

# Inspection report for Elland Children's Centre

Local authority	Calderdale
Inspection number	362473
Inspection dates	11-12 October 2010
Reporting inspector	Sarah Drake

Centre governance	Local authority
Centre leader	Julia Williams
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected
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Linked school if applicable	Elland CofE Junior and Infant school 107550
Linked early years and childcare, if applicable	Elland Children's Centre EY337954

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 Sections 49 and 50 of the Childcare Act 2006. The report of this inspection is available on our website [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk).

An inspection of the maintained primary school was carried out at the same time as the inspection of the centre under Section 5 of the Education Act 2005. The report of this inspection is available on our website [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk).

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

The inspectors held meetings with the centre manager, members of the senior leadership team, the principal officer for family services, parents and a large number of representatives from partner agencies. They also spoke informally with centre staff and users. The inspectors 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

Elland children's centre is a Phase 1 centre which opened in 2006. It is attached to Elland Church of England Junior and Infant school and is situated close to the town centre. This is a densely populated area which is identified as one of the 20% most deprived in the country. Here, 4.7% of families belong to ethnic minority groups, mainly Pakistani, Bangladeshi and Polish, and unemployment has risen steeply over the past year to 5.7%. The centre also serves a semi-rural community in which 1.8% of families belong to minority ethnic groups and 3.2% of families are in receipt of benefits. Sixty-seven per cent of local families are registered with the centre; of these 12% regularly attend centre activities. Eighty-five per cent of families recorded as belonging to minority ethnic groups are registered with the centre; of these around 6% attended activities in the past year.

The centre works with health, education and social organisations from both statutory and voluntary sectors. It operates throughout 50 weeks of the year, providing childcare for children from birth to four years between 8.00am and 6.00pm. When joining the early years provision, the majority of children have the skills expected for their age. The in-house midwifery and health visitor teams provide ante-natal and post-natal support to families and young children. This includes specialist support for young parents to be and mothers with drug or alcohol problems. Community Link workers are based on the premises. Family Support workers run weekly drop-in sessions and regular parenting programmes. Speech and language therapists run weekly and monthly sessions. Counselling and play therapy sessions are available for adults, young people and children. The centre runs a range of parent and toddler groups plus specialist groups to support childminders and grandparents. Staff also run groups within the wider reach area to support fathers and families that have children with disabilities. Credit Union and Jobcentre Plus staff run drop in sessions or one-to-one appointments. The centre also delivers courses in the adjacent library on return to work skills.

The centre is operated by the local authority. Having been supported by the local area extended services advisory board, it is in the process of setting up a children's centre advisory board to provide challenge and support for the three centres within the locality. There have been significant changes to staffing in the past 12 months. In November 2010 a satellite outreach centre is due to open in the grounds of Holywell Green Primary School.

## 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

Elland Children’s Centre provides a satisfactory service for local families, effectively helping those who use it to improve the outcomes for their children. Due to a large number of changes in leadership and staff over the past year, the centre is experiencing a period of transition. Detailed assessments have been conducted of local families’ needs as well as of the provision on offer from other agencies within the area. Well-focussed outreach work by staff has led to an increase in the numbers using the centre over recent months but, as the leaders are well aware, there is room to improve this further.

Clear lines of management and accountability mean that all staff understand their responsibilities and carry out their roles well. Satisfactory procedures are in place to ensure the safeguarding of all who use the centre, to promote equality and to celebrate diversity. Rigorous self-evaluation has highlighted the centre’s strengths and areas requiring further work. This has led to the strong sense of dynamism and purpose that is evident throughout the centre. New partnerships have been forged and new activities put in place, for example, to support those who are hoping to return to work. Those who use the centre are very positive about the services that it provides. Good quality care, guidance and support, with well coordinated working between different agencies, are making a real difference for individuals and families. Rates of breastfeeding in the area have increased and the numbers of teenage pregnancies have decreased. Parents and children show a good understanding of how to keep safe. Some who initially lacked self-confidence have moved on to volunteering, training and employment. ‘I wouldn’t be where I am now if it wasn’t for these people.’ is typical of users’ comments.

The systems for sharing information about all children’s needs or about the long-term impact of the centre’s work are not yet fully embedded. There are signs of good improvements for some individuals but it is too early for the centre to be able to demonstrate that its actions are having sustained positive outcomes for children and families in the wider community. The capacity for sustained improvement is satisfactory.

## What does the centre need to do to improve further?

### Recommendations for further improvement

- Increase the numbers of families that use the centre, particularly those belonging to groups that are not currently well represented.
- Embed systems and practice for the appropriate sharing of information between different agencies about children's needs and the long-term impact of the provision.

## How good are outcomes for users?

3
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One of the strengths of the centre is the impact that the parenting course has on children and their families. Drop-out rates from the eight week course are low and some past users have established a new group, offering helpful tips to each other from their own experience. They say it has made a, 'massive difference' to their lives, with less stress in the family and children who now understand about the consequences of making choices. Some have attended the course after referral through Common Assessment Framework processes or due to child protection concerns, with positive outcomes. Good quality behaviour and relationships throughout the centre create a welcoming, respectful environment in which children and other users feel very safe and grow in confidence. There has been a good uptake for sales and fitting of safety equipment and parents report that, for example, they now use a gate between their living space and kitchen to protect their children from danger. Similarly popular is the first aid course, which is now accompanied by helpful handouts after a suggestion from those who attended. Activities to promote healthy lifestyles, including nutrition and physical exercise have been much enjoyed and more are planned. However, those asked said they had only once used the recipes at home. Although 26 promises of smoke-free homes have been made, the numbers of pregnant mothers in the area who smoke have increased.

The all-round skills, including in communication, personal and social development, of the small number of children who attended the centre's Nursery and have recently completed their Reception Year at the adjacent school met or exceeded those expected for their age. They achieved well. There is no evidence about the skills of those who moved to other schools. The overall outcomes for Reception age children in local schools are broadly in line with those achieved in areas with similar levels of deprivation nationally. Children enjoy the activities provided in family sessions, such as messy mixing of foam, water and sand, and achieve satisfactorily. The Jobfather course, run in collaboration with local Connexions service and Jobcentre Plus, has proved effective in helping those attending to brush up their skills related to job applications. Benefits advice has helped some families to develop economic stability and increasing independence. Attendance at activities is increasing, from a low starting point 12 months ago, but not all sessions regularly attract good numbers. Appointments with specialists such as the speech and language therapist are not always kept. The largest group attending the centre does so for antenatal care.

Users' views are playing an increasing part in guiding the centre's practice.

*These are the grades for the outcomes for users*

<b>The extent to which children, including those from vulnerable groups, are physically, mentally and emotionally healthy and families have healthy lifestyles</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The extent to which children are safe and protected, their welfare concerns are identified and appropriate steps taken to address them</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which all users enjoy and achieve educationally and in their personal and social development</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The extent to which children engage in positive behaviour and develop positive relationships and users contribute to decision-making and governance of the centre</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The extent to which children are developing skills for the future and parents are developing economic stability and independence including access to training</b>	<b>3</b>

## How good is the provision?

**3**

Centre staff respond very effectively to referrals from its many partner agencies for support for families in crisis. Whether this means support with housing, after the incapacity of a parent, with a child who is failing to thrive or one who is being bullied at school, staff are highly focussed and have good knowledge of the best means for tackling difficulties. Sensitive observation and discussion often raise details of further underlying needs that lead to more well-targeted support and guidance. Close working between family support and community linkworkers ensures that the support is sustained whilst building up individuals' confidence and increasing their independence. As one user commented, 'If things are going bad, I just know I can turn to the centre for support.' Home visits and sessions held in, for example, the local library, help to extend the centre's reach. The recent introduction of, 'One page profiles' that identify from the outset individuals' likes, dislikes and how best they can be helped ensure that children are helped to settle swiftly and smoothly into activities.

The range of services is increasing. This is in response to needs identified through the centre's analysis of its current users and those it would like to reach, plus consultation in the community and with other agencies. For example, sessions are in place to support grandparents and those who suffer from domestic violence. Innovative work with the counselling service and play therapists is supporting adults and young children with mental health issues. Plans are in hand to provide, for example, services specifically aimed at minority ethnic groups and to develop users' creativity. All staff are determined to fill the identified gaps and the centre is beginning to do so successfully. The quality of care, guidance and support for individuals is good; however, in the words of one parent, 'People don't know the extent of the support on offer. They think it's just a nursery.'

*These are the grades for the quality of provision*

<b>The effectiveness of the assessment of the needs of children, parents and other users</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The extent to which the centre promotes purposeful learning, development and enjoyment for all users</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The extent to which the range of services, activities and opportunities meet the needs of users and the wider community</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The quality of care, guidance and support offered to users within the centre and the wider community</b>	<b>2</b>

### **How effective are the leadership and management?**

**3**

Good quality evaluation and rigorous systems of governance, professional supervision and accountability underpin the centre's improvement over recent months. Leaders have a detailed understanding, based on hard data, of the local community's needs and the gaps in the centre's provision. Parents who use the centre are involved at all levels of planning and evaluation, both through informal feedback and as members of the parents' group and the advisory board. Staff training is up to date and well targeted to reflect the centre's action plan. Safeguarding requirements are met. All staff are checked for their suitability to work with children and vulnerable adults, and activities are suitably risk assessed.

The centre and area managers have created a strong team with a clear vision to improve the well-being of local children. Good partnerships with an increasingly wide range of other agencies ensure that users can gain rapid access to the support they need and that resources are not wasted through duplication. However, the sharing of information between all agencies to build up a complete picture of the unique child is not yet fully in place. Tools to demonstrate the outcome and cost effectiveness of activities are being developed but their use is not fully embedded in practice and it is too early to see evidence of sustained impact. Staff are reaching out into the community through wide-ranging consultation and that aimed at specific groups, such as childminders. They have held meetings with, for example, a local solicitor and the imam at the mosque. The promotion of equality and diversity is satisfactory. Information is available in some other languages and translators, including volunteers, can support families if a need is identified. Parents with children who have disabilities are very appreciative of the support group organised for them at a neighbouring centre which has more space than Elland.

The centre provides a warm, encouraging welcome to all visitors. Those who use it greatly appreciate the support that it provides. Typical of their comments is, 'My life has completely turned around. I know how to be a mum now.' The leadership and management systems now in place have the capacity to ensure that this support

reaches a larger proportion of the local community. The centre currently provides satisfactory value for money.

*These are the grades for leadership and management<*

<b>The extent to which governance, accountability, professional supervision and day to day management arrangements are clear and understood</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which ambitious targets drive improvement, provision is integrated and there are high expectations for users and the wider community</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The extent to which resources are used and managed efficiently and effectively to meet the needs of users and the wider community</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The extent to which equality is promoted and diversity celebrated, illegal or unlawful discrimination is tackled and the centre fulfils its statutory duties</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The effectiveness of the centre's policy, procedures and work with key agencies in safeguarding children and, where applicable, vulnerable adults</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The extent to which evaluation is used to shape and improve services and activities</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which partnerships with other agencies ensure the integrated delivery of the range of services the centre has been commissioned to provide</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>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</b>	<b>3</b>

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

The lead inspector spoke briefly with those who inspected the linked primary school and the childcare setting in the week prior to the inspection covered by this report.

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](http://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](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk).



## Summary for centre users

We inspected the Elland Children's Centre on 11 and 12 October 2010. We judged the centre as satisfactory overall.

Thank you to all of you who spoke with the inspectors. As well as talking with you, we looked at the comments some of you have made about the service you receive. These were all very positive. We think that, 'Due to the support I am receiving I now feel that my family life is on an even keel.' sums up your opinions well. This is because the staff offer you good care, guidance and support. They are particularly good at working in partnership with other agencies, such as Family Support, housing and JobCentre Plus, and pointing you in the right direction for help.

It is good to know that fewer really young women in your area are becoming pregnant and that rates of breastfeeding have increased. We know that you enjoyed the healthy eating sessions: a few of you say that you have tried out the recipes at home. We are pleased that you feel so safe in the centre and are making sure your children are safe at home too. The parenting sessions are working well and helping you to improve your children's behaviour. This means that both you and your children are leading less stressful lives. It is also good that some of you are brushing up your return to work skills. Some of you have now got so much confidence that you are volunteering, attending training and getting jobs.

We know that the staff have done lots of work recently asking for your views about what could be improved. It is good that your parents' forum has an influence on how the centre moves forward. It is also good that the leaders have found out about the different groups in the local community who are not yet benefitting from the services on offer. The numbers of people who use the centre are going up but not enough use it yet for more than their ante-natal care or the Nursery. This is the main reason that we have judged the centre to be satisfactory, so we have asked the leaders to make sure that the number and variety of people who use the centre for different purposes increase.

We have also asked the leaders to persuade centre staff and those who work for other agencies, with your permission, to share information more freely about your family and children. We think that this will help them to tailor the services even more closely to your needs and also to make sure that the support they give you is having the hoped for outcome. We wish you well in the future.

The full report is available from your centre or on our website [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk).