

Inspection report for Clifton Children's Centre

Local authority	Kingston upon Hull
Inspection number	362457
Inspection dates	21–22 February 2011
Reporting inspector	Rajinder Harrison

Centre governance	Local Authority
Centre leader	Alison Aherne
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected
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Linked school if applicable	Clifton Nursery School
Linked early years and childcare, if applicable	Clifton Nursery School Day care

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 two additional inspectors. The inspectors held meetings with the centre manager, the Chair and Vice-chair of the Governing Body, a representative from the local authority and a range of providers, centre users and centre staff. Inspectors observed the centre's work including sessions at the centre and other sites. They looked at relevant documentation including the centre's operational plans, self-evaluations, key policies and safeguarding procedures.

Information about the centre

Clifton Children's Centre is a Phase 1 centre designated in 2007 and serves a large residential area with an ethnically diverse community in the city centre. The centre's reach area spans communities that live either side of the river Hull that divides the city. It offers its main services, notably the childcare and nursery provision, from the city-centre site but activities are located at venues on both sides of the river and much of the healthcare provision is located in the neighbourhood health clinics. The area served by the centre is socially mixed and highly populated. A high number of properties are council owned. An above average proportion of families claim benefits as the incidence of worklessness, at around 42%, is higher than the national average. While a high proportion of families are of White British heritage, a significant proportion, around 40%, represents a wide range of minority ethnic backgrounds, the largest group being Polish. A high proportion of children from the reach area enter the nursery with skills well below those expected for their age. A significant proportion come from homes where English is spoken as an additional language. Within the area the centre serves, there are significant issues surrounding extreme poverty, unemployment, poor health and low levels of literacy and numeracy.

The local authority has commissioned the governing body of the linked nursery school on the site to provide governance of the centre on its behalf. These arrangements are supported by representatives from a wide range of agencies and

service providers in the local community. The centre manager is also the headteacher of the nursery school and head of another nearby nursery and children's centre with which Clifton Children's Centre federated in January 2011. The centre offers a range of health, social care, and education and family support services.

Childcare for children aged from birth to five years is provided through the centre. The centre also provides regular crèche sessions. Education for children aged between three and four years in the Early Years Foundation Stage is provided through the nursery school within the same premises. An inspection of this provision was carried out in December 2010 and the report is available on the Ofsted website at [http: www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk).

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

Clifton Children's Centre provides a very friendly and safe environment for all its users. Parents and children are very appreciative of the work the centre does to support them and the positive impact this has on their lives. A typical view expressed by a user is: 'I could not have managed my family's problems without the help from the centre. Staff treated me with respect. Nothing was too much trouble. Anyone can come here anytime because someone will listen without looking down at you.'

Provision for childcare is outstanding, as are the opportunities for children to learn. As a result, children feel safe and happy and make excellent progress in their academic and personal development. Children who come from families where English is spoken as an additional language receive additional help, including bilingual support, to settle and make rapid gains. Opportunities for adults to extend their education and training and thus increase their chances to secure employment, while satisfactory, are not developed as effectively. Through an extensive and effective programme of home visits, the centre supports individual families well, particularly in helping them access service providers, for example, health, welfare benefits and housing agencies.

In the last year the centre has increased the number of users it reaches, particularly those new to this country and those facing particular hardship. An increasing number of children under three use the centre regularly. This has been through a concerted effort to promote the centre's work and its benefits to local families and ensuring that referrals from partner service providers are followed up promptly. A typical view is reflected in the comment made by one parent that the centre is a 'good place to go for help and advice and to give children a good start in life'. Users' views are heard through regular feedback following events and activities and parent governors are playing an increasingly active role in representing the community. With no parents' forum, parents are less involved in aspects such as decision making, influencing the centre's work, promoting self-help within the community and taking greater responsibility to improve their life chances.

The overall outcomes for users are good because provision is generally good. It is

strongest for children, who gain confidence and independence quickly and achieve exceptionally well. Parents and carers who use the centre gain in confidence and thus become more independent and self-reliant but the numbers who undertake education and training are not high enough to ensure sustained economic well-being. Information from course evaluations is used effectively to modify provision and where data are available, it is used well to identify users' needs and the centre's priorities. Information from most providers, notably education and social care agencies, is readily forthcoming because partnership working is well embedded. Partnership with the health services is not developed as effectively. In liaison with health visitors and midwives, the centre successfully promotes the benefits of breast feeding and childhood immunisation, for example, but the centre does not always have the information it needs to set ambitious targets to tackle major issues such as obesity and smoking in the area.

With a high level of support and commitment from the local authority, the centre has established much good practice, particularly in ensuring the welfare and well-being of all groups in the community. Procedures for safeguarding and the promotion of equality are good. Leaders model good practice and set high standards for others to follow. Strengths include the centre manager's good leadership, effective support from the governing body and positive relationships with the diverse communities the centre serves. The multi-agency partners and the local authority lend their expertise and support well and have been particularly successful in establishing high quality outcomes for children. Action to improve outcomes is effective. Leaders are proactive in ensuring that any areas identified as weaknesses are addressed promptly. They are accurate in their self-evaluation and acknowledge that they need to work in close partnership with all providers to improve further. The local authority provides a robust quality assurance role. This is a key factor in the centre's good capacity to further improve outcomes for parents and carers and their children.

What does the centre need to do to improve further?

Recommendations for further improvement

- Strengthen the partnership with the health authority so that staff have the data they need to help them tackle smoking, obesity and other health issues.
- Widen the opportunities for parents to develop the skills they need to access education, training and employment more successfully.
- Involve parents and carers more in the centre's work by:
 - giving them regular opportunities to meet and express their views and ideas
 - encouraging them to take greater responsibility in shaping the work of the centre so that it benefits more families in the local community in the long term.

How good are outcomes for users?

2

Children are very well prepared for school through high-quality learning experiences and extensive interactions with staff that impact very positively on their learning and

development. They feel well settled and learn to play together harmoniously, with older children helping younger ones, for example to tidy up, get changed and take turns sharing toys. Children have fun socialising with others and confidently play and explore independently inside and outdoors. They make very good progress in their personal development, behave exceptionally well and learn excellent hygiene and eating habits. Children's speaking and listening skills, including for those who speak little or no English when they start, improve rapidly because parents are shown how to talk and share books with them. Children who need extra support in their speaking benefit from early identification by speech and language therapists. Those who use the centre regularly settle in school quickly and make rapid progress.

Parents report that staff help them with, for example, advice on health or managing money. Through the many family learning activities, such as the 'Stay and Play', 'Movers and Groovers' and 'Messy Play', they say they gain a better understanding of parenting skills and early years education. The 'Forest school' and exciting outdoor areas show parents how much children enjoy physical exercise and its importance in promoting fitness. The centre provides fruit for snacks and children cultivate and cook fresh produce. High attendance at activities, particularly cookery sessions that promote healthy eating, indicates their popularity and usefulness. The benefits of breastfeeding are promoted well and regular weaning guidance ensures babies have a healthy start in life. Children who attend the centre have excellent meal choices and so maintain good health. In the wider community, a small but increasing minority of children show symptoms of being overweight by the age of five because families do not sustain the good eating habits the centre promotes. Health workers are successful in raising awareness of the dangers of smoking during pregnancy. As a consequence, last year, of the expectant mothers in the area who smoked, around 70% successfully quit during pregnancy. This level of success is not evident in other groups of smokers.

A small proportion of parents attend literacy and numeracy courses to extend their academic skills and successfully gain qualifications to help them access further education and training. Those new to learning English make rapid gains and are eager to progress to higher level courses. While a number of parents have gained employment as a result, the overall success rates remain low because the range of provision the centre offers to enhance their employability is limited.

The centre addresses parents' feelings of isolation and low self-esteem effectively. Those experiencing particularly low points in their lives or new to this country explain confidently that without the prompt and sensitive support from centre staff they could not have coped and taken control of their lives successfully. Typical comments are, 'I couldn't have managed without help from the centre staff when I suffered from depression. Here, I could discuss my problems and get the help I needed to sort things out and help my children'. Parents trust staff and staff identify quickly and sensitively any safety concerns and intervene appropriately before a crisis occurs. Good parenting courses, for example, the 'Raising Boys' course, help parents secure better relationships, behaviour and home safety for their children and ease distress flashpoints if problems arise. Services at the centre ensure users are safe and

resources such as free home safety packs aid safety at home. Regular sessions on home and road safety remind parents of everyday hazards and, consequently, the centre sees fewer children needing emergency aid at hospitals.

Mutual respect between staff and users ensures open, honest relationships. Parents are encouraged to suggest ideas for future activities. Key users, including fathers, have successfully organised activities and trips, including a camping event to support the community. Parents represent users' views on the governing body effectively but have no established forum whereby they can lead initiatives and take greater ownership of what the centre offers the community.

These are the grades for the outcomes for users

The extent to which children, including those from vulnerable groups, are physically, mentally and emotionally healthy and families have healthy lifestyles	3
The extent to which children are safe and protected, their welfare concerns are identified and appropriate steps taken to address them	2
The extent to which all users enjoy and achieve educationally and in their personal and social development	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

Sessions and courses provide high quality purposeful learning for children. Learning opportunities for parents are satisfactory. Parenting groups and the crèche facilities provide good opportunities for parents to enjoy quality time with their children as they learn from the effective practice modelled by staff. Children play and explore in a safe, nurturing environment; parents receive helpful advice and support from many professionals and spend valuable time sharing experiences with each other and building friendships. Many regularly attend the various childcare courses and activities that help them support their children's learning and development. For example, weaning sessions advise parents on when to introduce babies to healthy food and how to maintain a healthy diet. Many appreciate the non-threatening nature of these important information sessions and, once confident, a small number progress to more challenging literacy and numeracy courses that help them support their children's learning as well as equip them for work. However, the numbers moving into education and training opportunities in the wider community are too low to ensure greater economic stability in the area. Advice from Job Centre staff enables a few to secure some level of employment and independence.

The quality of care for parents and their children is good. Support for users' well-being is high priority and families report that their lives are better for having the specific help they needed, particularly at low points in their lives. Centre staff have had to respond swiftly on occasions but have done so in a very professional and sensitive manner and this has resulted in positive outcomes that effectively support community cohesion. Partnerships with social care are good. As a consequence, family workers coordinate well with care workers to support, for example, families in crisis. This personalised support is a strength and users appreciate its value.

Home visits are well organised and effective. For example, all new children entering the nursery and target families identified by staff or other agencies are high priority. Childcare arrangements for children under three are very flexible; this enables parents to plan the support they need efficiently. Staff monitor well the outcomes of any support they provide, but occasionally when users are referred to other agencies, staff do not always know if the families received the help they needed to progress. Families where disability limits users' capacity to access the centre receive additional support, often involving providers such as the portage service and childcare so that individual needs are identified early and met well. Centre staff ensure that the significant number of families of minority ethnic origin in the community receive the help they need, for example, welfare benefits and, if appropriate, courses in English, so that they settle and integrate quickly. Bilingual staff help at interviews and appointments and other translators are contacted where necessary.

The centre assesses and reviews users' needs well overall and consults with groups as to where to target further provision. Individuals requesting specific help or guidance receive this promptly, and this may include attending other centres in the city. In 'Stay and Play' sessions, assessments very effectively focus on children's needs and ensure activities are interesting and relevant to their lives. For example, children talk excitedly about exploring the 'forest' and climbing up 'steep' hills in the outdoor area. Parents are shown how they can help record the child's success through notes and photographs effectively. Procedures to assess the needs of most adult users, while generally good, are not yet sufficiently robust to guide those who have higher ambitions.

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 leader has an accurate view of the quality of provision and where improvements need to be made. Staff are managed very effectively and teamwork is embedded well. Through robust performance management procedures and high-quality professional development opportunities, staff have the support they need to improve their practice and develop provision. Parents who attend activities are encouraged to express their views regarding provision and this influences changes in the centre's day-to-day work. Parents are less well involved in decision making and taking a more prominent role in developing new opportunities for their community.

Governance is good because the governing body, partner organisations and the local authority understand the local community well and hold centre staff to account for delivering the services that children and their families need. They ensure that all staff implement stringent checks to secure the safety of children and their families and that every precaution is taken where concerns arise, particularly regarding child protection. Leaders ensure that the centre's development plan addresses most of the local and national priorities well and is based on analysis of data and information where it is available. The very careful assessments regarding the progress of young children as they move through the Early Years Foundation Stage shows that children who take up the support the centre offers benefit immensely when they start school. With gaps in the information the centre has regarding local health priorities, strategies to tackle some of these are less effective. Leaders review the centre's progress regularly with the local authority but without the necessary data to inform planning, targets to decrease obesity and smoking, for example, lack ambition.

Equality and diversity are promoted well. Everyone who uses the centre is integrated effectively. Referrals are followed up promptly and every affordable support given to those families in most need. Families experiencing exceptional hardship, for example, with respect to debt, receive support to cope with legal issues and to plan spending more carefully. New migrants are welcomed into the area and needs are identified quickly to help families settle and to register with service providers including schools, benefits agencies and classes offering English tuition.

The centre offers good value for money. The leaders have established outstanding practice to support young children and have identified strategies to engage more parents in education and training so that they can progress into employment. Leaders continually look for new ways to reach into the local community and to include all groups of users effectively. For example, fathers are encouraged to attend the centre to improve their relationships with their children and families. Home visits, leafleting and signposting through an effective children's centre network in the city help users go further afield to extend their opportunities. Leaders ensure users, including childminders and sports development workers, make good use of the facilities. They are aware that more needs to be done to raise the profile of health professionals and adult education providers in the centre and to encourage more community groups to use the centre to benefit adults and 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	3
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	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	3
The extent to which the centre supports and encourages the wider community to engage with services and uses their views to develop the range of provision	3

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

Clifton Nursery School, (URN 117693), which is on the same site as Clifton Children's Centre, was inspected in December 2010. This inspection examined the quality of provision in the nursery for children aged three to five years and day care for children under three. Inspection findings judged provision to be outstanding both for learning and achievement and for day care. The inspection of the Clifton Children Centre concurs that provision for children is outstanding.

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 Clifton Children's Centre on 21 and 22 February 2011. We judged the centre as good overall because it provides good support to you and your families. Thank you to everyone who took the time to speak with us; we are very grateful.

Provision for children is outstanding and children make an excellent start to their education. They are very happy in the nursery and enjoy playing with each other and making new friends. The centre provides a good range of services that are helping you to improve your lives. You appreciate the way staff at the centre help you and your families. You explained how you are made to feel welcome and that you feel staff listen to you. It was good to hear that you regard the centre as a safe and welcoming place and that you make good friends there. It is not surprising that more and more families are using the centre regularly.

The centre provides excellent support for your children, so that they have a very good start in life. 'Stay and Play', 'Movers and Groovers' and 'Messy Play' are obviously very popular as are the various cookery classes the centre offers. The centre provides good opportunities for parents and children to play and learn together. Many of you benefit from various parenting sessions that help you raise your children successfully. As a result, your families have fun and many of you gain a better understanding of how to stay safe, fit and healthy. The centre works well with many service providers to make it easier for you to receive the support and guidance you need when problems arise.

The centre manager and all staff work hard to support you and your families. The governors and other providers have a good overview of the centre's work. The staff are supported well by leaders to ensure the best outcomes for you all.

We have asked the centre to do three things to help improve provision for you:

- Ensure that staff have the information they need from the health authority to tackle issues such as smoking and obesity in the local community.
- Provide more opportunities for parents to undertake education and training so that they can secure employment more successfully.
- Involve parents and carers more by:
 - providing them with regular opportunities to meet and express their views and ideas
 - encouraging them to take greater responsibility in shaping the work of the centre so that it benefits more families in the local community.

We wish you every success for the future.

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