

Inspection report for Allerton Children's Centre

Local authority	Bradford
Inspection number	366414
Inspection dates	13–14 January 2011
Reporting inspector	Priscilla McGuire

Centre governance	Bradford Local Authority
Centre leader	Dave Morrison
Date of previous inspection	Not Previously Inspected
Centre address	Leytop Primary School, Avenel Road, Allerton, Bradford, BD15 7PQ
Telephone number	01274 493089
Fax number	Not Applicable
Email address	dave.m@leytop.bradford.sch.uk

Linked school if applicable	Leytop Primary School
Linked early years and childcare, if applicable	Child's Play Neighbourhood Nursery

The inspection of this Sure Start Children's Centre was carried out under Part 3A of the Childcare Act 2006 as inserted by section 199 of the Apprenticeships, Skills, Children and Learning Act 2009.

Introduction

The inspection addresses the centre's contribution to:

- facilitating access to early childhood services by parents, prospective parents and young children
- maximising the benefit of those services to parents, prospective parents and young children
- improving the well-being of young children.

The report is made to the local authority and a copy is sent to the children's centre. The local authority may send the report to such persons it considers appropriate and must arrange for an action plan to be produced in relation to the findings in this report.

This inspection was carried out by an additional inspector and an early years inspector.

The inspectors held meetings with centre staff, representatives from the local authority and other external organisations, health services, parents and carers.

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

Information about the centre

Allerton Children's Centre is a phase two centre which shares its site with Leytop Primary School and a local library in Allerton, Bradford. The children's centre is based in a school building and opened in 2007. Governance is through Bradford local authority. In conjunction with other agencies, the centre offers a range of universal and targeted services including daycare provision, family support, health clinics and adult learning. Activities are organised at four venues used by the centre.

The centre serves a reach area that is made up of different communities. Data shows that the starting point for many children in the reach area is lower than the national average. Most families are of White British heritage but a growing number of families are from other groups, most notably Asian Pakistani. An increasing number of families within the reach area are European Union migrants (EU) migrants, asylum seekers or have refugee status. A significant number of families are in receipt of tax credits and the income deprivation score within the reach area is higher than average. The level of registered Disability Living Allowance claimants within the reach area is also higher than the district average. Obesity rates at reception stage are higher than local and national averages. Childcare is offered by a private daycare provider located in a separate building on the same site as 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

Overall effectiveness of the centre is good with some aspects that are outstanding. The centre offers good quality provision. The centre is very much at the heart of the local community and some parents and carers describe it as a 'second home'. Users, partners and members of the wider community who are involved with the centre at some level by, for example, providing venues or attendance at events, comment very highly about its welcoming, warm and friendly environment. The centre is committed to improving the lives not just of children who attend the centre but their siblings and entire families. Inclusion is actively promoted and diversity well celebrated with many events for centre users being organised to link with cultural events that are significant to members of the local community.

Safeguarding is a priority at the centre. The centre has also been successful in helping users understand the link between safety and risk management. For example, one parent was afraid of playing with her children in the local park but has learnt through participation in centre activities organised at the park that children can play safely outdoors if risks are well managed.

Data shows that the starting point for many children in the reach area is lower than the national average. However, the number of children who reach 78 points across the Early Years Foundation Stage profile has improved significantly since 2007. Case study evidence from the local primary school also shows that Allerton Children's Centre has a positive impact on the lives of children, particularly in relation to their transition to school, their social and personal development and their communication skills. Personal development of parents and carers is also actively promoted and many volunteer at the centre. Parents and carers are well represented on the advisory board. However, the board is new and its role in governance and decision-making has yet to be established.

One of the key strengths of the centre is the productive and often creative use of

excellent partnership arrangements to provide services, support and resources for users. The head of centre is enthusiastic about finding new partners to work with the centre. Highly effective partnership work allows both the centre and its partners to achieve their respective goals and together they are able to achieve what they could not individually accomplish. Assessment of the needs of children, parents and carers and other users is another key strength of the centre. Staff make a sensitive, effective and personalised assessment of the needs of users and families.

Users talk very highly of the outstanding support and care they receive at the centre. They feel valued and respected. Staff are very committed to doing everything they can to support users and to respond in the most appropriate way to their needs. The package of support available for users is enhanced by multi-agency working. Support is offered at different levels but is always targeted to users' individual needs. For example, in some cases home visits are used to help users learn how to build their relationships with their children. In other cases, families are signposted to other services for more specialist support.

The centre is making good progress against targets agreed with the local authority. Users have a 'voice' and their suggestions are valued and lead to improvements. However, more work needs to be done to ensure a greater link between the delivery plan and the self-evaluation report. Although evaluation and monitoring of services and activities are carried out on a regular basis and are effective, the process of evaluation needs to be developed to ensure it measures and monitors impact and provides good quality information that can be used to raise standards. However, given the high calibre leadership and management and the effectiveness of performance management processes, the centre has a good capacity for continuous improvement.

What does the centre need to do to improve further?

Recommendations for further improvement

- Ensure evaluation of provision is a systematic process which measures and monitors impact on users.
- Develop and secure the role of the advisory board to ensure it makes an active and meaningful contribution to decision-making and governance of the centre.

How good are outcomes for users?

2

Outcomes for centre users are good. Activities and training organised by the centre have been successful in helping families improve their health. Health promotion is a key part of the role of one of the members of staff, who attends regular health training courses. Excellent partnerships with health professionals, such as health visitors and school nurses, have been instrumental in helping centre users learn how to improve their health and that of their children. Referrals from health visitors to the centre have helped families access support to improve their diets, to reduce their

social isolation, improve their emotional health and benefit from fitness and exercise classes offered by the centre. One parent said about the health improvements she had made: 'I have lost one stone in weight and gone a dress size. The children also eat more fruit and veg. now.'

Nurses give good advice and guidance to users about oral health, smoking cessation and other issues. Families also benefit from learning how to cook healthier meals for their families. One parent said of the skills she acquired since attending the centre: 'I learnt how to bake and know how to make a cake from scratch now.'

Parents and carers feel the centre offers a safe environment for their children. Effective and swift action is taken by staff to deal with any safeguarding issues and the Common Assessment Framework is used as appropriate to identify the most effective support mechanism for families. However, this is an area for further development and targets have been set to ensure greater use of the Common Assessment Framework by staff. Very few children in the reach area are on child protection plans but support is offered in conjunction with other agencies to ensure the needs of any of these children are met. Home safety is well promoted and centre users have made their homes safer environments by working with centre staff to identify and reduce risks in their homes by installing for example safety gates. One parent said, 'I was able to get fireguards and other safety equipment from the centre which I got free – I could never have afforded to buy all that equipment.'

The number of children who reach the 78 points of the Early Years Foundation Profile is lower than average, but evidence shows that the gap is narrowing and that the achievement of children in relation to the Early Years Foundation Profile is increasing. Children at the local school who have attended the centre make good progress at the school. Children and their parents and carers benefit significantly from their attendance at the centre. They have fun during play activities at the centre and at other venues. One parent said, 'I totally enjoy coming to the centre, it is a fun place for the children.' Another parent added, 'Children will have good memories of childhood because of what the centre has organised.'

Children develop good social and communication skills through activities and events, such as 'Stay and Play' and 'Story time' sessions. As a direct result of the centre, many families have been exposed to new experiences such as trips to the park, trips to the theatre and participation in community-wide activities organised by the centre.

Parents and carers also make good progress in their education and personal development. They develop the skills and confidence to live economically independent lives. Some centre users have progressed from volunteering onto employment. Other parents have gained accredited qualifications. One former centre user is now employed as a member of staff. Personal development is strongly encouraged by the head of centre and volunteers have good opportunities to develop their knowledge and skills. Positive behaviour of children is encouraged at the centre and at home. Parents are given good support to help promote the positive behaviour of their children. They also acquire and develop effective parenting skills and learn

from other parents. Parents are actively involved in the operation of the centre and contribute ideas, suggestions and views through the Parents Forum which is promoted as a 'Monday Mums' and Dads' session. Their views are valued and inform development of provision. For example, the centre purchased six notebook computers in response to a request from parents and carers who want to develop information and communication technology (ICT) skills.

Two designated 'Parent Champions' support and encourage other parents and carers and one of the parents has worked with centre staff to plan and deliver basic training for parents in ICT. Parents and carers who attended the course were able to use their ICT skills to produce curricula vitae (CVs) and posters and some progressed onto other courses. Parents and carers are well represented on the newly formed advisory board but their contribution to the governance of the centre through the advisory board is still to be developed.

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 and activities which help to improve outcomes for the wider community and for centre users. A real strength of provision is the extensive range of partners that work with the centre staff to assess and meet the needs of users. The head of centre has been very successful and creative in engaging the commitment of a wide range of partners from the statutory, voluntary and private sectors. He has also secured the engagement of local residents, a local councillor and community groups in centre-organised activities.

Most of the centre staff live in the reach area and have a good knowledge of the issues faced by the community and the changing nature of the population. Assessment of users' needs and the needs of others within the reach area is sensitive, timely, appropriate and highly effective. Local intelligence is used very

effectively along with data to assess the needs of users and the wider community. The response to families in crisis is very effective and leads to improvement. For example, one family living in poor quality and unhealthy accommodation received help from the centre working in conjunction with other agencies, to move to significantly better accommodation.

Comprehensive data is provided by the local authority about the reach area, particularly in relation to health characteristics. Links with local schools have been used effectively to offer services to children and families from the local community. Work with local schools has been instrumental in breaking down barriers and enabling more parents and carers to become involved in school activities.

Personal development and learning are actively promoted at the centre. Activities, events, training courses and opportunities to volunteer are offered to encourage users to develop their learning and skills. An English as a Second Language (ESOL) course has been particularly successful in helping users who do not speak English as a first language to develop their language and conversational skills and to gain the confidence to participate in other activities organised by the centre. Liaison with local colleges is also used to provide learning opportunities for users.

The head of centre has been creative and successful in providing a wide range of activities, celebration events, training courses and trips. Some activities have exposed children and families to new experiences. For example, trips to the theatre and participation in the 'Lord Mayor's' parade were first-time experiences for many families and children. The strategy of the centre is to reach out to whole families and the community rather than to just users of the centre. Many activities are organised around Every Child Matter Outcomes or in conjunction with national events such as 'Big Breakfast Week', 'National Poetry Day', 'Science Week' and 'Chinese New Year'.

The quality of care, guidance and support for users is outstanding. Many case studies and interviews with users illustrate the success of centre staff in providing good quality support at the right time and of the right type. Users and staff from partner agencies comment on the high quality of personal care and support offered by staff at the centre. A designated member of staff has responsibility for family support and she works very effectively with staff from a wide range of agencies to provide support for families. A parental involvement worker works jointly for the centre and for the local primary school and offers good quality guidance and support to parents.

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

Leadership of the centre is inspirational and management is good. Roles and responsibilities are clearly understood and staff work together as a cohesive team that shares a common purpose. The head of centre has a creative approach to the delivery of services and this is reflected in the wide and extensive range of innovative activities and events that are offered. Marketing of services is good and there is a systematic approach to advertising activities throughout the community. The extensive range of partners that work productively with the centre is impressive. These partners include health professionals, Job Centreplus staff, local supermarkets, charity organisations, creative artists, community groups, local residents and other children's centres. Partners contribute expertise, support and resources that are well matched to the needs and interests of users.

Arrangements for accountability and performance management are clear. Staff are well supported and staff, users and partner organisations speak very highly of the head of centre and his team. The centre provides good value for money and uses resources wisely. Accommodation at the centre is limited but this is recognised and improvements have been made to the layout of the centre. Venues out in the community are used to extend the 'space' that can be used to deliver services. This has mutual benefits for other partners. For example, a local church hall is used for regular activities and this has enabled the church to engage better with its local community. Centre staff also use their expertise to build capacity within other organisations. For example, a member of staff works regularly with a local charity to help parents and carers learn how to use play as a development activity.

Local authority staff actively support the process of self-evaluation by providing comprehensive data based on national indicators and local data and work well with the head of centre to review performance against agreed targets. Performance management through both the school and the local authority is a systematic and supportive process for the head of centre. A quarterly report is produced by the local authority which identifies key actions for improvement. Targets for performance are regularly reviewed. Although the self-evaluation report is comprehensive, the link between the report and the delivery plan is not strong enough. Monitoring of activities are carried out on a regular basis but the process of evaluating impact of provision is insufficiently thorough.

The centre's arrangements for safeguarding children and families meet requirements well and staff have received appropriate training in safeguarding and know when and how to take action if concerns arise. Risk assessments of all activities and venues used are carried out on a regular basis and as appropriate. There is an active and immediate response to families whose children may be at risk of harm. Multi-agency working is used effectively to safeguard families.

The centre has made a good response to the changing profile of the local population. Inclusion for all users, potential users and the wider community is actively promoted and diversity well celebrated with festivals organised in conjunction with cultural or religious events such as EID, Chinese New Year and Christian festivals. In healthy eating or cookery sessions, diversity is also celebrated and users share recipes from different countries and also teach each other how to cook food that is representative of their respective cultures. Community cohesion is actively promoted and negative perceptions changed. One parent said, 'Before the children's centre, you would never have seen a Muslim child sing in a choir around here, but now you do.' Inclusive practice and support to ensure that parents with disabled children or children with special educational needs can access all the services and activities offered by the centre is also good.

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	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	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

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 Allerton Children's Centre on 13-14 January 2011. We judged the centre as good overall.

During our visit we looked at the centre's plans and various documents and talked with many of you and also the staff and professionals who work with you at the main centre and at other venues. Those of you we met spoke very highly about the centre and some of you said that you felt the centre was 'like a second home'. It is clear from what you said and from what we observed that the centre is very much at the heart of your local community and helps to improve the lives of families.

You also told us how much you valued the support and care you receive at the centre and that it provides a warm, friendly environment. We were impressed with how much the centre means to you and one of the real strengths of the centre that we identified is the excellent care and support that is offered directly by staff or through their work with other organisations. Guidance to other services is also very effective and if the centre staff cannot help you directly, they know where to find the right help.

We were impressed with the extensive range of activities, events and services offered by the centre and we know this is a result of the hard work of the head of centre and his team. We know from talking to you that you and your children enjoy the range of activities, training sessions, trips and events offered by the centre. The centre has also helped many of you to improve your health by participating in fitness sessions or by eating and cooking healthier meals. Many of you have also gained confidence from attending sessions or have learnt how to be better parents.

Staff at the centre know your community very well. They also have an excellent understanding of your needs as families and are very skilled at working with you to find out exactly what services or support matches your needs.

As users of the centre, your views are valued and respected. We know that an advisory board has been recently set up and that some parents and carers are represented on the board. We want the board to be successful and have asked the centre to ensure the board contributes to decision making and governance of the centre. We have also asked the centre to improve the way activities and events are evaluated so that improvements at the centre can be informed by good quality evaluations and strengths can be maintained.

We would like to thank those of you who gave up time to speak with us and were willing to share your thoughts and feelings about the centre. We wish all of you and your families the very best for the future.

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