

Inspection report for Heaton Primary School and Children's Centre

Local authority	Bradford
Inspection number	362496
Inspection dates	14-15 December 2010
Reporting inspector	Tara Street

Centre governance	The governing body of Heaton Primary School and Children's Centre
Centre leader	Beverley Ledra
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected
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Linked school if applicable	Heaton Primary School
Linked early years and childcare, if applicable	Heaton 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 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 a range of users including senior managers, centre staff, parents and carers, members of the Children's Centre Committee and a number of partners including Early Years Foundation Stage and childcare partners; health, education and children's social care professionals. They observed the centre's work, and looked at a range of relevant documentation, including the centre's operational plans, evaluations, key policies and safeguarding procedures.

Information about the centre

Heaton Primary School and Children's Centre is a phase one centre situated on a large housing estate in Bradford. It is integrated, with one main entrance to Heaton Primary School and Nursery, Heaton Children's Centre, the Acorn Centre and the Forest School. The centre has been providing the full core offer for children's centres in areas with the highest levels of deprivation since 2006. This includes a range of health, social care, family support, childcare and early learning and childminder network support. The centre serves a community which experiences high levels of social and economic disadvantage, where there is also a high level of movement into and away from the area. There are significant issues surrounding overcrowded housing, domestic violence, drug related issues and low levels of literacy and numeracy. Levels of unemployment are high, as is the number of families in receipt of benefits and many of the existing jobs are low paid. The predominant cultural groups are Pakistani and White British, although the reach area is home to families from a wide range of ethnic and cultural backgrounds. There are an increasing number of families from East European countries and minority ethnic backgrounds. Housing is mostly social or private rental. Most children enter early education with

knowledge and skills that are significantly below expectations for their age. There are links to local primary schools.

The day-to-day management and provision of service delivery at Heaton Primary School and Children's Centre is the responsibility of the governing body of Heaton Primary School and Children's Centre. Governance of the centre is provided by the local authority in conjunction with the Children's Centre Committee that includes providers, delivery partners and members of the local community and users that attend the children's centre.

Childcare is provided by the on-site Heaton Children's Centre which was visited as part of this inspection. The Ofsted report for Heaton Children's Centre childcare, which was inspected as part of Heaton Primary School and inspected at the same time as the children's centre judged the childcare provision as good overall and was taken into account for this inspection. This report can be viewed at www.ofsted.gov.uk

Inspection judgements

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

Overall effectiveness

The effectiveness of the children's centre in meeting the needs of and improving outcomes for users and the wider community

2

Capacity for sustained improvement

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

2

Main findings

Heaton Primary School and Children's Centre provides good support for children and families which has a positive impact on the lives of those who use the service. The overall effectiveness of the centre stems from the management team's relentless drive for improved outcomes for the children, families and community it serves. Staff's knowledge and understanding of the specific needs of users and the personalised support, care and guidance towards meeting those needs are outstanding.

The centre's wide range of activities, opportunities and services are held within a welcoming, secure environment that promotes and values diversity and difference. Children's learning and development are effectively supported through planned, purposeful sessions. Parents, carers and extended families are equally well supported and relationships are firmly based on mutual respect and trust. 'Staff are always

there to listen to you', is a typical comment. Centre users and volunteers are confident in being accepted as part of 'the team' and feel their contributions are valid and valued. The children's centre committee is well represented by partner agencies, fully supports the work of the centre and is keen to drive improvement. However, at the time of inspection the Children's Centre Committee did not have a sufficient number of parent and carer representatives. This means that the users of the centre are not fully represented and could be more effective in contributing to the decision-making, strategic planning and evaluation of services, although their voices are heard through the parent forum group and staff use this information well to plan future activities and services.

The duty to safeguard all children and adults is understood and acted upon by all staff. Particularly strong actions are taken to support vulnerable families and children, and those who need support in times of acute need or crisis. All support services are fully integrated, with centre staff and other key professionals forming a highly effective team around each child and family. Excellent liaison and collaborative working ensures there are no gaps in this ring of support. As a result, children's and vulnerable adults' safety and well-being are well assured.

The centre managers, committee and children's centre committee have a very good understanding of the needs of the wider community. The centre evaluates its outcomes through analysis of a telling range of information from the local authority and different users and this is used to identify particular strengths and areas for development, although current data shown on the E-Start system does not always accurately reflect what is happening at the centre. Data from health sources are markedly poorer because data reported to the centre is unreliable and often not up to date. This limits the centre's ability to accurately evaluate its effectiveness and plan actions to improve its provision.

Managers lead by example and set high standards for others to follow. Staff are passionate, enthusiastic, committed and hard working in the pursuit of shared goals. They have a high level of expertise supported by good quality professional development. This together confirms the centre's good capacity for future improvement.

What does the centre need to do to improve further?

Recommendations for further improvement

- Strengthen information sharing systems between the Primary Care Trust and the children's centre, to ensure data is reliable and up to date and, therefore, to enable the centre to evaluate the impact services are making against the national indicators for health and improve the quality of provision.
- Develop further the children's centre committee to ensure that a sufficient number of parents and carers are involved so users of the centre are fully represented and can more effectively contribute to the decision making, strategic planning and evaluation of services.

How good are outcomes for users?

2

Outcomes of the centre's work are good and an increasing number of users benefit from its services. The centre records an increased uptake of targeted activities, suggested by users and provided by partner agencies, to promote health and emotional well-being. Midwife and health visitors are especially proactive in directing parents and prospective parents towards the centre's services. Case studies and interviews about ante- and post-natal support, health trainer clinics, baby yoga and massage groups verify their popularity, uptake and impact. Baby and playgroup sessions, beauty courses, English for speakers of other languages (ESOL) classes, 'Men & Kids Chill Out' group and parenting courses such as, 'Fun and Family' are the most popular sessions. Many learning sessions are supported by crèche facilities, which are greatly valued by participating families. Parents speak of their increased confidence in repeating these activities at home and the positive affect this is having on relationships with their children.

Users say that they feel safe and secure in the centre. They place a high level of trust in the staff and are confident that any worries, concerns or challenges will be allayed or appropriately addressed. Children with special educational needs and/or disabilities are able to attend all sessions and relish the opportunity to socialise and learn through play with their friends. The family support team is particularly proactive in promoting safety in the home and offer individual support and guidance to families. The centre helps parents to gain access to national home safety schemes, such as 'Safe at Home' to obtain equipment such as smoke alarms and safety gates and there has been a good uptake of this. Children behave well and all at the centre show a high level of respect for one another.

Children who are subject to child protection plans, looked after children and vulnerable families that face struggles every day are particularly well supported. Teams of centre staff, social care workers and health professionals form a triangle of highly effective support and protection. Tried and tested systems, including use of the common assessment framework, successfully record and monitor this support and ensure the safety and well-being of these most vulnerable children and adults. The centre is particularly successful in empowering and enabling users to become independent and to take on responsibilities. 'They have helped me deal with the children and now I am a much better mum' and 'I now know that I can do anything if I really want it' were two of the many positive comments from users. The centre actively encourages adults to volunteer throughout the primary school and children's centre in supporting activities, allows them to take a leading role and effectively guides them towards gaining qualifications in a relevant field. Several parents and carers expressed the view that their economic stability and independence had improved as a result of the opportunities the centre has provided. Users benefit from the centre's excellent partnership with the Bradford Community Advice Service,

which offers a wide range of guidance on issues, such as, how to access benefits, dealing with debt and housing issues, and with Jobcentre Plus and Children’s Information Link. They are effectively signposted to relevant information and guidance that is tailored to their needs and circumstances. As a result, many users develop good and relevant skills and qualifications to equip them for the world of work and improve their life chances.

Children are provided with good quality learning experiences which have a positive impact on their learning and development. The excellent liaison between the primary school, Reception class, Nursery and children’s centre staff has resulted in a number of initiatives being implemented to improve children’s speaking and listening skills which effectively identify and support those who require additional speech and language support. For example, they are making effective use of learning through play activities, such as parent workshops to promote the importance of language with parents and offer speech and language assessment clinics with the in-house therapist. Professionals spoken to during the inspection reported a positive impact that close working with the centre has had in breaking down barriers, raising aspirations and improving outcomes for young children.

The centre collects the views of parents and carers through widely distributed questionnaires and satisfaction surveys at the end of courses and events. Parents and carers happily express their views, thoughts and opinions through the parents’ forum sessions with the staff. However, there are not enough parents and carers representing the reach area on the children’s centre committee, which limits users’ contribution to the strategic decision making and development planning of services.

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 shared vision of the centre managers drives all actions and is clearly focused on providing exactly what each child, family and the local community need. Through

appropriate, robust assessment, each user's needs are known and understood. Excellent multi-agency partnerships ensure the needs of individual children and families are very well met. Those who are identified by, or referred to, the centre are quickly assessed and high-quality, appropriate provision put in place.

Staff know the community very well; they are aware of the needs and demands for services and activities. The centre is proactive in taking services out to groups who are hard to reach and who they know to be vulnerable. These services are supported by excellent partnership working and the centre's persistence in establishing links with hard-to-reach groups through schools and other partner agencies. In times of crisis, families are confident to turn to the centre for support. Comments such as, 'they are my lifeline', accurately reflect the users belief in the centre.

The centre provides outstanding support, effective coordination and integration of appropriate services so that parents and carers feel empowered to take the lead and improve their own, their families and others' outcomes. Men are equally well supported. Single dads, granddads and men who support their partner's children have been attracted to the centre's facilities through the 'Men & Kids Chill Out group'. The centre opens at weekends to accommodate the men and their children. Users are encouraged to be actively involved and enjoy a wide range of activities such as go-karting, football and circuit training, tie-dying activities and healthy eating sessions. The centre also provides a meeting place for the childminding network at which support and training is available for childminders.

There is a good range of activities to support learning and development. Sessions, such as structured toddler groups and 'Jumping Beans for Toddlers,' which promote physical activity sessions, are well planned and show clear learning objectives covering all areas of learning. Several initiatives are run at the centre and with partner agencies to help parents and carers develop their skills in behaviour management and supporting the communication language and literacy development of their children. For example, 'The Nurturing Programme' is a ten week course designed to support parents in all aspects of parenting, but with a particular focus on personal, social and emotional development. Good quality resources and equipment are available to parents and carers, such as a Nursery library to make books more accessible. Staff plan activity sessions for parents on how to use rhymes, music and movement to promote language development with their children. These activities enable parents and carers to support their child's learning in the home.

Responses to questionnaires, evaluations of activities, interviews with users and specific case studies overwhelmingly report the difference the centre makes and users are passionate in their appreciation of this. 'I don't know what I would do without the centre and the staff', was a comment reflecting the impact of the centre's exemplary understanding of users' needs and its outstanding care, guidance and support.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The effectiveness of the assessment of the needs of children, parents and other users	1
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	1

How effective are the leadership and management?

2

The determination of the leadership team to ensure continuous improvement steers all its actions. Whole-staff review and action planning is an everyday part of planning and provision. Senior leaders are clearly focused on tackling weaknesses and improving provision and current priorities are clearly recorded in the centre's action plan. This effectively supports the centre in accurately measuring its progress towards the broad objectives. However, there are currently difficulties in accessing reliable and up-to-date key data from health authorities that would allow the centre to work more effectively towards clearly defined, measurable targets against the national indicators for health.

The children's centre committee and staff share the leadership teams aspirations and are highly motivated to provide a wide range of good quality and effective services to the community, particularly those that are hard to reach and vulnerable. However, although parents and carers' views and ideas for future services are actively sought and taken forward, at present the children's centre committee does not have a sufficient number of parents and carers who are representative of the reach area to enable them to more effectively contribute to any decision making about the centre and its services.

All staff undergo a wide range of relevant and extended training focusing on the learning, welfare and safeguarding of children, their families and vulnerable adults. Staff confidence, therefore, allows for continuous improvements to be made based on the immediate needs of the users, best practice, new initiatives and creative thinking. For example, the provision of one-to-one support in families' homes, when requested and an ever-broadening range of activities, learning experiences and opportunities on offer throughout each week. The managers and staff at the centre are currently working on an 'Innovation Project,' which is a transformational programme aimed at improving outcomes for children from birth to five years. As part of this work they are working extensively with partner agencies and community members in the reach area to re-think the way that services work in order to strive for the best outcomes for children and families.

Staff are vigilant in identifying and responding to any potential dangers that users may encounter. Checks have been made on all adults who work as part of the centre and all required systems and procedures are in place to safeguard the users' wellbeing.

There is a keen sense of family within the centre and leaders strive to embrace all that the local community has to offer. The centre staff regularly attend local events to promote its work and to reassure, advise and engage current and new users. The universal contact service reaches out to all families including those who face the most difficulties and challenges in their lives. Highly integrated services work tirelessly to ensure that the needs, wants, security and well-being of the most vulnerable children and adults are effectively safeguarded.

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. The leadership team and partner agencies have a reflective approach to working and continually look for new ways to reach into the local community and include groups of users effectively. For example, staff are working hard to ensure that the services offered encourage more participation of families from the European Union.

The centre is keenly focused on the sustainability of the site and also the services it provides. Robust financial management systems are in place to monitor day-to-day expenditure and delegation of responsibility for resources is at an excellent level to ensure timely and effective packages of support to families. These actions effectively support the centre's ability to provide good value for money.

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	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

Information from the most recent Ofsted inspections of Heaton Children’s Centre was taken into account when writing about early years provision and outcomes for children.

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

Heaton Primary School and Children’s Centre was inspected on 14- 15 December 2010. The centre was judged to be good overall. We talked with parents and carers, staff, a wide range of partners and members of the local authority linked to the centre. The centre’s work was observed and a range of documents looked at. Some aspects of the centre’s work are outstanding. These include how well the centre knows each and every one of you and exactly what help you may need, and the quality of the care, guidance and support it offers to you all. It was a privilege to talk with so many of you and to hear how much you value the work of the centre staff and never hesitate to call on them. You told us they are hard working, approachable, never judgemental and often a lifeline in the tougher times. We found this too. Led by a knowledgeable, passionate leadership team, the centre and partner staff have a high level of expertise. They work exceptionally well together and offer outstanding practical and emotional support to children, families and vulnerable adults.

This exceptional care not only takes place in the centre. Increasingly, the centre reaches out into the local community, seeking out those families who face complex and sometimes overwhelmingly difficult times. This inclusive practice extends to everyone who uses the centre, regardless of age, ability, gender or cultural background.

The centre provides a wide range of carefully planned activities to help with your children's learning and development. It was lovely to see the little ones and their mums and dads enjoying the playgroup sessions together, exploring the sensory activities on offer, making party hats and watching children enjoying quiet stories and one-to-one special times. These activities prepare the children well for their future time in school. The centre offers a good range of services and activities for all families in the area, which are led by skilled and dedicated professionals. They are helping you to keep yourselves and your children safe and healthy. You told us that you feel safe at the centre and are happy to leave your children in the care of the staff. This reflects the good work the centre does to promote safety and welfare and its good safeguarding arrangements. You told us that the centre was a good place to meet up with other parents, especially if you feel alone but, more usually, to catch up and see how each of you are doing. Your open, frank discussions during, for example, the parent forum and the 'Parenting Programme' sessions were particularly moving and enlightening. It is good to note that the centre provides parents with this open forum and to see that you feel secure and confident to speak so candidly with each other.

The centre makes a good contribution towards improving the futures of its families. We spoke with a number of volunteers who are gaining a great deal from opportunities for further training, work experience and qualifications provided in partnership with Jobcentre Plus. The thriving 'Men's and Kids Chill Out group' provides excellent opportunities at the weekend for men to use the centre and its resources and to have valuable one-to-one quality time with their children. Your views and opinions are held in high esteem by the centre and your evaluations of activities, training and courses contribute to the centre's overall evaluation of how well it is meeting your needs. Under the leadership teams' experienced management it is clear that there is a strong team of talented, committed staff, all of whom have high ambitions for everyone in the community and the enthusiasm, commitment and energy to keep improving the provision and to improving families' lives. Their successes to date demonstrate that they have a strong capacity to continue making things better.

In order to further develop the work of the centre, we have asked the centre to continue to work with the local health authority to ensure that they are provided with reliable and up to date information so that the centre has a clearer picture of how well it is doing and where it needs to go in relation to health targets for your area. We have also asked the centre to extend the number of parents and carers on the children's centre committee so that you are able to more effectively contribute to the future development of your children's centre.

Thank you very much for your welcome and your open, honest discussions with the inspection team. These helped us immensely in building up a clear and accurate picture of your centre's work and the difference you feel it has made to your lives. We wish you and your families all the very best for the future.

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