

Inspection report for Olive Hill Children's Centre

Local authority	Dudley
Inspection number	366330
Inspection dates	16–17 February 2011
Reporting inspector	Susan Crawford HMI

Centre governance	Governing Body of Olive Hill Primary School
Centre leader	Linda Probert
Date of previous inspection	N/A
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Linked school if applicable	Olive Hill Primary School
Linked early years and childcare, if applicable	

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 Section 3 of the Childcare Act 2006. The report of this inspection is available on our website www.ofsted.gov.uk.

An inspection of the maintained nursery 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.

This inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and one additional inspector.

The inspectors held meetings with the centre manager, the senior management team, representatives from the partnership board, the local authority and a range of agencies, and parents, carers and other users of the centre.

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

Information about the centre

Olive Hill Children's Centre was designated as a phase two children's centre in January 2008, the centre moved to new premises in August 2009 which are linked to the primary school and provides the full core offer of services. It offers additional services at a satellite centre based at Lapal Primary School. The local authority has delegated the management and governance of the centre to the governing body of Olive Hill Primary School, on whose site the centre is located. It serves Halesowen North where there are pockets of high levels of deprivation. The centre is in an area where there is vast diversity in terms of language, ethnicity and economic status. Unemployment is higher than the national average but lower than the West Midlands average.

Some children enter the Early Years Foundation Stage with knowledge and skills below those expected for their age. The local authority's onsite nursery provides 60 places for children on a part-time basis. Olive Hill Primary School was inspected at the same time as the children centre and the Early Years Foundation Stage.

Health staff deliver a range of services from the centre, including health visitor support, breastfeeding support, development baby clinic, parenting advice, eczema and asthma advice, midwifery booking-in clinic, and specialist support for children with a wide range of disabilities, including speech and language difficulties. Training is provided for a range of personnel including childminders, volunteers and staff from the school and children's centre.

Inspection judgements

Grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Overall effectiveness

The effectiveness of the children's centre in meeting the needs of and improving outcomes for users and the wider community

2

Capacity for sustained improvement

The centre's capacity for sustained improvement, including the quality of its leadership and management

2

Main findings

Olive Hill Children's Centre is a good centre; users say that it is 'at the heart of the community'. This is because strong leadership of the centre by the centre manager and headteacher has ensured that families, particularly those that are vulnerable, benefit from a range of good-quality services that are carefully tailored to meet users' needs. Excellent links exist with the school where the children's centre is located; there is a seamless approach to many aspects such as transition arrangements and the sharing of policy's and procedures this promotes a cohesive approach to the efficient running of the centre. Procedures for safeguarding are comprehensive and robust. The centre is rightly recognised by users as a place of safety. Relationships with parents and carers are good, and the centre rightly prides itself on the warm welcome it extends to all. Users speak very positively about what the centre provides and say that all staff, without exception, are welcoming and very helpful. Particular strengths are the work of the family support workers, speech and language therapist, health visitors, Citizens Advice Bureau, and adult learning.

The centre encourages adults to take part in a range of activities and values their feedback, making changes and introducing their ideas in response to their views. For example, by changing the way that English was taught in the centre from a formal qualification to conversational classes, the attendance levels increased significantly as

a result. Some feedback that the centre receives does not provide sufficient detail for the centre, the governing body and partnership board to evaluate the impact of the services that users have received and the difference that they have made. Members of the partnership board and governing body are fully supportive of the work of the centre. However, currently the membership of the partnership board does not reflect the local community and does not have a user representative. This does not allow the board to hear users' views to inform practice and to influence the content of the centre's development plan.

The centre's self-evaluation covers all the necessary areas but it is not yet securely based on sufficient and up-to-date data from the local authority to enable the centre to plan effectively for future services. The centre has successfully identified some areas of need and shortfalls in provision because of the good-quality information that health visitors and other professionals provide, as well as their own local knowledge of their reach area. This enables the centre to target some of the groups of people to ensure that their needs are met. Equality is promoted well within the centre, which strives to be inclusive. Almost all users who are registered at the centre regularly use services.

One reason that provision is good is because of the way that services are tailored to meet individual needs, a range of services are developed to ensure all groups including those hard-to-reach and vulnerable families access the centre. They are provided with a wide variety of advice and support which is communicated to them effectively.

The children's centre shows good capacity for improvement. The leadership of the centre's manager is good. She demonstrates a passion and relentless determination to improve the life chances of families in the local community. The centre has clear management and staffing structures. There is a strong sense of teamwork and shared goals, and staff show a clear commitment to the centre's work and to improving services in order to reach more families. All staff work well together across the whole of the site. They have a shared vision which is evident throughout the centre and school.

What does the centre need to do to improve further?

Recommendations for further improvement

- Improve the rigour of self-evaluation by ensuring it is sharply linked to the impact of services on outcomes for users, taking into account their views, and informs planning for further development.
- Work with the local authority and other agencies to obtain more refined data in a timely manner to ensure that all hard-to-reach groups can be targeted effectively.
- Review the structure and membership of the partnership board to ensure that it

involves more users of the centre, reflects the local community and provides a voice for all partners and users.

How good are outcomes for users?

2

The outcomes for users of the centre are good and improving. A systematic approach to recording data and analysis is being developed to reflect the outcomes in a more comprehensive way. Questionnaires, feedback forms and discussions with users show that satisfaction levels are very high and that parents and carers are benefiting from the wide range of services on offer. Parents and carers feel listened to because of systems that are in place such as 'you said ... we did'. They feel well supported by the centre's staff. Sessions at the 'First Time Moms Group' have given on-going advice on weaning and healthy eating. Alongside this, groups such as the yoga for pregnant mums encourage mothers to become healthier through exercise. Parents and carers feel that they and their children are safe. They have an increased understanding of accident prevention in the home and first aid through accessing safety equipment and receiving a home visit.

Users say that attending a range of centre activities helps them to make new friends and become less isolated. This is making a good contribution to developing their well-being. Users of the centre make a positive contribution to the development of activities, for example, by becoming centre volunteers and supporting specific services such as the 'breastfeeding buddies' and the baby clinic. The centre is currently developing opportunities for users to have a voice through a parents' forum and for them to also provide user representation on the partnership board.

Available courses are valued by parents and carers, and courses, such as the baby massage which takes place on a Saturday to enable fathers to attend, promote self-confidence. Parents and carers talk confidently about enjoying the courses and how they want to develop their knowledge to enable them to help their children.

Progression routes through training for users are clear, and the courses build on previously taught skills such as the 'Snack and Chat' English for speakers of other language courses. The centre has good links with other children's centres where additional opportunities are offered such as 'Jumping Beans'.

'Stay and Play' sessions are well attended at the centre. Children actively enjoy the sessions and benefit from the range of resources available. Staff obtain feedback from parents and carers about any topics they would like to discuss or obtain further information on, and the centre arranges for other agencies and partners to come to the sessions to talk to the parents and carers informally. Good links are made between all of the services. The different organisations work closely together to provide a smooth transition for the children between the different services. A particular strength are the transition arrangements between school and the centre which are aided by the 'Steps to Nursery' sessions which are run each year for the new intake.

Effective partnerships and secure systems ensure staff in different services identify

and refer families who may be at risk of harm. The centre's staff build good relationships with families so families feel able to engage with professionals to access help. The Common Assessment Framework and 'team around the child' referrals are improving outcomes for users. One parent commented that the centre staff, 'Really do care'.

These are the grades for the outcomes for users

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

How good is the provision?

2

The centre provides a good range of integrated services and activities which are well matched to the needs of users. Parents and carers are seen as individuals and the centre assesses their needs effectively to ensure that those with the greatest level of need are prioritised. Good relationships are established with an extensive range of key partners, including school, health, social care, adult learning and the Families Information Service. These partners ensure that families receive a coordinated approach to the delivery of services. Home visits are provided to support those who have difficulty accessing the centre. The staff use their knowledge of the services available to help families to engage with other services. The links with midwives have ensured that information is passed onto parents and carers to enable them to access the centre when their children are still very young; this ensures that new parents and carers are quickly made aware of what the centre has to offer. Activities and services are advertised through effective links with other providers and community groups, including local schools. Olive Hill School sends out to all parents and partner schools a weekly newsletter which provides equal space to the children's centre and the school to advertise forthcoming events and celebrate successes.

Good signposting ensures that users have access to a range of information. The centre assesses the needs of all groups to ensure they are providing a good level of support and guidance. Crèche facilities enable parents and carers to attend courses at the centre, such as the 'Positive Parenting Self-Esteem' course.

The centre provides good-quality information and guidance documents in its main reception area and throughout the centre. Its website provides basic information but is not reflective of the good-quality information available in the centre. Effective links are being established with Jobcentre Plus, and users are being supported to improve both their personal and educational development. The centre actively signposts users to local colleges. Provision in the centre is of good quality which enables all users to access activities which support their personal development. The centre promotes transition into the Early Years Foundation Stage well by providing 'steps to nursery' sessions each summer term, this supports children's learning and development.

Senior leaders, partners and centre staff encourage regular feedback from centre users through discussions and written evaluations. This helps the centre to identify needs and to tailor activities accordingly, although this does not always measure the impact of the services that they have accessed so, therefore, does not feed in to the long-term plan.

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	2

How effective are the leadership and management?

2

The centre's leaders work well as a team with a shared vision across the children's centre and school. They have built strong and effective links with agencies and providers in order to provide good-quality services, which are matched to users' needs. Line management arrangements are clear and understood, and staff value the regular supervision and professional development they receive. Value for money is good because resources are used well. In particular, the school and centre share office space and certain areas of their buildings.

The centre has a commitment to providing an inclusive environment and removing barriers. Good individual support is given to families who speak English as an additional language to support them in accessing services, combating isolation and promoting their children's learning and development. Because of the close links with the school, the centre is aware that it is contributing to narrowing the achievement gap.

The centre has strong and effective relationships with current partners and

professionals. The headteacher and the centre manager involve most staff and users in the process of self-evaluation in order to identify strengths and areas to improve. Parents and carers share their views to shape services, such as requests for particular parenting courses. However, they currently do not have representation on the partnership board.

Because of the lack of data and the lack of evaluation against outcomes, the governing body does not have the tools to sufficiently challenge the work of the children's centre to ensure it helps to shape and improve services and activities. They have a clear understanding of safeguarding arrangements and have effective systems in place to ensure these are met. The centre has robust safeguarding policies and procedures, including risk assessments. Centre staff demonstrate a good knowledge of the procedures to follow if they have a child protection concern.

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	2
The extent to which resources are used and managed efficiently and effectively to meet the needs of users and the wider community	2
The extent to which equality is promoted and diversity celebrated, illegal or unlawful discrimination is tackled and the centre fulfils its statutory duties	2
The effectiveness of the centre's policy, procedures and work with key agencies in safeguarding children and, where applicable, vulnerable adults	2
The extent to which evaluation is used to shape and improve services and activities	3
The extent to which partnerships with other agencies ensure the integrated delivery of the range of services the centre has been commissioned to provide	2
The extent to which the centre supports and encourages the wider community to engage with services and uses their views to develop the range of provision	2

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

The Early Years Foundation Stage at Olive Hill Primary School was inspected at the same time as the children's centre. Provision and outcomes were judged as good.

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 Olive Hill Children's Centre on 16-17 February 2011. We judged the centre as good overall.

The centre, which is based in Olive Hill Primary School, provides you and your children with a modern, attractive, safe environment where you feel well cared for and valued. Drop-in groups, such as 'Stay and Play', are offered at the centre's buildings. The centre provides you with a wide range of information and makes every effort to contact others who have not accessed the centre to inform them about the services it provides and the support it can offer.

The centre's staff know the community well and are committed to supporting both your children's development and your own skills. They work hard to build good relationships with you by developing your confidence so that you feel better equipped to support your families. You benefit from the range of courses available and value the opportunities to develop your skills in English, helping your children to learn and managing your children's behaviour. Many of you are helping the centre by supporting services on a voluntary basis, the centre values your contributions and says that they could not do without you.

The centre's leaders work well together to make sure that the centre is well organised. They often ask for your views, feedback and ideas to help you decide how they can help you more. The centre's self-evaluation covers most areas but does not clearly show how successful the centre is in measuring the impact that it has on you and what difference it has made to you and your family. The centre needs to develop systems to obtain data so that it can measure how well it is doing and to enable staff to identify particular groups of people in your community who may need help or additional services.

Olive Hill Children's Centre is a safe place for you to meet other parents and carers and people who can help you. Thank you for contributing to the inspection. You told us that the staff build up trusting relationships with you and there is mutual respect. All families are welcomed and helped to attend a good range of advertised sessions,

for example by the provision of a crèche. There is a parents' forum but currently there are not many of you who go along to help the centre shape its service by hearing what you have to say. The partnership board is not fully representative of the local community and is missing you as a member to ensure that it provides what you want and meets your needs and those of the community.

The centre's staff look at ways of providing interesting activities and courses that will benefit you. They listen to your views about what courses would be of most benefit. The centre provides your children and yourselves with an attractive, safe environment where you and your children feel well cared for and valued. You told inspectors that the centre is making a big difference to your lives and that you enjoy attending the good range of activities on offer. Those of you who need it are given support and information with difficulties you may be having such as with housing or managing your finances.

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