support processes are available for looked-after children and those who have a child protection plan. Case studies show how carefully planned home visits are helping families to develop greater understanding of how to keep their children safe.

The centre encourages parents to use available nursery provision, although the number of places which are directly funded by the centre has fallen recently because of reduction in funding. The private nursery linked with the centre was judged to be outstanding in its latest inspection and to be having a major impact on the lives of the children who attend. The various support groups for parents and their children are helping families to learn together. For example, a number of fathers have been encouraged to engage with their children by attending a session at a local play facility at which the centre has secured reduced-rate admission.

The centre's activities promote harmonious relationships and encourage good behaviour and social integration for the children who attend. Mothers at one group, for example, commented how much they had seen their children grow in confidence and develop their ability to relate to other children through attendance at the centre. Staff encourage feedback from users and take note of their views to adjust and improve the activities. A small number of users also have an opportunity to contribute to the governance of the centre through membership of the advisory board, although the strengthening of users' input is one of the actions on the centre's current development plan.

Although many of the centre's users face difficult economic circumstances, the centre can point to individual cases where it has helped adults to acquire new skills and obtain new qualifications. Adults regularly use the information provided by the centre with regard to employment opportunities. Those who have home visits receive a plethora of advice and help which enables them to improve their economic stability and independence.

These are the grades for the outcomes for users

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	2

How good is the provision?

2

The centre has meticulous procedures for assessing the needs of individuals and for maintaining careful records. A new electronic filing system has streamlined the record-keeping process and now enables simultaneous access to records for centre staff and integrated services. This has improved efficiency, reduced error and ensured more accurate information is available to the professionals who support families in the area. There is excellent liaison between the various agencies and a highly cooperative approach to assessments carried out under the common assessment framework. The use of national and local data to assess and prioritise needs within the centre's reach area and is not as sophisticated. Thus, while the centre caters for a wide range of users and provides a rich variety of activities, all of which are appreciated by and relevant to those who attend, it cannot demonstrate that activities are targeted at the most vulnerable and needy groups within its reach area.

The centre uses its various activities well to provide good learning opportunities for attendees. These are enhanced through a wide range of visiting speakers and specialists. Users comment appreciatively about the visitors they have and say how much they learn from the input provided. During group sessions, purposeful and carefully planned play activities are provided by the facilitators.

The quality of care, guidance and support for users who attend the centre and for those who are visited in their homes is excellent. Those who work in the centre and the wide range of professionals who contribute their services exude a high degree of care and concern for those they are there to help. The excellent collaboration between the different services ensures that the most appropriate help is nearly always readily available. Those visiting a family, for example, may not have the expertise to solve a problem, but know to whom they can refer the family for specialist care and advice. This tight-knit, supportive, friendly and caring cooperation between the services has a major impact on the quality of the service provided by the centre.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The effectiveness of the assessment of the needs of children, parents and other users	2
The extent to which the centre promotes purposeful learning,	2

development and enjoyment for all users	
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 local authority provides the centre with effective support and holds the centre's managers accountable for the services they provide. In recent months, it has provided the centre with an increasing range of data which is becoming more localised and relevant to the reach area. Satisfactory interim arrangements are in place for the local advisory board and plans are in hand to make this body even more effective through the appointment of an independent chair and through greater involvement of the centre's users. Staff understand their roles well and work flexibly to cover any identified areas of need where, for example, another member of staff is unavailable for any reason. The centre's leaders are focused strongly on providing high-quality services and have high expectations for themselves and of each other. There is a palpable sense of enthusiasm for the centre's work. The work of other agencies is integrated very effectively into the centre's scheduled activities. The tight integration of services and the deployment of staff expertise and resources across the four centres for which Hadley acts as a hub ensure good value for money. The centre's activities are monitored and evaluated regularly but not rigorously enough to ensure with certainty that the centre is catering for the most vulnerable groups within the community.

Safeguarding arrangements are excellent. There is a very good understanding of the principles for ensuring safe recruitment of staff, and the centre's records on staff recruitment and identity go beyond the minimum requirements. The regular referrals of children and families in need and the high level of multi-agency cooperation contribute very strongly to improving the emotional health and well-being of the referred families. Staff training in child protection is thorough and up to date, as it is undertaken more frequently than the prescribed intervals. The centre actively promotes equality and diversity, and the range of users reflects the ethnic diversity within the local community. The centre acknowledges, however, that there are still some hard-to-reach groups, particularly within ethnic minority communities who do not yet use the centre's services. Good relationships with the special school co-located on the same site ensure that expertise is readily available for those with disability.

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 extent to which ambitious targets drive improvement, provision is integrated and there are high expectations for users and the wider	2

community	
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	1
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	1
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

The most recent inspection of the private ABC Nursery which is linked to Hadley PFI Children's Centre took place in July 2009. The Nursery was rated as outstanding in terms of its overall effectiveness.

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 Hadley PFI Children's Centre on 6–7 October 2010. We judged the centre as good overall.

We greatly appreciated the opportunity to talk to a good number of you who attended the various activities we visited during the inspection, such as the Asian parents group, the childminders' group, Butterfly Babies and Jungleland. You gave us a very positive picture of the work of the children's centre. It is good to know that you value the centre's work and find the activities it provides to be helpful to you in so many ways.

We were particularly impressed by the quality of care, guidance and support which the community receives from the centre. Many of you may be unaware of the huge amount of time, commitment and thought which goes on behind the scenes to plan the centre's activities and home visits. The set-up of the centre and its attractive facilities help to bring a wide range of services together under one roof. However, the centre's service to you would not be anywhere near as effective as it is without the determination and close collaboration of the centre's staff and the wide range of professionals who contribute to the centre's activities. They really do provide you with a one-stop shop for many of the needs which you as families have to face. For those of you facing really difficult circumstances, no effort is spared in bringing together services to discuss how best to provide the support and help you need.

The centre is led and managed well. The local authority keeps a close eye on what is happening and provides the centre staff with valuable support and advice. The centre seeks your views on the effectiveness of its activities and a number of you are involved in an advisory capacity. The centre would, however, like to extend the opportunities available to users to have a greater say in what the centre provides in the future. The centre takes very seriously its obligation to provide a safe environment for those who use its facilities, and to ensure that all of its staff are qualified and suitable for working with children and families. For those of you who receive home visits, the centre is making a concerted effort to help you to provide as well as you can for the welfare and safety of your children.

There is no doubt that the activities which the centre offers are having a positive impact for many of you. The sessions provided are well planned and of good quality. You told us that you particularly like the speakers who attend some of the sessions. These speakers provide helpful and valuable insight into health-related matters, such as how to ensure your families receive a healthy diet. There are good opportunities for mothers and mothers-to-be to receive advice and guidance on how to look after young children or how best to deal with difficulties in pregnancy. The centre seeks to support those of you who are looking for employment by providing information about jobs which are available in the locality.

We know that the centre's work is valued, as so many people travel to the centre's activities from outside the immediate locality. Because they ask your views and opinions, we know that all of the activities provided are relevant to the needs of some members of the community. However, in order to increase the effectiveness of the centre even more, we have asked the centre's managers to look more closely at the data which are available to them to ensure that they are identifying and then meeting the most urgent needs within the community.

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