

# Inspection report for Highbury Children's Centre

Local authority	Birmingham
Inspection number	365683
Inspection dates	29–30 March 2011
Reporting inspector	Ian Jones AI

Centre governance	Birmingham City Council
Centre leader	Dilys Garrod
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected
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Linked school if applicable	Queensbridge Secondary 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.

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

The inspectors held meetings with the head of centre, staff, local authority representatives, health workers and members of the advisory board. They held informal discussions with parents.

They observed the centre's work, and looked at a range of relevant documentation including the centre's development plans, evaluations, key policies and safeguarding procedures.

## Information about the centre

Highbury Children's Centre is a phase two children's centre providing the full core offer to communities within the Moseley and Kings Heath areas of Birmingham. The children's centre delivers services in a wide range of community venues and in partnership with many providers. Family support is offered in collaboration with Community Advocacy Support and Advice (CASA) and The Malachi Trust. The reach area served by the children's centre is diverse, with some prosperous areas and others where deprivation is high. Worklessness levels are high in the north of the reach area. The children's centre serves an ethnically diverse area; the two largest groups are White British (41%) and Asian (29%). When children enter the Early Years Foundation Stage, their knowledge and skills vary considerably across the reach area, ranging from below to above national expectations. The centre is governed by the local authority.

## 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

Highbury Children’s Centre offers good support to families and young children. Users, parents and carers fully appreciate the work of the centre, and value the welcoming and supportive response they receive. The centre is staffed by an enthusiastic and energetic team of staff who are effective in providing a broad range of services to help meet the needs of the reach area. Partnership working is fundamental to the success of the centre and a wide range of services and support is provided.

The centre owes much of its success to the positive relationships developed with users and with the wide range of additional service providers located in the community. Requests for support are responded to swiftly. The safe environment makes users feel confident to share their problems and ask for help, often in times of crisis. For example, the centre has been effective in supporting young carers by providing first-aid training and by arranging respite care in order for them to engage with others in similar circumstances. Furthermore, several fathers spoke passionately about the good-quality support they receive, enabling them to develop parenting skills and secure employment. Due to the good leadership and management, the number of users accessing the centre has increased rapidly over the past two years.

Safeguarding is given a high priority. Effective, regularly reviewed policies and procedures are in place to ensure the safety and health of all users and staff. Procedures are well known by staff who are confident to follow them and practised in identifying any issues, swiftly referring users to other agencies where necessary.

The centre, in collaboration with the local authority, maintains a high level of data which are used well to identify and prioritise where support is required. However, data are not well used to set specific targets against which the impact of action can be measured.

The centre advertises a full range of services. Information is of good quality and displayed at a wide range of locations and through the centre’s website. Significant examples show how individuals and families have received effective support, and many have been able to retrain and access employment as a result. Pre-school

provision for children residing in the area is especially wide-ranging. Leaders and managers appreciate the need to develop their systems of information sharing and support to enable parents to make informed choices in accessing these services.

The centre has made significant progress since its launch in February 2009. Staff are involved in the self-evaluation processes including the setting of future targets. As a result, the centre demonstrates good capacity for sustained improvement. The impact of work to support adult users is carefully tracked. Although progress for children is well documented through a range of impressive case studies, Early Years Foundation Stage Profile scores for those children who access the centre's services are not systematically reviewed.

The centre celebrates equality and diversity well, successfully engaging with users across the ethnically diverse reach area. Users report that they feel listened to and that the centre is responsive to their views. They often take the opportunity to discuss their own circumstances informally with centre workers and other users. Parents' views are actively sought through the regular 'Parent Voices' meetings, which leaders and managers have used to good effect in planning future provision. The centre's approach promotes an inclusive service where the contribution of all is valued.

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

### **Recommendations for further improvement**

- Improve the use of data to evaluate the impact of the centre's work.
- Develop systems of information sharing and support to enable children to make a good start at school.

## **How good are outcomes for users?**

<b>2</b>
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The centre offers a good range of services, which help to develop children's and adults' emotional well-being, physical health and understanding of how to adopt healthy lifestyles. Parents' and carers' understanding of what constitutes a healthy lifestyle for their whole family is well supported by the centre. Good physical health is promoted through the 'Healthy Eating, Healthy Living' courses and participants stated that their children would be healthier in future because of information they received: 'The course has helped me to be healthier. I give my children more fruit and vegetables for snacks and meals.' Another said, 'I eat more daily fruit and vegetables and less fried food. I look more carefully at the contents of food before buying.' One group, aimed specifically at women from ethnic minorities, enabled all participants to engage fully in the exercise class, and they report feeling fitter. Nutrition sessions, including offering free vegetables and fruit and recipes, result in healthier diets, promoting the principle of trying out new varieties of fruit and vegetables.

Children and families report feeling safe when attending activities. Steps are taken to protect children at risk, supporting families who struggle to ensure their children's safety, and teaching parents and carers about keeping children safe. The centre regularly liaises with relevant agencies to effectively support those children considered to be at risk. The centre supports children subject to Common Assessment Framework processes well, leading to improved outcomes, such as better family relationships and emotional support, respite care, and stimulation and socialisation for children. The centre has been proactive in arranging for safety equipment to be available for parents, and has arranged a number of courses, including first-aid, conflict management and parenting classes. The weekly 'Fathers' Group' provides impressive support and is very well managed. The centre works effectively to support looked-after children and the nine children who currently have a child protection plan.

Parents and carers, including targeted groups such as fathers, lone parents, ethnic minorities and those with criminal records, say that they enjoy activities provided through the centre. They speak highly of the courses available to them. Participation is active and attendance rates sustained. Some parents and carers go on to gain accredited qualifications which help them gain employment and further develop their understanding of how to care for their children. Children's learning is recorded through 'Learning Stories' and the centre can point to a number of case studies which demonstrate good impact of the centre's work on the lives of young children.

Users access a range of ways to make a positive contribution to the work of the centre, including membership of the advisory board and through the 'Parents Voices' group. There is good support in developing users' confidence and supporting them to move into further training, education or employment.

Children play well together and build positive relationships with each other and adults. Staff encourage healthy eating well, enabling children, encouraged by their parents and carers, to eat healthy snacks. The good early years' provision means that children are well prepared when they move to school or other early years' settings.

As a result of the centre's work, significant numbers of vulnerable parents are more economically stable and more able to give a stable home to their children; others are gaining skills to make them more independent and others have obtained employment.

*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>2</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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Provision is of consistently good quality. Children and adults learn and develop well because the centre staff have good insight into the needs of families. A good range of services and activities are delivered, and there are good opportunities to participate in well-organised activities tailored to the needs of the community. There is regular contact with a range of other support agencies such as The Malachi Trust, social care, health and many others. This enables proper consideration of new referrals and regular review of ongoing cases to ensure that the most appropriate support is being given and that knowledge is shared. Centre staff play a prominent role in implementing Common Assessment Framework procedures with good engagement with other agencies.

The centre provides a wide range of opportunities for users to learn and develop and there are many good examples of quality outreach work, including events in the local schools and other community locations. When they register, adults are asked if they would like information about courses; these are also promoted through the regular newsletters, flyers and on the centre's website. Achievement is celebrated and those who complete courses receive certificates, awarded at celebration events, whether or not the course is accredited.

A range of case-study evidence demonstrates how the centre has supported many families facing a range of issues. Staff assess all users' needs from first contact, collecting wide-ranging information using a well-designed registration form which has been adapted for use by other children's centres in the city. Swift action is taken to meet the assessed needs, and cases are regularly reviewed to ensure that services continue to provide the required support. Users self-assess, gauging their self-esteem and emotional well-being. This information provides a clear picture of where help is needed and provides a useful tool to measure the impact of the centre's work. A child-friendly version is also used with children enabling staff and parents to understand the child's feelings. This has proved a powerful tool in developing empathy and understanding.

Good links with outreach services enhance the centre's provision so that it caters effectively for the community it serves. This is because centre staff work closely with a wide range of other professionals to provide a good range of fully integrated

services to support the welfare needs of all groups of users and the wider community. For example, adults enjoy outreach health promotion programmes, such as healthy eating workshops and the 'Stress-busting' Tai Chi exercise course. In the latter, one father explained how this has led to continuing exercise with his son at home: 'I love it! It helps us bond and gives my son exercise and stimulation.' The centre makes particularly good provision for supporting fathers, which is much appreciated by users. A number of parenting courses have a positive impact on family life and have inspired parents to take other courses and, in the case of two parents, to train to deliver the courses themselves; attendance and completion rates are high.

Children enjoy and achieve through the regular crèches and groups provided by the centre. Educational experiences such as 'Leaps and Bounds' and support from teaching staff help to promote enjoyable and purposeful educational play where good progress can be seen; the 'Stay and Play' at the library takes the form of a story-time session which encourages reading and stimulates learning.

The quality of care, guidance and support is good. The centre's involvement in the local community has increased steadily since February 2009 and staff engage with a significant number of families in the reach area. The centre is effective in engaging with users and ensuring what they offer is matched to the needs of the community. Some families receive continuing long-term support enabling them to make positive improvement to their lives.

*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>2</b>

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

**2**

Leadership of the centre is successfully focused on continuing to improve the service provided. The centre leader's commitment and energy lead to good management and a clear vision for the future. Her professionalism has a positive effect on staff who work extremely well as a team, demonstrating enthusiasm and enjoyment in all that they do. Self-evaluation procedures are accurate and focused on the right priorities. However, data are not used sharply enough to identify specific targets against which the centre can measure its performance.

Governance is good, and the advisory board provides effective support. Members bring a wide range of expertise and are committed to bringing about further improvement. As a result, they effectively hold the centre to account for the services provided. The good management of resources and the effective deployment of staff demonstrate the good value for money provided.

Safeguarding arrangements are good and records are up to date. Leaders ensure that staff are safely recruited, and all adults who work with children are checked carefully beforehand. The work of external support agencies is managed effectively by the centre's leaders. Regular liaison helps ensure that most appropriate support is being given and that expertise and knowledge are shared. Referrals of children and families in need and the good cooperation between multi-agency groups contribute well to improving the mental and emotional health and well-being of users.

The centre serves a diverse community and celebrates this well. Determined action to improve and promote equality has been effective in engaging some hard-to-reach groups, with the result that achievement gaps between groups are closing. Parents and carers regularly put forward their opinions in the knowledge that they will be listened to, and effective liaison with external agencies helps ensure that support is channelled to those families requiring help and support.

*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>	2
<b>The extent to which ambitious targets drive improvement, provision is integrated and there are high expectations for users and the wider community</b>	2
<b>The extent to which resources are used and managed efficiently and effectively to meet the needs of users and the wider community</b>	2
<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>	2
<b>The effectiveness of the centre's policy, procedures and work with key agencies in safeguarding children and, where applicable, vulnerable adults</b>	2
<b>The extent to which evaluation is used to shape and improve services and activities</b>	2
<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>	2
<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>	2



## **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 Highbury Children's Centre on 29–30 March, 2011. We judged the centre as good overall.

We would like to thank those of you who spoke to us during the inspection. Your assistance is appreciated. You were very positive about your experiences at the centre and confident that you receive the support you need. In particular, you told us how you and your children enjoy attending the activities provided by the centre and meeting new friends. It was reassuring to hear how well some of you have been helped when you have a problem and that the centre is helping to make a difference. We could see for ourselves how much you and your children enjoy the facilities and how well everybody gets along with each other. The staff at the centre are good at encouraging you to give your views, and groups such as the 'Parent Voices' group and the advisory board ensure that your views really do matter.

The wide range of courses and activities provided by the centre are well planned and popular. The centre is good at helping you and your children to celebrate your achievements, and we were impressed by the range and number of qualifications and achievements the centre has helped you attain.

The centre is consistently good in its work to support your community. They assess your needs quickly and well, which means they understand how best to help you. One of the reasons for their success is the cooperation they have with a wide range of agencies, either to give you support, or point you in the direction of where you can get it.

The governors and local authority do a good job of checking on the centre's work and helping it to improve. Even though the centre provides a good service, the leaders and staff are determined to make it even better. We have asked them to use the data available to measure how well their action plans help the centre improve each year. We have also asked leaders to develop the systems they have to make sure your children get the best possible start at school.

We would like to express our thanks again to everyone who came to speak with us. It was a privilege to be able to talk with you. Your honesty and openness helped us immensely during the inspection. We are very grateful for your help and we wish you 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)