

# Inspection report for Withernsea Children's Centre

Local authority	East Riding of Yorkshire
Inspection number	366332
Inspection dates	17–18 February 2011
Reporting inspector	Wendy Ripley HMI

Centre governance	Local Authority
Centre leader	Lucy Jackson
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected
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Linked school if applicable	Withernsea High School and Technology College
Linked early years and childcare, if applicable	EY307158 Safe 'n' Sound Day Nursery 314766 Withernsea Out of School Club

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 one early years inspector.

The inspectors held meetings and had telephone conversations with senior managers and staff, the chair of the advisory board, health care and other professionals, local authority and voluntary sector representatives and groups of parents and carers.

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

The linked child care that shares the building is managed separately and provided by Safe 'n' Sound Day Nursery. This setting was last inspected in 2008 when the quality and standard of nursery education was judged to be good. Withernsea Out of School Club, which operates within the centre, is also managed separately. The setting was last inspected in 2005 when the quality and standards of care was judged to be satisfactory. The inspection reports are available on our website [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk).

## Information about the centre

Withernsea is a small seaside town situated in a remote area of the east coast. Its facilities support some very isolated rural villages. Local communities are heavily dependent on seasonal work generated by tourism and agriculture. The area that the children's centre serves contains nine super output areas of which five are within the bottom 30% most deprived areas in England. The vast majority of the local population is of White British heritage. Most services, such as Jobcentre Plus and specialist health services, for example, are located in Hull some 23 miles away or Beverley which is 30 miles away. There is limited public transport to these centres and journeys take at least an hour.

Withernsea Children's Centre is located close to the town centre on the site of Withernsea High School and Technology College. The local primary school is close

by. The centre opened in 2005 and was developed from a Mini/Rural Sure Start Local Programme. It operates from a purpose built centre that it shares with the separately managed day nursery and delivers some outreach sessions in the villages of Patrington Haven, Ottringham and Easington. The centre provides the full core offer of services and delivers a range of integrated services that includes health, family support, and early years advice and guidance. Agencies that are co-located at the centre for some parts of each week are: community midwives, social care professionals and a youth worker. The centre is part of a children’s centre cluster for the South Holderness locality that includes two other children’s centres quite a distance away at Hedon and Skirlaugh. The qualified Early Years Foundation Stage teacher operates across this cluster. The Advisory Board for the South Holderness cluster, established in November 2010 is responsible for strategic management at the Withernsea centre. At the time of the inspection, the centre leader had been in post for just under three months, following a recent local authority reorganisation of provision.

There are currently 670 children known to be living within the centre’s reach area. Of these, 565 are registered with the centre, 41% of whom live in one of the 20% most deprived wards in England. Approximately 25% of children aged under-four are known to be living in households dependent on workless benefits. Children enter Early Years Foundation Stage provision across the area with skills and abilities that are often lower than those found nationally.

## 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

Withernsea Children’s Centre makes a good contribution to improving the lives of children and families in the local area. Friendly, approachable and well-trained staff provide outstanding care, guidance and support. They ensure that there is always a warm welcome and a listening ear for all who enter. Partnership working with other agencies is a particular strength. Excellent indoor and outside spaces, together with high quality resources, vibrant displays and the thoughtfully planned activities the centre provides, promote individualised purposeful learning very effectively. All these

factors result in an environment where all staff place high value on the well-being of its users, helps to raise their confidence and self-esteem and minimises the sense of isolation and loneliness many parents report experiencing. As one young mother explained, 'Withernsea is a forgotten place stuck in a time warp miles from anywhere. If the centre wasn't here I don't know what families would do'.

The number of local families and children who access the range of services the centre provides has increased year on year. This is because staff have developed long standing relationships within the local community and have a deep understanding of the needs of the families who live within in it. Consequently, activities are effectively matched to local requirements. The centre's inclusive approach ensures it is well used by different groups in the local community, including fathers, young mothers, grandparents, foster carers and those in the most challenging social and economic circumstances. Thorough assessment of need and sensitive individual support from a range of agencies has proved highly effective in helping centre users deal with difficult situations and times of personal crisis.

Parents describe the centre as 'a safe haven' and are confident that their children will be secure and well-cared for. Safeguarding is paramount, and facilities, including those used for outreach delivery in the community, are rigorously risk-assessed. Staff are well trained in child protection procedures. Systems for checking the suitability of staff and volunteers are rigorous. Data show that children who use the centre during their early years get off to a good start and make good gains in their learning, given their varied starting points. This sustains them well as they move onto school. A much higher proportion of children who have accessed the centre and the day care provision associated with it reach expected levels in their early learning goals, compared with other children locally.

At present there is a lack of robust performance data to inform improvement plans, establish benchmarks and targets and to measure impact. This means that evaluation of the quality of the provision and outcomes for users is not currently incisive enough to enable leaders to judge whether activities and courses are as effective as they could be. This is largely because the local authority restructure last September coupled with changes in data management systems earlier in 2010, means that reliable information is only just becoming available to the centre's leaders. For the same reasons, longer-term planning and governance arrangements through the Advisory Board are in the early stages of development. Similarly the parents' forum is in its infancy and the carefully gathered users' feedback is not yet used strategically to inform decision making. Reliable systems to analyse and assess the needs of the wider community are embryonic at this stage. Nonetheless, the centre leader's most recent strategies and the local authority children's centre action plan demonstrate that leaders are now in a strong position to rectify these issues.

The centre is well led. Day-to-day operation is efficient and effective. The new centre leader, with good support from strong and dedicated local authority officers, is driving forward change rapidly after some turbulent and very difficult times for the staff team. In the short period of time she has been in post she has rightly

concentrated on developing the staff team, building effective relationships and assessing the quality of existing provision. Given the improving outcomes for children and their families, the centre's recently reinvigorated and determined leadership, the strong teamwork underpinning services and the effective and efficient management of resources the centre demonstrates it has good capacity for sustained improvement.

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

### Recommendations for further improvement

- By the end of July 2011 ensure that the management information and data now being captured is rigorously analysed and interrogated so that:
  - it fully informs the centre's strategies
  - performance can be reviewed and evaluated against benchmarks and indicators in development plans
  - self-evaluation records the full impact of the centre's work
  - it provides the information and analysis needed to help staff know how well they are doing and can celebrate their successes
  - consistently challenging improvement targets can be set.
  
- Develop mechanisms for collecting the views of the wider community and ensure that the views of parents and potential users consistently contribute to the governance of the centre as well as determining and shaping the services it provides.

## How good are outcomes for users?

<b>2</b>
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Health outcomes are improving strongly from some low baselines because users receive good integrated services and advice from health professionals, family support workers and community nursery nurses amongst others. Good quality wall displays and informational leaflets throughout the centre promote a wide range of health messages very effectively and signpost to other specialist services, including those for sexual health screening, smoking cessation and drug and alcohol misuse. The health room used for drop-in clinics and routine appointments is well resourced. It contains some very powerful visual aids to help health staff discuss the risks of smoking in pregnancy.

The centre provides good support and advice for mothers about breastfeeding. Breastfeeding rates across the area are low. Strategies such as increased contact with pregnant mothers during their antenatal care and the deployment of trained peer supporters are improving breastfeeding initiation and continuation rates for those mothers who use the centre. The successful implementation of 'weaning parties' where parents make and taste different baby foods help them move their

baby onto solids successfully at the right age of six months.

Around a third of the centre users are young parents. The teenage conception rate in the South Holderness area is high but shows a strongly reducing trend in recent years as a result of the concerted efforts of staff, youth workers and sexual health professionals operating through the centre and the adjacent secondary school. Some young mothers explained that they saw getting pregnant as 'a way of feeling special and having someone to love'. The parents/young parents' projects are very popular with young mothers who say that it helps them to understand their own feelings as well as those of their child and feel they can cope with the demands of parenthood better.

The proportion of obese children in the Reception Year in local schools is lower than average, while the proportion of children who are underweight is greater than normally found. This has informed the range of activities that the centre, in partnership with other professionals, delivers on site and through outreach sessions in individual homes. Parents speak enthusiastically about the support and training provided to help them to keep themselves and their families healthy. They particularly enjoy baby yoga, baby massage and cooking in the training kitchen alongside their children. Parents understand that these activities not only promote physical health, but also support their emotional well-being and help them to develop positive relationships with their child. HENRY the 'healthy exercise and nutrition for the really young programme' helps parents produce nutritious meals on a tight budget.

The centre makes a good contribution to the safety and welfare of its users. Robust systems for security in the building ensure that parents and children remain safe when attending activities. As a result of the excellent relationships with centre staff, parents have the confidence to speak out about any issues that concern them at home, in the centre or the local community. Exemplary personalised support ensures that even the harder-to-reach families are helped to access both targeted and universal services. Particularly effective and acutely sensitive individual support is provided for users who have been subjected to domestic abuse and to help perpetrators of domestic violence understand what triggers their inappropriate actions and develop strategies to avoid them. The Common Assessment Framework is used effectively when appropriate. The centre offers a good range of activities aimed at raising parents' awareness of how to keep their children safe and has an effective home safety equipment scheme in place. All these activities help to prevent accidents in the home and help to ensure that the incidence of emergency hospital admissions and road traffic accidents in the area remain low. Through the parenting programmes the centre offers, staff model behaviours and instil routines that provide parents with practical coping skills for times when they are most likely to feel under pressure and enable them to explore their parenting style and how this impacts on the behaviour and self-esteem of their children.

A range of activities helps parents to support and improve their children's creative, personal, educational, social and emotional development. These include the

extremely popular and well-attended 'Dad's Café' that is run in partnership with Children and Family Action, and 'Golden Moments' which is specifically for grandparents, as well as 'Creepy Crawlies' and 'Play and Learn'. Users say they these opportunities help them to develop their own and their children's self-esteem and confidence and improve their relationships as well as having a fun time together. Children's behaviour is good as are relationships between adults and children. Children make good progress and achieve well when taking into account their often lower than average starting points. Well-planned play sessions ensure all aspects of children's learning are systematically covered. The excellent range of exciting indoor and outdoor resources are used very effectively to help parents develop activities they can do at home and when out and about in the local community. Strategies are in place to meet children's individual needs quickly, such as those with speech and language or special educational needs. 'All About Me' and 'Learning Journeys' completed in more informal activities such as 'Stay and Play' and 'Let's Get...', help to celebrate children's achievements and identify what they need to learn next. 'Early Support Plans and well-targeted activities such as 'Chatter Time' and the implementation of 'Every Child a Talker' are effectively supporting the development of early language skills. Consequently, children are well-prepared for the next stage of their learning and the gap between their achievements and those of children across the East Riding of Yorkshire is reducing.

Children are helped to express their views and these are listened to and responded to where possible. Parents and carers are encouraged to review services and make suggestions for changes that may better meet their needs and interests. Information and advice to parents and carers on education, training and employment are good. Adults are encouraged to participate in learning opportunities to develop their own skills, confidence and competencies. Many take their first tentative steps on programmes which result in accredited qualifications, delivered by the local authority's adult education service through the centre, before accessing a wider range of programmes offered at the secondary school next door. Other parents are being helped to prepare for the world of work once they are ready. Parents and carers value the provision of short-term day care and crèche facilities that enable them to attend courses that would have been out of their reach otherwise. Crèche and day-care facilities are also used well to support vulnerable families in times of crises. Signposting to job vacancies, benefits advice and debt management services at the centre are good. Accessing these services directly is very difficult for most users because they are not available in Withernsea and local roads and transport links are poor. Staff work very hard to allay users' anxiety about such matters and really do go 'the extra mile' as they will very often drive adults and their families to Hull, accompanying them to meetings when it is appropriate and helpful to do so.

*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>2</b>
<b>The extent to which children are safe and protected, their welfare</b>	<b>2</b>

<b>concerns are identified and appropriate steps taken to address them</b>	
<b>The extent to which all users enjoy and achieve educationally and in their personal and social development</b>	<b>2</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>2</b>

## **How good is the provision?**

<b>2</b>
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Partners work very well together to ensure the needs of children and parents are met. The needs of the most vulnerable children and their parents are assessed quickly so that interventions and support can be targeted effectively. Staff have a thorough understanding of safeguarding and child protection issues so that referrals made to social care are appropriate and use the Common Assessment Framework when necessary. Centre staff provide flexible one-to-one support in times of significant need. Parents who have faced significant challenges in their lives speak about their appreciation for the timeliness and quality of support provided. Local knowledge is helping to identify more hard-to-reach groups and there has been an increase in the proportion of families using the centre as a result. However, systems are not yet sufficiently robust to demonstrate that all potential users are being reached. Therefore, although the quality of outreach, services and the variety offered are good, the centre is unable to identify whether the needs of all potential users and those who could benefit best from their work are being well met.

The centre promotes good, purposeful learning and development opportunities for all who use the centre, including harder-to-reach groups such as teenage mothers. Sessions for young children are of high quality, well-resourced, exciting and child-focused. Courses provided for adults are well attended and provide good quality learning and development opportunities. Fathers make considerable gains in the 'Dad's Cafe'.

The care, guidance and support for families in difficulty or facing particular challenges are excellent. All reception desk staff are well-trained, quickly put entrants at their ease and signpost them on to the right session or advice. Staff act as good role models and work sensitively and effectively with parents and children ensuring families can benefit fully from the provision. Parents interviewed confirmed high levels of satisfaction with the centre's provision and were very clear about the benefits. There are many examples of how parents have been helped to develop their parenting skills, self-confidence and emotional well-being. Participation rates are good for the vast majority of activities. This is due to good outreach work, effective referrals from other professionals, informative leaflets and word of mouth.

*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>2</b>
<b>The extent to which the centre promotes purposeful learning, development and enjoyment for all users</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which the range of services, activities and opportunities meet the needs of users and the wider community</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The quality of care, guidance and support offered to users within the centre and the wider community</b>	<b>1</b>

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

**2**

The newly appointed centre leader and the staff team share a passion to make a difference to the lives and achievements of Withernsea children and their families. All of the staff participated in a recent self evaluation day that proved to be a strong team-building activity, helping the centre leader and staff team understand and record the centre's current position. This information is now being used to inform baselines for longer term plans and to establish challenging performance measures with the aim of driving improvement forward. Day-to-day organisation is strong and effective. The maintenance of the centre's files and records is meticulous. Resources are used well to provide a wide range of appropriate activities and rich and welcoming environments across the area, which represents good value for money. Outreach work extends the reach and impact of the work of the centre and more parents come to use the centre as a result.

Short-term and individual activity planning is highly effective. The way that individual staff routinely review and evaluate the sessions they deliver is an example of best practice. Staff use their reflections alongside comments from parents and observations of children's learning and play to inform planning for the next session and to improve their own practice. Performance management arrangements support the centre's promotion of equality of opportunity effectively. For example, there is a strong focus on 'up-skilling' and training all staff to deliver inclusive provision that is sensitive to the needs and views of users. Parents pay testament to this in their evaluations and during discussions with inspectors. To break down barriers further, staff provide one-to-one support in individual homes when necessary and at times, provide transport to help families in need.

Simple, helpful posters and leaflets displayed around the centre and at outreach sessions make it clear to families what to do if they have any concerns about safety. They also highlight the high expectations the centre has for assuring children and

families are safe and keep safe. Shared priorities are making a positive difference to the safety and well-being of families. Centre staff have been central to developing effective safeguarding protocols for a recently completed Play Pathfinder project in the local community. Good partnership working with 'Children and Family Action' for instance, is successfully supporting families who face a range of challenges. Partnership working with the private, voluntary and community sector adds value to the centre's activities by stretching limited resources in order to sustain key services where needs are identified. The local authority communicates effectively with the centre and makes a good contribution to centre activities through the development of good early years practice.

*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>2</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>2</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>2</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>2</b>
<b>The extent to which evaluation is used to shape and improve services and activities</b>	<b>3</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**

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](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 Withernsea Children's Centre on 17–18 February 2011. During our visit we looked at the centre's plans and documents, visited a number of activities and talked with you, centre staff and other professionals that work with you. We have judged that the centre provides good support for you and your families.

The centre has many strengths, including the actions taken to support you and your children's safety and well-being and the excellent quality of the care, guidance and support offered by all staff who work with you and your children. The friendly staff team always provide a listening ear for you and are passionate about creating an extremely warm and welcoming place. The staff put the utmost importance on you, the parents, and your families. As a result, you use the centre regularly and feel at home to talk freely about things that matter to you or are causing you concern. Community midwives and other health professionals work well with the centre staff. All of the staff are helping you to keep yourselves and your children healthy, for example, through HENRY (healthy exercise and nutrition for the really young), baby yoga and baby massage and the weaning party some of you recently took part in. Staff provide you with access to safety equipment and advice on how you can prevent accidents in and around your home to keep your children safe.

You told us the centre has helped you gain more confidence and self-esteem and develop closer and more effective relationships with your children. You also told us that the centre has provided opportunities to form friendships and support one another and that this has helped you feel less isolated. We could see how much you enjoy the activities you access at the centre and the very positive impact these are having on you and your families.

The centre has some excellent resources that excite and interest your children and help them to develop new skills and learn through their play. The outdoor spaces are some of the best the inspectors have ever seen and have been

very carefully planned to foster adventurous play, encourage physical development, and allow parents and children to grow healthy foods together. We were really disappointed that the weather was not good enough for children to be playing outside (as we would have quite liked to join in).

Knowledgeable and enthusiastic staff also help you to support your child's learning and development at the centre and at home, for example, through the parenting programmes. You told us that you enjoy the learning opportunities provided by the centre. The courses and events focusing on aspects such as Parentcraft and Dads' Café are very well attended. Some of you have accessed accredited adult learning courses and this is helping you to develop your literacy and numeracy skills, for instance, within the centre before moving on to further learning or training elsewhere.

Your views are sought regularly and staff use this information really well to develop their plans for individual activities. As yet though, because of recent changes to the way children's centres are set up in your area and how information is collected your feedback is not being used as well as it might to help centre leaders with their longer term plans. The parents' forum is another way that you can make your views known and help to shape the future development of the centre. This is a very recent development at your centre and will require your help and support if it is to get off the ground and working effectively.

Consultation with people in the local community who are not currently using the centre is underdeveloped. This means that centre leaders do not currently know if there is anyone else living in or around Withernsea that would benefit from the services it provides. The centre staff know this and are working hard to encourage even more parents and their children to access services and activities. You can help them by continuing to tell people about all the good things the centre has to offer.

While the centre leader is very new in post she has prioritised the right activities to start with; these include getting out and about to see what is happening at Patrington Haven and Ottringham and meeting you to find out about the activities the centre is currently providing. She is receiving good support from local authority officers and the caring and hard working staff team. Consequently, she is already providing good leadership and centre leaders are demonstrating they have good capacity to make further improvements and ensure outcomes for you continue to improve. Day-to-day management of the centre is meticulous. This can be seen in the very well cared for rooms and resources, and the effort that goes in to making displays around the centre colourful and vibrant to attract attention to the important information they contain. To develop the work of the centre further we have asked the centre's leaders to strengthen systems to evaluate how successful their work with you has been. This will help them to plan future actions more effectively and celebrate and share successes with you. We have also asked them to improve how they use your feedback and involve you more in the decision making process.

Thank you very much for your welcome and openness with inspectors. We are very grateful for your help. It was a privilege to meet you and to hear your views. We wish each of you every happiness and every success for the future.

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