

Inspection report for New Road Children's Centre

Local authority	Calderdale Metropolitan Borough Council
Inspection number	362531
Inspection dates	6-7 December 2010
Reporting inspector	Jean-Marie Blakeley

Centre governance	Calderdale Metropolitan Borough Council
Centre leader	Caren Parkinson
Date of previous inspection	NA
Centre address	New Road School, Sowerby New Road, Sowerby Bridge, HX6 1DY
Telephone number	01422 835614
Fax number	01422 835614
Email address	Caren.parkinson@calderdale.gov.uk

Linked school if applicable	New Road School
Linked early years and childcare, if applicable	New Road Children's Centre 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 one additional inspector and an early years inspector. The inspectors held meetings with staff and senior managers from the centre, parents and carers, members of the governing body, the advisory board and local authority representatives. Inspectors also met with a number of partners, including health and children's social care, adult education, speech and language therapists. They observed the centre's work, and looked at a range of relevant documentation.

Information about the centre

New Road Children's Centre opened in 2006 and is co-located with New Road Primary School. The centre is a phase one children's centre, providing the full core offer of services. It is situated in the westerly tip of the Sowerby Bridge reach area. Statistical data indicate that the area is split into 12 areas with four areas of high deprivation (in the top 20% nationally) and eight areas of low deprivation. The majority of people living in the area are of White British heritage but an increasing number of East European families are moving into the area.

The centre is part of a cluster model and is one of six children's centres and three satellite centres in the Central Halifax Service Area of Calderdale led by an area manager. Halifax Opportunities Trust (HOT) provides the children's centre services with the day care provided by Calderdale Metropolitan Borough Council (CMBC). CMBC maintains overall governance of the centre with HOT leading the advisory board. A central team, employed by HOT provides crèche provision, group session facilitators, family support and outreach staff. The area manager, children's centre manager, deputy children's centre manager and day-care staff are employed by CMBC.

The proportion of children who are living in households in receipt of benefits and where no one is working is above the national average. Known free school meal eligibility for children attending schools in the local area is well above the national

average. The skills and knowledge with which children enter the nursery are generally below those expected for their age.

The children’s centre is on a split level with the nursery and outreach services located separately within the building and accessed from two different entrances. The nursery provides full and part-time care Monday to Friday for children aged 0 to five years and is open 10 hours a day, 50 weeks per year. The provision complies with registration requirements for the numbers of children in each age group. The children’s centre is open Monday to Friday from 9am until 5pm with occasional evening and weekend sessions.

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

The centre offers satisfactory support to children and families. Outcomes for users, quality of provision, leadership and management and capacity to improve are all satisfactory. Parents, carers and users enjoy the welcoming centre. They told inspectors that they feel their children are happy, safe and well looked after in the day care. A particular strength of the centre is its response to meeting the needs of teenage parents and the support it gives them. As a result, vulnerable young parents grow in confidence and increase their parenting skills.

Safeguarding is good. Staff have a good understanding of child protection procedures, they are well trained and ensure that any concerns are promptly shared with relevant agencies. Unannounced visits from the manager responsible for safeguarding ensure all aspects of safeguarding are up to date. As a result, outcomes for staying safe are good. Children in the nursery learn how to stay safe when they are playing, using equipment such as scissors and how to be safe on the roads.

The centre staff work closely with health, family support and social work professionals. This leads to effective early identification of needs. The Common Assessment Framework is used well to identify, plan and coordinate support for families. As a result, the numbers of children on child protection plans has reduced. Children behave well during sessions and make steady progress in developing skills

from their low starting points. Evidence from case studies and discussions with users demonstrates that aspects of the provision are having a good impact on some children, adults and families. However, although users attend the joint adult and children sessions, such as 'Musical Minds', there is very low participation in family learning and adult education courses, such as literacy, numeracy, information and communication technology and story sacks.

The centre seeks the views of users through surveys, questionnaires and discussions. In response to feedback from users, the centre is adapting aspects of its provision. For instance, the centre has introduced courses in paediatric first aid because users wanted to be more confident in dealing with accidents at home. The leadership team recognises the need to find ways to involve users more in contributing to the centre's decision-making process, strategic planning and evaluation.

The centre has engaged well with families where there are children with disabilities through the provision of activities during the school holidays. Community cohesion has improved particularly between migrant Czech and local Asian families through the employment of a Czech speaking parent support worker. Although the number of users has significantly increased in the last year, managers recognise that there are some small pockets of deprivation where more work needs to be done to engage with families.

Data on outcomes, collated by the local authority, are used to plan and monitor the provision in line with strategic priorities. However, data are not sufficiently well understood or used to set specific and measurable targets to improve outcomes.

The centre's improvement plan identifies most of the priorities for development. The cluster centre managers, the local authority senior management team and the advisory board all meet regularly in their respective groups to evaluate each centre's performance. However, monitoring of development plans is not rigorous enough to ensure the follow through of issues and actions.

The leadership team is focusing on improving areas of weaker outcomes and filling any gaps in provision. Since it opened, there have been a number of changes in the management of the centre to address and improve aspects of its performance. Although some parts of the service have developed more slowly, there is evidence of greater improvement during the last year. The satisfactory and improving outcomes, together with a sound understanding of strengths and areas for development, demonstrate a satisfactory capacity for sustained improvement.

What does the centre need to do to improve further?

Recommendations for further improvement

- Ensure evaluation and monitoring of development plans are more rigorous.
- Increase the use and understanding of data to set targets for improvement.

- Increase user involvement in evaluation and decision making by establishing a centre user group.
- Develop effective strategies to engage with the hardest to reach families from the small pockets of severe deprivation.
- Increase the promotion of family and adult learning to improve the skills, knowledge, employability and economic well-being of families.

How good are outcomes for users?

3

Outcomes for children, adults and families are satisfactory and improving. The centre has systems in place to demonstrate how it is improving outcomes across most areas. In the day care, young children are happy and make satisfactory gains in their learning and development with good transition into the school. Their personal, social and communication skills increase steadily from low starting points. Parents increase their confidence and self-esteem.

Families and children are developing a secure understanding of how to keep healthy through cooking sessions and the promotion of healthy meals, snacks and physical activity. Immunisation rates are high. Obesity rates in reception, although steadily reducing, are still high. The numbers of mothers who start their babies on breast feeding is very good but too few continue and numbers are low by the time babies are 6-8 weeks. Skilled and effective counselling services have a good impact on the mental health and happiness of parents, adolescents and children. Too few women give up smoking during pregnancy.

The centre is a safe and secure environment where users feel they can share their concerns. Case studies indicate that some users, such as those who have been subject to domestic violence receive good support. A typical comment is that, 'If not for the staff here, I would not be here today, neither would my children. The centre helped me get a roof over my head, apply for benefits and gave me emotional support'.

Parental evaluations of parent-child sessions, such as 'Sticky Fingers' show that they make a sound contribution towards developing users' parenting skills. 'My child loves coming to the centre and is very happy and confident', said one parent. However, too few adults engage in family learning and adult education. Although the number of workless families in the reach area has reduced, only a few former centre users have gained employment.

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	3
--	----------

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 range of services provided by the centre is flexible and meets the needs of those who access the centre adequately. The recently revised programme now provides a clear pathway of activities linked to children's stages of development. There is variable but improving participation in services and day-care occupancy rates have increased. The centre is not centrally located and has little locally accessible outreach provision. Managers recognise that they need to do more to continue to increase the numbers of users from the small areas of severest deprivation.

The centre has a clear system for assessing the needs of all children, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, and for tracking their progress. Observation and assessment of children are used well to inform planning and the curriculum. Staff support child-initiated activities well and children make good choices for their learning. Children enjoy their learning and staff celebrate their achievements through informal discussions with parents and carers and through 'learning journals' and photographs.

Adults make satisfactory gains in their learning and development, particularly in parenting skills and confidence. Some parents benefit from a vocational childcare course, which led to one mother gaining employment. Parents gain knowledge and skills in managing children's behaviour through attendance on a behaviour course. However, adult learners do not participate in courses such as literacy and numeracy. The Job Centre Plus advisor attends the centre regularly and gives information and financial calculations to help get people into work. However, many users have low level employability skills and as a result, are not yet ready for work. The centre recognises that it needs to find ways of progressing parents from initial engagement activities to more structured learning, development and training opportunities.

Case studies show that the centre is having a positive impact on some vulnerable families. Users appreciate the support they receive from family support workers and the counselling and friendship groups established for those with post natal depression or mental ill-health issues. Parents are helped with counselling for depression and had support for debt management, and a typical comment is that, 'I

don't know what I would have done if it were not for this place'.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

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

The centre is a happy and friendly place and runs smoothly on a daily basis. Staff are motivated and committed to improving the work of the centre. The impact of leaders and managers on improving outcomes for users is increasing. Their ability to monitor and evaluate the centre's work and to demonstrate its impact is developing satisfactorily. Evaluation is partly supported by evidence of the impact on outcomes for users. This has resulted in some changes to provision, such as the refocus of the activities programme to help improve the Early Years Foundation Stage profile results and narrow the achievement gap.

Centre management, governance and advisory board meetings are focused on improving the service. Leaders, managers, governors and staff clearly understand their roles and responsibilities and have a good understanding of the needs of the community. Although the quality of provision and outcomes are monitored at all levels, the rigour in which the centre is held to account for its identified developments is not sufficiently thorough. As a result, some aspects of the centres work have developed too slowly. The contribution that users make to the strategic work of the centre is limited and there is currently no user representation from this centre on the cluster advisory board and a parent forum is not established.

Safeguarding is good. Procedures to ensure the protection of users as they move around the site are effectively implemented. Staff have a clear understanding about their roles in identifying and reporting concerns and do so promptly. The centre has good systems in place for recording information related to the vetting and recruitment of staff. Policies are appropriate and regularly updated. Activities are thoroughly risk assessed. Partnerships with other services, in particular, the health service and the family support team contribute well to satisfactory outcomes for users.

The centre is committed to promoting the inclusion of all children and their families. It knows its target groups and evaluates their engagement with the provision

demonstrated by the success in working with vulnerable teenage parents. However, they have yet to identify how services can be developed to further improve outcomes and to better engage with the very hardest to reach families.

The centre approaches sustainable development through a variety of mechanisms. It makes best use of its small accommodation and extends available space through its partnership with the school. As a result, it has increased its activities and user participation. The flexible use of staff, such as family support workers and health professionals, across the cluster of children’s centres means there is some targeting of resources to meet particular needs. However, a few services and activities are underutilised with low attendance by users, such as the monthly speech and language drop-in sessions. The centre provides satisfactory 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	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

None

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaining about inspections', which is available from our website: www.ofsted.gov.uk. If you would like us to send you a copy of the guidance, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

Summary for centre users

We inspected the New Road Children's Centre on 6 and 7 December 2010. We judged the centre as 'satisfactory' overall.

Thank you very much for talking with us and contributing to the inspection of your children's centre. Those of you we spoke to told us how much you enjoy coming to the centre. You said that you feel your children are well cared for and that they are safe.

The centre offers satisfactory support to all of you that use it. You said that staff are 'friendly' and give support if any families are in crisis. You particularly appreciated the counselling services and friends group. We found that staff have a very good understanding of child protection procedures and that they are well trained. Some of you told us how the support you have received at the centre has helped keep families together. The health care workers, family support worker and children's centre staff work closely together to try to make your experience a good one.

You told us that the services and activities at the centre meet your needs but we found that some people who might benefit from the centre are not using it. You like the activities with your children such as 'Musical Minds' but there are not many of you are being encouraged to take courses to get qualifications and skills to help improve your opportunities. Your children behave well and you all learn more about staying healthy and being even better parents. Teenage and young parents are really enjoying coming to the centre. There is good attendance at ante-natal clinics but we found that not many pregnant mums have taken up the offer of help to stop smoking. Although many mums start breastfeeding, not many are continuing until the babies are at least six to eight weeks old.

The centre listens to you and asks you what you think of the services and activities it offers. The staff change how and when they do some things because of what you say. For example, some of you asked for a first aid course to help you deal with accidents your children might have. You are enjoying the new paediatric first aid sessions at the centre. We would like to see you more involved in making decisions about your centre and making sure you have the right services, perhaps through a 'Parent's Forum' or getting involved on the advisory board.

Calderdale Metropolitan Borough Council helps the centre make sure it knows who lives in the area and helps them monitor who is benefiting from attending the centre. This has shown that people from some parts of the area are not using the services of the centre. The centre team needs to use this information better and find ways of making sure all the people in the area know about the centre, so that their families

can get more support to improve their lives. Those of you that come to the centre get on well together, make new friends and support each other.

The manager and all the staff are keen to improve the centre and have been making a number of changes this year, which you appreciate. You are pleased with how the nursery has improved and with the new activities in the centre. The centre already know the mains things they need to do but sometimes they do not always keep focused on them, which means some of the changes are slow.

Because the centre has steadily been improving and they know what they need to do to improve further, we are confident that it will continue to improve.

Thank you very much for sharing your views with us– we wish you well for the future.

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