

Inspection report for Briercliffe Children's Centre (Scarborough)

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| Local authority | North Yorkshire County Council |
| Inspection number | 365726 |
| Inspection dates | 18–19 January 2011 |
| Reporting inspector | Lorraine Rowson-Clark HMI |

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| Centre governance | North Yorkshire County Council |
| Centre leader | Diane Leith |
| Date of previous inspection | Not previously inspected |
| Centre address | 76 Briercliffe, Scarborough, North Yorkshire, YO12 6NS |
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| Linked school if applicable | Not Applicable |
| Linked early years and childcare, if applicable | URN EY364018 Seashells Childcare Services |

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.

An inspection of the registered early years/childcare provision was carried out at the same time as the inspection of the centre under Section 3 of the Childcare Act 2006. The report of this inspection is available on our website www.ofsted.gov.uk.

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

The inspectors held meetings with the centre manager, staff members, steering group members, a range of providers, partner agencies, users and local authority officers linked to the centre.

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

Information about the centre

Briercliffe Children's Centre is a phase one centre, offering early learning combined with full day care provision provided on site by a private provider. It is located in one of the most disadvantaged areas within the traditional seaside resort of Scarborough, although it also serves some of the more affluent residential areas. Scarborough has a population of 50,135 of predominantly White British heritage with approximately 3% of Indian and Pakistani families. As a tourist destination the population increases during the summer months by attracting approximately 5.4 million visitors, which has a significant impact on the infrastructure of the town. Families face a number of socio-economic challenges relating to high unemployment, low incomes, a high proportion of single parents, a high level of child poverty and problems with substance misuse. The population is predominantly static with high levels of intergenerational unemployment linked to low educational attainment.

Briercliffe Children's Centre was built in April 2005 as the new premises for the Scarborough Sure Start Local Programme. It was designated as a children's centre in February 2006, with the local authority taking over responsibility in March 2008. New

catchment areas were decided in March 2009 with the announcement of the phase three centres, and the catchment area for the centre increased significantly to cover the north area of the town and outlying villages. There are satisfactory transport links to the nearby areas of Scalby and Newby, but inconsistent ones to the outlying villages. Deeper rural areas suffer from problems of accessibility to facilities and services and the cost of providing services in these areas is greater because of the scarcity of population. Services are delivered mainly on site with some services being offered at other accessible sites to serve the whole of the Scarborough reach area.

Children enter early years provision with a varied range of skills and abilities, some having fewer skills than expected for their age, particularly in emotional and social development and in their communication skills.

The centre is currently undergoing a period of change following a local authority review of services. Interim management arrangements are currently in place with a new structure planned from April 2011.

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

3

Capacity for sustained improvement

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

2

Main findings

Briercliffe is a satisfactory and rapidly improving centre. A number of its features are good. Care, guidance and support and arrangements for assessment are strong as a result of the passion and drive of the leadership, staff, and professional partners. Staff morale is high despite a number of significant changes to the centre over the last six months. This is a result of effective leadership and supportive, sensitive line management. Good partnership working with other agencies ensures that services are well integrated and cohesive. Relationships between agencies, many of whom are based on site, are professional with effective transfer of information between key partners ensuring the needs of users are met.

Outcomes for users are satisfactory overall and are strongly improving. The centre is particularly effective in supporting users to live healthy lifestyles and in keeping users safe and protected. Centre users say that they are very safe and well cared for whilst

accessing services and centre staff are very supportive and encouraging. The centre is collecting detailed data to evaluate how effective activities are for users. However, collection systems are complex. This makes it difficult for the centre to evaluate the impact of its work over a longer period of time, particularly in relation to health and to the most vulnerable families in the reach area.

The many exciting activities on offer help children learn and develop their skills. This is resulting in them making progress in all areas of their learning. However, occasionally, early years providers do not get sufficient warning about when children are moving to school to enable them to fully ease children's transition. Additionally, the centre does not always get feedback on the children's Early Years Foundation Stage Profile point scores at the end of the Reception Year, so is not able to evaluate accurately longer-term impact of its provision on the children's progress.

The centre consistently gives high priority to safeguarding children and their families and the quality of care, guidance and support provided is good. As one parent reported, 'The centre has changed my life; I used to think I was the worst parent in the world, and now I am confident in looking after my child'. The range of provision on offer meets the needs of those using the centre's services well. However, senior leaders are not complacent and recognise the need to evaluate more closely the extent to which services are making a difference for the most needy.

The centre promotes the inclusion of all children and families. It is aware that with the population being mainly of White British heritage it has to work hard to promote equality and an understanding of diversity. There are increasing opportunities for parents and users to express their views and parents are becoming more actively involved in decision making through the parents' forum and the steering group. Users are encouraged to develop their skills and undertake training for qualifications to return to work with some positive effect. However, the centre is eager to strengthen the links with adult learning and Jobcentre Plus and to work more collaboratively with these services in order to further raise families' aspirations.

Outcomes and provision are improving and are good in some respects. This is the result of strong leadership and management, where leaders have taken concerted actions to consolidate and improve performance. Analysis of needs is accurate and the centre recognises how it can further improve its evaluation and provision. These factors give the centre good capacity to improve further.

What does the centre need to do to improve further?

Recommendations for further improvement

- Determine accurately the full impact that the centre is having over time and target future development within the revised reach area by:
 - working with the Primary Care Trust to analyse and use health data at a more accurate and localised level
 - working with the local authority to identify the most vulnerable in order to increase access to services

- working with local schools to ease transition and track children's progress to the end of the Reception Year.
- Promote and encourage families to raise their own aspirations by working more collaboratively with adult learning and Jobcentre Plus.

How good are outcomes for users?

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Across all of the five areas, outcomes are improving strongly. This is because the centre provides a wide range of activities, which are developed well in partnership with other agencies and professionals. Healthy lifestyles and healthy eating are promoted particularly well and good intervention strategies ensure that vulnerable families are supported effectively. Early booking for maternity services is available on site and good advice and support is given to pregnant mothers to access the centre's services. Those who use services say that they help them to build and maintain effective, supportive relationships with other users, thereby reducing feelings of isolation. Parents and children benefit from the wide range of activities on offer and are developing a good awareness of adopting healthy lifestyles. Parents have easy access to healthy cooking sessions, jointly delivered by parent support advisers and members of the Women's Institute. 'I enjoyed the cooking course and often use the recipes. We all eat more healthily'; 'The food at all the sessions is healthy and my children now love to eat fruit', typified the comments from parents. Low breastfeeding rates are being tackled with some success through integrated services, such as the employment of a lactation specialist, breastfeeding buddies and effective support and encouragement from all parent support advisers.

The centre is very effective in ensuring that parents and children keep themselves safe and free from harm. There is a wide range of preventative measures and advice including home safety packs provided at cost, free home safety equipment for eligible families, and general home safety advice from parent support advisors to ensure families understand their responsibility for the ongoing safety of their children. The centre is a safe and welcoming place to be due to the vigilance of all adults and the completion of comprehensive risk assessments of all areas and activities. Effective use of the Common Assessment Framework (CAF) ensures cohesive support is available to vulnerable families, effectively preventing situations from reaching crisis point. As a result of the initiatives, outcomes for staying safe are good.

There are many opportunities for parents and children to play and learn together and a range of good information and advice is available to parents on all aspects of child development. Children make some good progress as staff have a good knowledge of the Early Years Foundation Stage and activities are planned with children's development and learning in mind. Support is available to external providers in developing their own knowledge of child development, resulting in more effective learning opportunities for young children. Speech and language therapist support is available for children with speech and language delay. This has had a positive effect

on the outcomes for individual children so that, as a result, data for the last year show a slight, (0.27%,) increase in the number of children reaching 78 points across the assessment scales of the Early Years Foundation Stage Profile. The gap between outcomes for the most vulnerable groups and others is therefore narrowing, albeit slowly.

The centre provides a range of opportunities for users to make a positive contribution. Children behave well at all sessions and they are learning to share and take turns. Families develop strong relationships within the centre and show respect, care and concern for others. There are opportunities for parents to express their views through regular evaluations of activities and surveys. For those with limited communication skills, the centre adopts a simple but highly effective scoring system enabling all users to comment and express their satisfaction. Parents are beginning to become engaged in the decision making and governance of the centre through the parents' forum and by participating on the steering group. However, members of the steering group are still developing their understanding of their roles and responsibilities although they are not afraid to challenge and ask pertinent questions of the centre. The steering group has a realistic view of the centre and knows that they need to raise the centre's profile and engage with more members of the community.

The centre successfully helps to promote families' economic stability, for example, by effectively supporting children to develop skills for the future, helping families to secure benefits and giving them access to independent legal advice. The centre demonstrates a positive attitude to supporting adults seeking further training and future employment by signposting to other agencies, and there are some opportunities for adults to access basic skills training in numeracy and literacy and vocational courses leading to formal qualifications. The centre is working hard to secure such courses and encourage take up.

These are the grades for the outcomes for users

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| 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 | 3 |
| The extent to which children engage in positive behaviour and develop positive relationships and users contribute to decision-making and governance of the centre | 3 |
| 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?

3

The children's centre is effective at assessing users' needs and provides very good quality care, guidance and support. It works well with partner agencies to ensure that assessments carried out under the CAF are robust and well informed. Support is well targeted and users make progress in the outcome areas. Assessment is being used increasingly effectively to determine the needs of the community and families within the extensive reach area, although strategic data relating to live births and potential user groups are not yet fully available. The centre demonstrates very good knowledge of those families using their services and a developing knowledge of the community within its reach area and uses this information to tailor services to meet families' needs.

There are clear programmes in place to promote the health and social well-being of users, including a strong emphasis on providing emotional support to boost confidence and raise self-esteem. Parents state that there is always someone to talk to at the centre and that they feel valued and listened to by all staff. Parenting classes are a strength of the provision and are well regarded by those who have accessed them.

Experienced parent support advisors endeavour to make contact with hard to reach families and are making progress in engaging with more families, although registration rates at the centre are approximately only one third of those known to be in the reach area. Consequently, the centre's leadership team have made improved registration rates a priority target. The centre is aware of the difficulties and challenges faced by some families within its reach area, for example, it recognises that rural families may be suffering from feelings of isolation. In order to relieve the isolation, the centre is looking at innovative ways to engage with rural families, such as through advertising at village post offices and shops. However, it is too early for the impact of these strategies to be assessed.

Good examples of outreach and support work include stay and play sessions, Portage groups and parenting classes at a local women's centre. A midwifery service is based at the centre which helps to introduce expectant mums to other services on offer. The centre signposts to Jobcentre Plus and adult education services for help and support with training and employment, and is eager to reinstate support sessions at the centre which were withdrawn as a result of staffing shortages in these services.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

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| 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 | 3 |

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| The extent to which the range of services, activities and opportunities meet the needs of users and the wider community | 3 |
| 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

Leadership and management are at least satisfactory at all levels and are particularly good in relation to governance, ambition, safeguarding and partnership working. Senior leaders have a clear vision for the centre; they consistently communicate high expectations to staff and lead by example. All staff are enthusiastic about their work and are committed to making a difference to all families within the community. Staff know how they contribute to the centre's effectiveness and value each other's contributions. For example, the receptionists are aware that they play an important role in the delivery of services and ensure they warmly welcome everyone on arrival. Parents report how important that warm welcome is, especially the first time they come to the centre.

There is evidence to demonstrate that staff have effectively supported families suffering incidents of racial abuse. They are working hard to ensure that all children and adults, regardless of background, aptitudes or other differences, have access to the range of services and activities on offer. Information displayed within the centre promotes equality and diversity and the centre is accessible for people with disabilities.

Partnerships between agencies are strong and ensure that all identified needs are met. Staff report that everyone works collaboratively to improve outcomes for users. There is a clear management structure with effective line management and supervision and staff feel well supported. The centre focuses on activities that are sustainable, building upon existing provision and sharing costs and resources, including staffing, with other agencies where possible to ensure satisfactory value for money.

The senior leadership team has a good understanding of the centre's strengths and knows where further improvements can be made. Self-evaluation is largely accurate and the centre's priorities for improvement are appropriate, challenging and realistic. Action plans are specific and identify clear success criteria and timescales. For example, an ambitious target has been set to increase registration rates and this has been shared with all staff. The centre's new data collection system is now enabling the centre to measure the success of its provision on outcomes, although the impact over time is yet to be fully realised. The centre manager is looking to extend the centre's work with partners in order to have more accurate strategic data to support the centre's work. For example, limited health data relating to live births, childhood obesity and hospital admissions, and a lack of consistent feedback from local schools on the children's Early Years Foundation Stage Profile point scores make it difficult for the centre to track the progress children make over time.

There are good arrangements in place to safeguard all users. Recruitment and vetting procedures for new staff are robust and relevant training is up to date. Clear arrangements are in place for ensuring staff from partner agencies are appropriately vetted. All staff are aware of their safeguarding responsibilities and are highly vigilant in identifying and responding to any potential dangers that users may encounter. Comprehensive risk assessments and staff's thorough knowledge of the detailed safeguarding procedures protect children and families well. Clear procedures and protocols for sharing information are in place and these, together with the strong partnership arrangements, ensure that children and families at risk or in need are prioritised effectively.

These are the grades for leadership and management

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| 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 | 3 |
| The extent to which equality is promoted and diversity celebrated, illegal or unlawful discrimination is tackled and the centre fulfils its statutory duties | 3 |
| 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 | 3 |
| 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 | 3 |

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

The linked early years provision, Seashells Childcare Services, was inspected on 14 January 2011 and the findings were used to inform the judgements relating to outcomes for children. The full report on the nursery can be found at www.ofsted.gov.uk.

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 Briercliffe Children's Centre Scarborough on 18-19 January 2011 and we judged the centre as satisfactory overall, with a number of areas being judged as good.

As part of the inspection we visited a number of activities, looked at the centre's documentation, and talked with a range of children and adults including parents, staff, community representatives and partnership workers. We were pleased to speak to so many of you and to listen to your views. We really enjoyed talking to you around the centre and in the various activity sessions you were engaged in. You made your views very clear to us and we appreciated your honesty in telling us how things really are.

We are pleased to tell you that your centre is working very hard to support you and your families. Your centre does some things particularly well, such as the way everybody works together to make things better for you and the way you are encouraged to keep safe and learn how to live healthily. You told us that you and your children are well cared for and that staff offer you good levels of support and encouragement and we agree with you. You told us that you trust the centre to look after you and your children well and we were pleased to see this for ourselves. Some of you also told us how you have made friends by coming to the centre's activities and how you have been helped to become better parents. 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.

We saw your children behaving very well, thoroughly enjoying their play and learning in the good quality activities they were engaged in. You told us that you have been helped to understand about play and how children learn by attending the stay and play activities and parenting sessions. We were pleased to hear that these activities help you support your children's learning at home.

We were very pleased to see how well the centre staff work with others to provide good care and support to you. The parent support advisors work well with others to provide exciting training for you, such as the cookery sessions which you told us you enjoyed greatly. We saw for ourselves that these sessions are making a difference to you by helping you prepare healthy meals for all the family. We also saw that the healthy snacks at activities are having a positive effect on children as they regularly choose to eat fruit.

It was clear to us that staff at the centre are working extremely hard to make the centre as good as it can be. They regularly consider how best to improve services for you and your children and are very aware of the need to encourage more families to come to the centre. You can help them achieve this by talking to friends about the exciting things on offer to you at the centre. We have suggested that centre staff work with others to find out more about families in the centre's catchment area in order to make sure they are reaching as many families as possible. We also asked them to look more closely with their partner agencies at how the activities on offer and the work that they do are making a lasting difference to you. By doing this they will be in a stronger position to show how well they are doing and will be able to plan more worthwhile things for you.

We know that many of you have good ideas about how the centre can make things even better and would encourage you to become involved in helping to make decisions about what activities should be offered and where. You can do this by becoming involved with the parent's forum and the steering group or by telling staff what will make things better.

We have also asked the centre to support you in finding training schemes and learning opportunities that interest you in order to help you gain the skills you may need for employment. You can help by telling the staff what activities interest you and what helps you learn.

Thank you once again for your welcome and your willingness to talk to us. We can see why the staff love working with you and wish you every success in the future.

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