

Inspection report for Hessle Children's Centre

Local authority	East Riding of Yorkshire
Inspection number	365794
Inspection dates	19 – 20 January 2011
Reporting inspector	Tara Street

Centre governance	Local Authority
Centre leader	Linda Louis
Date of previous inspection	Not Previously Inspected
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Linked school if applicable	Not applicable
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.

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 senior managers, centre staff, parents and members of the advisory board. They also spoke to a number of partners including Early Years Foundation Stage and childcare partners; and health, education and children's social care professionals. They observed the centre's work, and looked at a range of documentation including the centre's operational plans, evaluations, key policies and safeguarding procedures.

Information about the centre

Hessle Children's Centre is a Phase 2 centre, which is based on two sites, one at the Hourne old school building based in the centre of Hessle town in East Riding and the other at Hessle Penshurst Primary School. The children's centre catchment has contrasting areas of advantage and disadvantage within its locality and the neighbouring city of Kingston upon Hull. Hessle Children's Centre is part of a cluster arrangement of children's centres which includes: Anlaby, Cottingham and Brough. The centre has been providing the full core offer since 2009 although there is no full-time day-care offered due to the close proximity of other local childcare services. The offer includes a range of health, social care and family support services. Within the reach of the centre there are significant issues surrounding low levels of literacy and numeracy and data indicates that the number of lone parents and teenage pregnancies is increasing. Levels of unemployment are high, as is the number of families in receipt of benefits. Many of the existing jobs are low-paid. There are significant levels of social and private rental housing. The predominant cultural group is White British. Most children enter early education with knowledge and skills which are generally in line with expectations for their age, except for communication and language development and speaking and listening which are slightly below expectations for their age. There are links to local primary schools. A range of

activities offered by the children's centre are run from various outreach venues and other children's centres within the Haltemprice area.

Governance of the centre is provided by the local authority in conjunction with an advisory board, which includes providers, delivery partners and members of the local community, and users that attend the children's centre.

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

'All staff are very welcoming; they have helped me enormously'. This comment typifies those expressed by parents and carers and helps to explain why Hessle is a good and improving centre. The high quality of the provision is a result of the passion and drive of the leadership, staff, advisory board, and its professional partners. Staff morale is high. They support each other effectively and show great respect for their leadership team, all users and visitors of the centre. Effective partnership work ensures that services are very well integrated and cohesive. For example, collaborative working operates between partners and the four children's centres within the Haltemprice cluster. Resources are shared across the children's centres and activities and training are co-ordinated effectively to ensure a sustainable rolling programme. As such, users are able to access services across the joint reach areas. Relationships between agencies are highly professional and mutually respectful with effective transfer of information between key partners ensuring the needs of users are met. However, partnerships with Jobcentre Plus and further education providers are not yet as well-established or helping more users to develop the full range of skills needed for future employment.

Outcomes for users are good and improving. Detailed procedures and protocols for safeguarding are robust and reviewed regularly. All staff are well trained and continuously update their knowledge to ensure they have the most current guidance. Consequently, staff are good at ensuring the on-going safety and well-being of children and their families. Users, including parents and children, feel very safe at the centre. The centre is an inclusive setting and by providing for a wide range of users,

promotes equality and diversity well. Particularly strong actions are taken to support vulnerable families and children and those who need support in times of acute need or crisis, through close multi-agency working and the effective family support and community nursery nurse teams.

Staff are effective in listening to what parents, carers and users say, through discussion and written feedback from participants after each activity session and through the more formal, parent consultation process. This information is used well to plan future activities and services. However, at the time of inspection there were no parent representatives on the children's centre advisory board from the Hessle reach area to ensure that they are involved in decision-making and on-going developments of the centre.

The newly-appointed manager shows drive and ambition, and uses the skills and talents of the staff team successfully to full advantage. Consequently, strong teamwork, high expectations and continuous improvement are central to the work of the centre. The local authority is aware of the limitations of some of the data to which it has access and the difficulty faced in getting current, accurate data from all service providers. In addition, some data collected is not broken down sufficiently to ensure it reflects the reach area of the children's centre. This impedes the efforts made to evaluate the full impact and effectiveness of the centre in some areas. Nonetheless, an increasingly robust quality assurance role is being provided by the local authority and the advisory board is effective in identifying priorities through good consultation. Managers and staff routinely reflect on practice to evaluate the impact of provision. Self-evaluation is accurate and informs the development plan. This has a positive impact on changes made to provision and meeting individual needs. As such, the centre has a good capacity for continuous improvement for its families and children.

What does the centre need to do to improve further?

Recommendations for further improvement

- Collect quantitative data to monitor the on-going effectiveness of the centre and develop, with the local authority and partners, a full range of strategies to demonstrate impact
- Ensure that parents from the reach area are represented on the advisory board so that they can effectively contribute to the on-going developments of the centre
- Strengthen links with Jobcentre Plus and adult education providers to improve the economic well-being of users.

How good are outcomes for users?

2

Evidence through case studies and discussions with partners and parents all reflect the very positive impact of partnership working on children's and families' emotional well-being and physical health. Families engage well in the services offered by the

centre. The good advice and training on health issues and safety in the home are having a positive impact on how well families keep themselves and their children healthy. For example, antenatal and postnatal support is well attended and breastfeeding is undertaken for longer periods. The centre is effective in ensuring that parents, carers and children keep themselves safe and free from harm and children's safety in the home is improving. This is demonstrated by a good range of preventative measures and advice, including home safety visits to ensure families understand their responsibility for the on-going safety of their children. There is also an on-going commitment to ensure that any eligible family is provided with free home safety equipment. Children using services at the centre are effectively safeguarded including children from vulnerable families and those who are hard to engage. The centre is a safe and welcoming place to be due to the vigilance of all adults and the completion of robust risk assessments of all areas and activities. The knowledge and involvement by the centre in the use of the common assessment framework and those subject to a child protection plan is effective in improving the safeguarding of children.

There are increasing opportunities for parents, carers and children to play and learn together and a range of good information and advice is given to parents and carers on all aspects of child development. All centre staff have a comprehensive knowledge of the Early Years Foundation Stage and all activities are planned with children's development and learning in mind. Staff have been proactive in working alongside other early years providers in the reach area resulting in more effective learning opportunities for young children linked to the Early Years Foundation Stage principles, particularly with regard to communication, language and literacy. Children with speech and language difficulties and special educational needs and/or disabilities are quickly identified by well-trained staff and referred to appropriate partner agencies where they make good progress. Parents report that they really enjoy and benefit from the recreational activities, such as the 'Dads' group' currently offered at the Anlaby Children's Centre, 'Let's Get...' and 'Creepy Crawlies' sessions. Skills learnt, such as learning songs to sing together and participating in messy play activities are then repeated in the home. Those who attend the 'Family Links' parenting course report that they have gained a better understanding of how to manage any incidents of challenging behaviour by setting clear boundaries, remaining calm and having the confidence to say 'no'. Parents explained how they are always given new ideas about how to help their child learn and develop.

An increasing number of parents and carers say they feel empowered to make a positive contribution to the centre and wider community by becoming volunteers and mentors. They feel encouraged to offer their views and suggestions. However, more work needs to be done to increase the level of their engagement in effectively contributing to the on-going developments of the centre's work. The centre staff signpost users to Jobcentre Plus and adult education for help with training and employment advice. However, links with these partner agencies are limited which impacts on how effectively staff can encourage and support parents and carers who wish to consider training and employment opportunities. Users benefit from the centre's partnership with the Citizens Advice Bureau and East Riding Money and

Benefits Advice Service, offering support on issues such as how to access benefits and tax credits.

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 provides good quality services, care, guidance and support through its centre-based activities, family support and community nursery nurse teams and home visits. It is valued by the community and users say they find the centre staff very approachable. All provision is of good quality and contributes effectively to improving outcomes for children, parents and carers and all users of the centre. This is because staff get to know families well and assess their individual needs. Effective partnership working with child and health services ensures that assessment is robust and families benefit from the wide range of activities on offer. Assessment of individual cases is robust and the common assessment framework is successfully ensuring teams can be gathered quickly to support children and families identified as being in need.

Parents report that the care and support given are good and staff ensure that support is provided for as long as needed. The well-planned activities for babies and toddlers ensure children are well cared for while receiving stimulating opportunities to explore their environment. Baby massage, child health clinics and 'Bumps to Babies' sessions are well attended and provide good guidance and support for parents and carers.

Learning, development and enjoyment are promoted well. A wide range of community venues are used to provide accessible and enjoyable events, engage users and promote the services that the centre has to offer. Good and developing partnership working with childcare providers and local schools is ensuring that aspirations are raised. Collaborative working with the early years advisor and development officer is having a positive impact in raising the quality of early years

provision across the centre and beyond. The level of individual care provided by staff is of a high standard because of their commitment to enable families to succeed. This is evident in the range of good guidance and support available through leaflets, drop-in sessions, targeted support and signposting to specialist services. The centre provides a weekly update of jobs. These are displayed in the welcoming 'Play and Learn' room and staff are always available to help download application forms and offer support in completing them. However, the centre leadership is aware that links with Jobcentre Plus and adult education are less well developed in promoting the future economic well-being of users. Advice is readily available on a wide range of issues which are pertinent to users such as breastfeeding, weaning, debt, financial management, benefits and housing.

Staff conduct their work with enthusiasm having good levels of expertise and professional knowledge to help families improve their health, well-being and achievement successfully. Staff continuously reflect on how and where services are provided to better meet the needs of users.

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, 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	2

How effective are the leadership and management?

2

Governance, lines of accountability, professional supervision and day-to-day management arrangements are clear and understood. As a result, multi-agency working and performance management are effective at all levels. Staff are passionate about the centre and its community. Senior leaders have a clear vision, set the tone, communicate high expectations and are determined to ensure that the centre is effective in improving the life chances of all users. Every staff member is fully committed to the centre's work and understands how they contribute to its effectiveness. For example, administrative staff know how important a warm welcome is and that they are as much a part of the delivery of services as other staff.

A key strength of the centre is the effective partnership arrangements which ensure that all needs are met. Staff report that relationships between staff and key agencies are very good, morale is very high and that everyone pulls together to improve

outcomes for users. The centre focuses on activities that are sustainable, building on existing provision and sharing costs and resources with other agencies and children's centres in the cluster area where possible. Much has already been done to analyse local needs and staff are active in targeting the hard-to-reach.

Equality and diversity are promoted successfully. This is because all services are designed to engage users from the range of backgrounds in the local area, including the promotion of inclusive practice for children with special education needs and/or disabilities. As a result the inclusion of all children and families is threaded through all of the centre's work.

Staff have a good understanding of the strengths in provision and where further improvements can be made. Self-evaluation is on-going and largely accurate so the centre's priorities for improvement are appropriate, challenging, yet realistic. For example, senior leaders are well aware that currently there is no parental representation on the advisory board from the Hessle reach area to ensure their views are included in any decision-making about the centre and its services, although their views are heard through consultation systems and regular session evaluations. The centre's data collection system is enabling the centre to measure the success of its provision on outcomes, although the impact over time in some areas is yet to be fully realised due to a lack of data from some partner agencies. The Haltemprice cluster advisory board plays a very active role in identifying priorities. Action plans are specific, sharply focused and have clear success criteria.

Good safeguarding arrangements are supported by the clear lines of communication and collaboration between agencies to ensure children are safeguarded. All checks, vetting and recruitment processes meet current guidelines and staff have up to date training in safeguarding, child protection and first aid. The centre places a strong focus on developing the skills of all staff, through high quality training, and to deliver inclusive provision that is sensitive to the needs and views of users. For example, the provision of one-to-one support in families' homes, when requested.

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 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 Hessle Children's Centre on 19-20 January 2011. We judged the centre as good overall.

During our visit we visited a number of activities, looked at the centre's plans and documents and had discussions with parents and carers, the staff, a range of partners and members of the local authority linked to the centre. Many of you told us how much you enjoy the activities provided through the centre. You told us that staff listen to you and make sure that you get the right advice and support. We found that the centre was good at helping people at times in their lives when they most need it; action was taken quickly and different people and organisations worked very well as a team to support both children and families. We found the centre to be warm and welcoming to all families and busy with activity. The staff have a high level of expertise and offer good practical and emotional support to families who need it.

The centre offers a good range of services and activities which are led by dedicated and skilled professionals. The centre works hard with local nurseries and schools so that your children's educational achievements can be improved. They are supporting

you and are helping to increase your knowledge about play and how children learn through the many stay-and-play activities and parenting sessions, which you told us are fun and worthwhile. Parents we spoke to thoroughly enjoy attending services such as the 'Bumps to Babies', health clinics for children and activities such as 'Family Swim' and 'Babies Playing' with their babies and children. We were delighted to see that the centre is making a real difference to improving your lives and to hear how much more confident you feel as parents. You told us about the friends you had met through the centre's activities. It was very encouraging to hear that so many of you feel less isolated in the community by coming into the centre and getting involved. We were also pleased to hear that some of you have been helped to undertake training which may help you get back into employment. We also found that services work well together as a team to provide help and support to families with children or parents who have special educational needs and/or disabilities.

The people in charge of running the centre are doing a good job. Under the careful direction of the manager, staff provide good care, guidance and support for you and act on your views and suggestions. To develop the work of the centre further we have asked staff and the local authority to encourage more parents to be involved in the management of the centre. We have asked them to build further links with Jobcentre Plus and adult education so that those of you who wish to consider training and employment opportunities are better supported. We have also asked the local authority and its partners to further develop the systems it has in place for sharing information which helps them to monitor the impact that all activities it provides have on your lives.

We thoroughly enjoyed the time we spent at your centre. Thank you to everyone who took the time to come and speak with us and we wish you every success in the future.

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