

Inspection report for Field Lane Children's Centre

Local authority	Calderdale
Inspection number	365780
Inspection dates	18 – 19 January 2011
Reporting inspector	Joanna Sharpe

Centre governance	Calderdale Local Authority
Centre leader	Michelle Golding-Smith
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected
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Linked school if applicable	Field Lane Primary School URN 107527 (same site only)
Linked early years and childcare, if applicable	EY302385 Field Lane Children's Centre

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 two additional inspectors.

The inspectors held meetings with centre staff, local authority representatives, staff from local children centres, representatives of local partnerships; Field Lane Primary School headteacher, family support worker, parent support worker, health professionals, linked service providers, community link workers, children and the children centre's users.

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

Information about the centre

Field Lane Children's Centre is a phase one children's centre based in Rastrick, Brighouse. The children's centre was opened on 1 December 2004. The children's centre is situated on the same site as Field Lane Primary School but does not share governance. The centre offers a wide range of services including early years child care (EY302385). Children's attainment on entry into this early years setting is below that expected for their age.

The centre serves a disadvantaged area of the borough with pockets of considerable deprivation. There is a mix of rural areas and built up areas, social and privately let and privately owned properties in the reach area. The majority of families are White British.

Governance of the centre is by Calderdale MBC local authority with the daily management of the centre the responsibility of the centre manager. In 2010, 21% of children aged nought to four were living in households dependent on workless benefits. In 2009-2010, there were 240 claimants seeking Job Seeker's Allowance,

395 ESA/Incapacity Benefits and in May 2009, there were 725 registered unemployed in the Rastrick area.

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

3

Main findings

Field Lane Children’s Centre offers a satisfactory service to its users. The centre is good in ensuring the environment is safe and meets all requirements with regards to the safeguarding of its users. Staff have a wide range of training to help provide support for the welfare of users and are well supported to understand their roles in protecting users. Sound systems are in place to protect children’s safety and the centre is pro-active in supporting users. The centre cooperates with key agencies to ensure systems are effective.

All senior leaders are committed and dedicated to improving the provision the centre offers its users and to increasing the numbers of users in the children’s centre. Senior leaders are aware of the need to reach all groups of users at the centre so that their support can impact on their well-being.

Changes have taken place in the last twelve months to instigate improvement but these new systems have yet to be fully effective in bringing about that improvement. Systems such as the Impact Evaluation Tool, wider consultation, changes in management structure and further data analysis have more recently been introduced. These systems and data interpretation have yet to be cascaded to all partners and to be fully understood and used by all managers. Current data provides evidence of a rise in obesity rates for children from the ages of five to the end of primary schooling at the end of Year 6, rises in workless parents and carers, and fewer mothers continuing to breastfeed and fewer teenage mothers engaging in further training. The Advisory Board is currently in its infancy with not all partners taking an active role in shaping provision. The centre has made increasing efforts to gather the views of its users through consultation and evaluation to help shape the range and quality of services it offers.

The Children's Centre is currently reaching a minority of users in the area and does not fully engage with the more vulnerable groups in its area. For instance, whilst there are 62% of children registered with the centre from the reach area, only 18% attend the centre. The childcare facility has vacancies for all of its sessions. Attendance at activities within the centre is variable with no patterns of attendance emerging but partnership workers note falling attendance.

What does the centre need to do to improve further?

Recommendations for further improvement

- The children's centre must ensure clarity of its data so that; it is a useful tool for all to use and understand, and it is used to effectively analyse local needs, shape provision and analyse the impact.
- The children's centre must ensure that it extends contact within its reach area to make effective and sustained contact with more users, including and especially those from vulnerable groups.
- The children's centre must make more efficient and effective use of the accommodation.

How good are outcomes for users?

3

Outcomes for users over a range of services and support are satisfactory. The centre has built good partnerships with a range of professionals, such as speech therapy and the midwife to promote ease of access to other facilities. There have been some opportunities to promote awareness and development of healthy lifestyles, this is more prevalent in the childcare facilities where outcomes are good. Children and users all report they feel safe and parents are made aware of safety in the home through systems, such as home checks by health visitors and the availability of safety packs. Children on the child protection register can access nursery places through 'Access to Support'. Parents who use the centre can gain support through link workers and parenting programmes, However, the centre does not reach all vulnerable parents of young children and young parents and these groups have limited access to the centre and its facilities. There is evidence of parents being supported to achieve in their personal and social development particularly through the parenting programme and parents report on beneficial impact in the home from attending these courses. The centre has made available courses on first aid and parenting skills, currently these have supported parents but have little impact on their economic well-being. The centre does not focus on raising aspirations for instance, providing more courses with accreditations or by increasing the numbers of teenage mums in training, numbers of whom are currently declining. Support is provided from the centre to help parents seek employment. Children's learning

journeys in the childcare setting demonstrate that children are making good progress in developing skills for the future from their starting points. Evaluations from users after sessions, parents' forums, consultation and a parent on the Advisory Board are allowing parents to have an increasing contribution to decision making and governance of the centre.

The extent to which children, including those from vulnerable groups, are physically, mentally and emotionally healthy and families have healthy lifestyles	3
The extent to which children are safe and protected, their welfare concerns are identified and appropriate steps taken to address them	3
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

There is sound assessment of the needs of families from the Family Support Worker who works effectively with partnership agencies. There is evidence of the children centre staff referring parents to the Women's Centre where support has been given to parents, particularly in cases involving domestic violence. Systems, such as the safeguarding matrix, enable professionals to ensure that the assessment of needs is accurate and leads to positive outcomes for users. The majority of centre staff are active in supporting parents and seeking appropriate intervention when required. Not all staff within the children's centre are aware of when there is a need to seek outside support for parents and what the protocols are for dealing with vulnerable parents. One parent noted staff being supportive but referrals not being made to more specialized support. Parenting programmes have helped parents and many report on positive outcomes after completion of the course, one parent reported, 'I can now talk to my kids without kicking off', and is a typical comment made. Comments from parents note the support these courses have given to deal with difficult situations within the home. A wide range of support is available from the children's centre, or is signposted by the children's centre, Jobcentre Plus, smoke free homes and health professions. However, courses leading to some form of accreditation are limited. Parents' and carers' groups and 'Messy Monkeys' sessions allow parents to support each other and one noted that by attending these activities meant she 'did not feel as lonely, it's a good way to meet people'. Attendance on

courses and at drop in sessions is variable, with some professionals noting falling attendance. Activities to support and engage with childminders need to be developed, as currently there is limited contact made with this group or other local childcare providers. The centre does not fully and consistently engage with all groups, such as lone parents, teenage parents and children with additional needs or disabilities. Activities for these groups are being considered but have yet to be planned and established. The number of users utilizing facilities in the reach area is limited. The centre is not easily accessible due to entry systems and this means that a community cafe area is greatly underused, and parents report that, 'generally it is empty unless someone is waiting to see someone.' The upstairs area is also currently temporarily unavailable for some users with mobility issues and health professionals report that this is hindering access for some users and discouraging attendance. The lack of clarity in collecting and using data means the centre is only in the early stages of considering tackling issues raised by local data and this leads to services not currently meeting the needs of all the users.

The effectiveness of the assessment of the needs of children, parents and other users	3
The extent to which the centre promotes purposeful learning, development and enjoyment for all users	3
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	3

How effective are the leadership and management?

3

All staff support each other well and are committed and motivated to the positive progress of the centre. Day to day management of the centre is clear and understood by all. Some leadership and management systems have been in place for 18 months and are still developing. The Advisory Board has only recently been established due to problems with the structure and effectiveness of previous boards. This board has yet to prove its effectiveness. The lack of accurate, and ease of interpretation of, data available means not all senior staff and partners are clear about targets and how they could and should be met. New systems are being developed such as the Impact Evaluation Tool, but this has yet to be refined so that it can provide more focused data. The ability of the leadership team to evaluate the long term impact of services and changing local data is improving. Senior staff acknowledge that the services do not currently meet the needs of the community and that this is partly due to the lack of clarity and effective use of data. The centre does not currently gain pertinent information about precise groups to clearly evaluate

their needs and monitor their engagement and impact. Therefore, some groups lack engagement with the centre and its work. Arrangements, such as crèche facilities for parents on courses have been arranged at times so that parents are able to access facilities on offer with ease. This has enabled parents who would not have otherwise attended to take part in parenting courses.

Safeguarding arrangements are good with all regulations being met. Staff are committed to ensuring the safety and well-being of centre users. All staff have appropriate checks and risk assessments are robust. Staff have appropriate training regarding child protection and also have further training on the Common Assessment Framework and domestic violence. Staff cooperate effectively with key agencies to reduce the risk of harm to users utilising the good systems that are in place.

The extent to which governance, accountability, professional supervision and day to day management arrangements are clear and understood	3
The extent to which ambitious targets drive improvement, provision is integrated and there are high expectations for users and the wider community	3
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	3
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 inspection of the Field Lane Children's Centre childcare provision took place at the same time and the findings from this inspection contributed to the judgements made during the inspection of the centre. The inspection noted the childcare offered was good with children making good progress, although judgements on entry and exit levels were not made.

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Summary for centre users

We inspected the Field Lane Children's Centre on 18 and 19 January 2011. We would like to thank everyone who came to speak with us, you were all very happy to speak with us and made us feel very welcome.

We judged that the children's centre provides satisfactory support for you and your families. We found that the centre takes steps to ensure you and your children's safety and well-being in the centre and at home. We found that the centre works very well with some services, such as the midwife, the Women's centre, community link workers and family support workers to provide support for you. We know you have had access to guidance on smoke free homes, safety in the home and support with parenting.

Staff at the centre are aware that the community café is not as easily accessible as both you and they would like it to be and the current situation regarding the lift limits access to the whole building for some users.

All of the parents we spoke to told us how much their children enjoy coming to the centre and gave us some examples of how children have grown and developed as a result. Many of them told us how the centre has helped them to grow more confident about themselves, how they had been supported and how some parenting support had really made a difference to life, particularly at home and dealing with their children's behaviour. The centre gives you limited opportunity to help to gain qualifications. The centre has arranged sessions where you are able to gain information and guidance from the Jobcentre Plus and parents note that this has been supportive.

Parents who spoke to us all said how friendly and supportive the centre staff are. We found that there are good systems in place for staff to get you help from other services when you need it and that staff are proactive in instigating this help for you.

Many of you we spoke with particularly noted the support the community link workers gave you and how this had helped you cope in difficult circumstances and helped you grow personally.

The centre staff know that the centre is underused and that not everybody in the Field Lane area is accessing the centre and the services are not suitable for the needs of everyone. The centre is taking good steps to ensure that they are gathering the views of everybody in the area so that the centre can serve you all. The centre conducted a consultation with everyone in April 2010 and intends to make these a six monthly event so that your views can really shape the centre and its work. The centre also takes great care in gathering views of current users through evaluations and through the Parents' Forum. You have a parent representing you on the Advisory Board, which is the board which takes part in the governance of the centre.

The centre staff currently use a great deal of data to help them come to conclusions about the services they provide and the quality of those services. They also use your views and evaluations to inform them of the quality of services and your needs. Currently, this data is not giving them a clear picture so they are unable to give you the services to make a real impact on your needs. The centre staff are working hard to use all this information more effectively.

We have asked the centre to make sure it is making contact with more of the Field Lane community and making sure the services are meeting your needs and making positive contributions to your lives. We have asked them to make the information they look at more user friendly so that it can form a real picture of what is needed and how it is improving the lives of people in the area. We are also aware of how the centre space is not fully used and that many sessions, both in childcare and in the activities provided, are not very well attended and at times attendance is falling. We have asked the centre to consider this issue and try to improve it.

The centre staff works very well together as a team and are committed to improving the centre and determined to make sure the activities and support they provide is based on your needs and wants.

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

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