

Inspection report for Colburn Children's Centre

Local authority	North Yorkshire
Inspection number	362458
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Reporting inspector	Lorraine Rowson-Clark HMI

Centre governance	North Yorkshire County Council
Centre leader	Mrs Julie Broughton
Date of previous inspection	n/a
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Linked school if applicable	n/a
Linked early years and childcare, if applicable	n/a

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 of Her Majesty's Inspectors and an early years inspector.

The inspectors held meetings with the children's centre manager, staff members, members of the steering group, a range of providers, partner agencies, users and local authority officers linked to the centre. They observed the centre's work, and looked at sessions in operation in the children's centre and in nearby locations. They also looked at a range of documentation including the centre's development plans, evaluations, key policies and safeguarding procedures.

Information about the centre

Colburn is a phase 1 single site centre and has developed from a Sure Start local programme. The area served by the centre is a rural community that borders Catterick Garrison, the largest military base in Europe. Colburn has pockets of significant social and economic deprivation and is ranked in the top 15% most deprived for living environment and 25% most deprived for crime.

The centre provides the full core offer and a wide range of supporting services, incorporating crèche facilities run by the NSPCC, health support, adult courses and workshops. In addition, the centre delivers outreach services at the neighbouring children's centres. Strategic direction is provided from the Children's Trust, through the children's centre strategic board, to the centre's steering group which is made up of representatives from the local community, including parents and carers.

The centre's designated childcare provision is provided by a nearby privately run nursery, Hipswell Kindergarten. It was last inspected in 2008 and will be subject to a separate inspection by Ofsted. The centre's other designated childcare provision closed in July 2010. Most children enter early education with a range of skills lower than expected for their age, particularly in social and language development.

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

'All staff are very welcoming; they always go that extra mile'. This comment typifies those expressed by parents and carers and helps to explain why Colburn is a good and improving centre. Some of its features are outstanding. The high quality of the provision is a result of the passion and drive of the leadership, staff, steering group, and its professional partners. Staff morale is high; staff support each other effectively and show great respect for their leadership team and all users and visitors of the centre. Excellent partnership work ensures that services are very well integrated and cohesive. Relationships between agencies are highly professional and mutually respectful with effective transfer of information between key partners ensuring the needs of users are met.

Outcomes for users are good and improving. The centre is particularly effective in keeping users safe and protected and in promoting users' contribution to the governance and decision making of the centre. Detailed data are being collected by the centre and are used to evaluate the effectiveness of activities. However, data are not yet being used to the full to assess how well the centre is making a difference over time to the lives of the families in the area it serves.

The centre consistently gives the highest priority to safeguarding all children and their families and the quality of care, guidance and support provided is excellent. As one parent reported, 'The centre has been my family and my rock and without it I would be lost'. The range of provision on offer meets the needs of users well. However, senior leaders are not complacent and recognise the need to look closely at the availability of childcare provision, which has recently been reduced due to the closure of one of its designated providers.

There are many opportunities for parents, carers and users to express their views and they are very effectively involved in decision making by their involvement in the active parents' forum and the steering group. Users are encouraged and supported in accessing local training courses, securing benefits and embarking on training for qualifications to return to work. However, the centre is eager to work more collaboratively with Adult Learning and Jobcentre Plus in order to further raise

families' aspirations.

Considering that outcomes are improving, together with its other strengths, including highly effective partnership working, the centre has good capacity to improve further.

What does the centre need to do to improve further?

Recommendations for further improvement

- Use data more effectively to fully assess the impact that the centre is having on outcomes over time in order to target future development.
- Assess the availability of early years childcare provision in order to meet the future needs of the community and any families in need of respite.
- Promote and encourage families to further raise their own aspirations by working more collaboratively with Adult Learning and Jobcentre Plus.

How good are outcomes for users?

2

Across all of the five areas, outcomes are improving strongly. This is because the centre provides a wide range of activities which are developed well in partnership with other agencies and professionals. Healthy lifestyles and healthy eating are promoted by all and early referral and intervention ensures that families who may be more vulnerable than others are appropriately supported. The strong integration of this work, based on a clear analysis of need is central to the centre's success. For example, the centre encourages parents and carers to use the drop-in sessions to see speech and language therapists for advice and support in helping their children develop their talking skills; appointments can also be made with the foot clinic for children with podiatry difficulties; and parents and carers have easy access to weaning support groups co-delivered by health practitioners. Good advice and support, in collaboration with local schools and health, is given to pregnant teenagers to access the centre's services, which enables them to build and maintain effective and supportive relationships with other users of the services, thereby reducing feelings of isolation. Parents, carers, and children benefit from the wide range of activities on offer and are developing a good awareness of adopting healthy lifestyles. 'The food at all the sessions is healthy; there are no sugary biscuits and children enjoy trying new foods'. 'I enjoyed the cooking course and use many of the recipes. I now cook more healthily for my children'. 'My life is now much more healthy and happy as a result of coming to the centre', typified the comments from parents and carers. As a result of the initiatives, outcomes for promoting healthy lifestyles and well-being are good.

The centre is highly effective in ensuring that parents and carers and children keep themselves safe and free from harm and children's safety in the home is improving. This is demonstrated by a wide range of preventative measures and advice including the distribution of basic home safety packs, an ongoing commitment to ensuring that

any eligible family is provided with free home safety equipment, and home safety visits to ensure families understand their responsibility for the ongoing safety of their children. Staff model safe practices exceptionally well and the centre is a very safe and welcoming place to be due to the vigilance of all adults and the completion of comprehensive risk assessments of all areas and activities. Very effective use of the common assessment framework ensures that vulnerable families are involved in preventative work rather than situations reaching crisis point.

There are increasing opportunities for parents, carers and children to play and learn together and a range of good information and advice is given to parents and carers on all aspects of child development. All centre staff have a comprehensive knowledge of the Early Years Foundation Stage and all activities are planned with children's development and learning in mind. Staff have been proactive in supporting external providers in developing their own knowledge of child development, resulting in more effective learning opportunities for young children linked to the Early Years Foundation Stage principles. Speech and language therapists and special educational needs coordinators ensure that children with speech and language delay and special educational needs and/or disabilities are given additional support. As a result, data for the last year show a 5% increase in the number of children reaching 78 points across the assessment scales of the Early Years Foundation Stage Profile and the gap between outcomes for the most vulnerable groups and others is narrowing.

The centre provides many opportunities for users to make a positive contribution so that commitment to the centre and local community is extremely strong. Parents and carers are encouraged to understand children's behaviour and development with increasing numbers of families attending positive parenting classes. Children and families develop strong relationships within the centre and show high levels of respect, care and concern for others. There are many opportunities for parents and carers to express their views. These include a suggestions box, regular evaluations of activities and surveys. For those with limited communication skills, the centre adopts a simple but highly effective scoring system enabling all users to comment and express their satisfaction levels, and key documents are translated for those whose first language is not English. Parents and carers are fully engaged in the decision making and governance of the centre by their active involvement in the Parents' Forum and by their strong participation on the Steering Group. As a result, the centre is effectively influenced by the families in their reach area while parents and carers are developing their confidence and are showing an increasing commitment to the centre.

The centre helps to promote economic stability, for example, by supporting users in attending local training courses, securing benefits and gaining qualifications to return to work. Increasing numbers of parents and carers are taking courses in basic skills in numeracy and literacy and some are successfully undertaking courses at National Vocational Qualification (NVQ) Levels 2 and 3 in childcare and education, demonstrating a positive attitude to further training and future 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	2
The extent to which children are safe and protected, their welfare concerns are identified and appropriate steps taken to address them	1
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	1
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 children's centre provides good quality services with outstanding care, guidance and support. There is a wide range of additional services and the centre meets its core offer well. Assessment is used effectively to determine the needs of children, parents, carers and users. As a consequence, the centre demonstrates a good knowledge of local families and the community and strives to ensure that services successfully meet the needs of users. The common assessment framework is well embedded and exceptionally strong partnerships with other agencies ensure that assessments of all children, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, are robust. There are clear programmes in place to promote the health and social well-being of users, including a strong emphasis on providing emotional support to boost their confidence and raise their self-esteem. The centre has worked with a number of agencies to support military families with the 'Cycles of Deployment' regarding the large numbers of personnel from the area who are currently serving in Afghanistan. The 'Stay Connected' campaign encourages families to keep in touch and 'e-bluey' clubs help young children send messages to their parents serving overseas. The centre has also been involved in the production of a supportive DVD for military families who are separated by deployment, which was nominated for a national award and has been adopted worldwide by the British Army.

Experienced parent support advisors are well known within the community and make tireless efforts to make contact with hard to reach families. The centre is very aware of the difficulties and challenges faced by families within its reach area. The needs of local military families are given careful consideration and a range of services are in place to support them during times of deployment. For example, stay and play sessions, which run at the local barracks, reduce feelings of stress and isolation. Parents and carers told inspectors that because of the open door policy there is always someone to talk to and that they feel valued and listened to by everyone they

speak to.

There are many examples of good quality outreach and support work, including the regular stay and play sessions, parenting classes, support groups for parents and carers of children with autism, teenage support groups, speak easy sessions, and community baby clinic. A midwifery service is not based at the centre but sessions are held around the reach area and mums are supported if needed by parent support advisers. The centre signposts users to Jobcentre Plus and adult education for help and support with training and employment. A new innovative project has begun with the health authority to improve access to psychological therapies by holding sessions in the centre which is less clinical than medical centres and enables parents and carers with young children to attend because crèche facilities can be provided. It is envisaged that this may be particularly beneficial to military families undergoing periods of adjustment following return from active deployment.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The effectiveness of the assessment of the needs of children, parents and other users	2
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 and management are consistently good at all levels and outstanding in relation to safeguarding and partnership working. Staff are passionate about the centre and its community. Senior leaders have a clear vision, set the tone, communicate high expectations and are determined to ensure that the centre is effective in improving the life chances of all users. Every staff member is fully committed to the centre's work and understands how they contribute to its effectiveness. For example, administrative staff know how important a warm welcome is and that they are as much a part of the delivery of services as other staff. A key strength of the centre is the extremely effective partnership arrangements which ensure that all needs are met. Staff report that relationships between staff and key agencies are excellent, morale is very high and that everyone pulls together to improve outcomes for users. The centre focuses on activities that are sustainable, building on existing provision and sharing costs and resources with other agencies where possible.

The inclusion of all children and families is threaded through all of the centre's work. Staff are effective in ensuring that all children and parents and carers, regardless of background, aptitudes or other differences, have the same access to the range of experiences on offer. All information displayed promotes equality and diversity and

there is a varied range of resources that reflect the diversity of the reach area. The centre is fully accessible for people with disabilities and links with the Minority Ethnic Achievement Team and Army Welfare Service Gurkha development workers are enabling the centre to target harder to reach groups.

Staff have a good understanding of the strengths in provision and where further improvements can be made. Self-evaluation is ongoing and largely accurate so the centre's priorities for improvement are appropriate, challenging, yet realistic. For example, senior leaders are well aware that work to identify childcare places is a priority following the closure of one of its designated providers, although plans are in place to use local childminders to meet any needs for the immediate future. The centre's new data collection system is now enabling the centre to measure the success of its provision on outcomes, although the impact over time is yet to be fully realised. The steering group plays an active role in identifying priorities. Action plans are specific, sharply focused and have clear success criteria.

There are high quality arrangements in place to safeguard all users. The procedures for vetting staff are extremely robust and relevant training is up to date. All staff are fully aware of their responsibilities and are highly vigilant in identifying and responding to any potential dangers that users may encounter through the use of comprehensive risk assessments and a thorough knowledge of the detailed safeguarding procedures. Robust procedures and protocols for sharing information, together with high-quality partnership working and innovative screening, ensure that children and families at risk and in need are prioritised effectively. Parents, carers and users of the services spoke with extreme confidence that their children are very well protected and that they wholeheartedly trust the centre with the care of their children.

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	1
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

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Summary for centre users

We inspected Colburn Children's Centre on 6–7 October. We judged the centre good overall.

As part of the inspection we visited a number of activities, looked at the centre's documentation, and talked with a range of children and adults including parents and carers, staff, community representatives and partnership workers. We were pleased to speak to so many of you about the centre's work and to listen to your views. We really enjoyed talking to you around the centre and in the various activity sessions you were engaged in. You expressed your views very clearly and we appreciated your straight talking in telling us how things really are. This is what we found out.

First, and most importantly, we are pleased to tell you that the centre provides good support to you and your families. The centre does some things extremely well, such as the way everybody works together to make things better for you and the way you are encouraged to keep safe and make a contribution to the centre and your own community. You told us that you and your children are very well cared for and that you are supported extremely well and we agree with you. We were pleased to hear that more of you are coming to the centre, making new friends and getting involved. You told us that the staff are like your friends and that you have complete and utter trust in them to look after your children.

The centre works hard with local nurseries and schools so that your children's educational achievements can be improved. They are supporting you and are helping to increase your knowledge about play and how children learn through the many stay and play activities and parenting sessions, which you told us are fun and worthwhile. We also know that many of you have learnt about nutrition and cooking healthy meals through the healthy cooking course and that you continue to use the recipes long after the course has finished.

We were delighted to see that the centre is making a real difference to improving your lives and to hear how much more confident you feel as parents. You told us about the friends you had met through the centre's activities and outings. It was very encouraging to hear that so many of you feel less isolated in the community by coming into the centre and getting involved. We were also very pleased to hear that some of you have been helped to undertake training which may help you get back into employment.

You told us that the staff always go that extra mile for you and it was clear to us that they are working very hard to make the centre as good as it can be. To help them we have suggested they look more closely at how the activities they provide are making a lasting difference to you. By doing this they will be in a stronger position to show how well they are doing and will be able to plan more worthwhile things for you. You can help by telling the staff the activities you need and what helps you and your children to learn.

We have also asked if they could also look at how much childcare provision there is to make sure there is enough for those of you who need it, and we have asked that they work more closely with adult learning and Jobcentre Plus to support you in finding training schemes and learning opportunities which will help you gain the skills you may need for employment.

Thank you once again for your welcome and your willingness to talk to us. We can see why the staff love working with you every day and wish you every success in the future.

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