

# Inspection report for Horsforth Children's Centre

Local authority	Leeds
Inspection number	365800
Inspection dates	30-31 March 2011
Reporting inspector	Priscilla McGuire

Centre governance	Leeds City Council
Centre leader	Helen Higgins
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected
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Linked school if applicable	Broadgate 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.

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

The inspectors held meetings with the centre manager and other staff, parents and carers, members of the advisory board, representatives from the local authority, users and staff from partner agencies including representatives from the health services and local schools.

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

## Information about the centre

Horsforth Children's Centre is a phase 2 centre situated in north Leeds and was set up in 2008. The centre is located in a single storey building and shares its site with Broadgate Primary School. The area is relatively affluent but there are areas of concentrated 'deprivation' and areas of social housing. About 11% of children within the Horsforth area have been identified from local data as living in poverty.

The vast majority of families in the reach area are White British but there is a small percentage of families from minority ethnic groups and some families who speak English as an additional language. Children in the reach area targeted by the centre, enter Early Years Foundation Stage provision with skills lower than typically expected for their age. Obesity rates for children of this age are lower than the national average but higher than other parts of Leeds. The centre is governed by the local authority and supported by an advisory board. Staff are employed by Broadgate Primary School.

The centre meets the core offer as appropriate for a phase 2 centre and provision includes health clinics, family support and creche facilities.

## 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

The overall effectiveness of Horsforth Children's Centre is good and leads to good and sometimes outstanding outcomes for users. The centre manager has made good progress in developing excellent provision and services in a relatively short period of time. She leads a highly cohesive and enthusiastic staff team who work well together and who are dedicated to their mission to improve the lives of families within their reach area.

Users and partners value the welcoming atmosphere at the centre. One partner described the centre as being 'well embedded' in the community. Comments such as 'it's a welcome home from home' are typical of the views of users. The range of services, activities and support offered at the centre meets the needs of users and the wider community very well. The staff, led by a dynamic and highly competent manager, constantly review provision to ensure a close match between provision and needs. The success of the centre is further enhanced by highly productive partnership working with staff from organisations such as the health services, social care and the local police. Partners hold the centre in very high regard and value its contribution to the community and particularly the commitment of staff to improving outcomes for vulnerable families.

The priority given to safeguarding is shared by partners who work effectively with the centre to respond swiftly to concerns about the safety of children. Case studies and evidence from the local primary school demonstrate the centre's success in improving the educational, personal and social outcomes of children. Children who attend the centre are well prepared for the transition to school.

Adult users make excellent progress in their personal, education and social development and benefit from formal learning and training offered at the centre. Many users have also progressed to volunteering both at the centre and elsewhere. Evaluations and monitoring of provision at every level of service delivery are at the heart of practice at the centre and are effective in identifying strengths and areas for development.

The views of users are regularly sought and valued and as a result, user engagement is high and users are actively involved in operational issues and in decision making. A commitment to equality is demonstrated in practice at the centre and in the response made if, for example, discriminatory attitudes are demonstrated by users. Constant monitoring of registration data is used by the centre manager to ensure targeted services are reaching the most vulnerable families. However, although arrangements are in place for centre staff to complete the Stephen Lawrence award (a standard developed in Leeds to promote race equality within schools) formal and regular training of staff in a range of equality and diversity issues is insufficient. Given the good outcomes, the good leadership and management and the ability of the centre to be critically evaluative of provision and to plan accordingly, the centre has good capacity to maintain its excellent provision and improve outcomes for users.

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

### **Recommendations for further improvement**

- Centre manager and local authority to ensure all practice is informed by up-to-date knowledge and understanding of a range of equality and diversity issues by:
  - reviewing arrangements for formal training of all staff in different aspects of equality and diversity.

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

<b>2</b>
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Overall outcomes for users are good. The health of families, particularly their emotional health, has improved significantly as a direct result of engagement with the centre. Healthy living is actively promoted through activities such as a 'breastfeeding cafe'. Users also develop good understanding about healthy living through participating in an accredited family learning health course. During the inspection, users registered on the course were observed participating in a lively, well facilitated session about oral health and hand hygiene.

Users feel safe at the centre. One parent said, 'It feels like a safe environment to share personal feelings and experiences.' Partners such as the social care team and foster carers also feel the environment at the centre is safe for contact visits. Safeguarding is actively promoted through posters on display and there is constant reinforcement of safety policies. Evaluations carried out by the centre confirm that parents who receive support to implement home safety practices become more confident to deal with risks to safety in the home.

Staff make good use of the Common Assessment Framework to make accurate assessments of the needs of children and families. Carers receive excellent support at the centre which has led to significant benefits for the children they look after. For example, one child who had delayed development, attended the 'Baby Sign' sessions

and can now use signs to communicate with her carers. The centre also works effectively with a range of partners to improve outcomes for families with children on child protection plans. However, long term and sustained positive outcomes for children on child protection plans have yet to be demonstrated.

Children who attend the centre make excellent progress in their personal and social development. Their transition to school is also good. Centre staff work very productively with local networks of schools, early years and other providers to improve educational outcomes for children. Parents also make outstanding progress in their personal and social development and as a result, benefit from increased enjoyment of activities at the centre, from socialising with other parents and from participating confidently in group activities. The centre is recognised as a 'hub' of the community and plays a significant role in the lives of families. 'I don't think of the people who work here as staff, more like friends', was the comment of one parent who reflects the views of many users.

As a result of their engagement with the centre, children and adults improve their economic and social well being. Children develop excellent social and personal skills through participating in activities at the centre with other children and with their parents. Meanwhile, parents receive good quality advice and guidance about education, employment and training from joint sessions facilitated by Jobcentre Plus and a childcare advisor. Many parents have progressed to volunteering at the centre or elsewhere and in some cases to employment. The take up rates and attendance on training courses offered at the centre are good.

The contribution of users to decision making and governance is outstanding. Parents are well represented on the advisory board and make a significant and important contribution to key decisions about the centre such as staffing and safety policies.

*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 concerns are identified and appropriate steps taken to address them</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which all users enjoy and achieve educationally and in their personal and social development</b>	<b>1</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>1</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>

<b>How good is the provision?</b>	<b>1</b>
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Centre staff use their own expertise and skills and that of their partners to make well informed and accurate assessments of the individual needs of users. Centre staff also make excellent use of the Common Assessment Framework to identify the most appropriate level of intervention and support that is needed for a family. The centre operates its own 'three tier' support system which is used to identify the level of initial response and support that is needed for referrals to the centre. The work of the outreach workers is outstanding. They promote the centre to the wider community and engage users in centre activities using leafleting, outreach, group activities, individual support and courses. The outreach workers also work very effectively with other partners to deliver direct support for targeted families through joint home visits and other activities at the centre. Partners and users talk very highly of the positive impact of their work. One user said, 'The outreach workers are fantastic and offer support to children, mums and grandparents.'

Activities are designed around planned outcomes and promote purposeful learning and development. Accredited courses in topics such as family learning, volunteering and behaviour management of children are offered to ensure users benefit both from good quality teaching and learning but also have the opportunity to gain accredited qualifications. As active participants of the local Foundation Stage Network, centre staff work collaboratively and effectively with schools and other partners to respond to local educational priorities such as developing children's writing and 'mark making' skills.

The centre offers an excellent range of services and activities that serve the reach area very well. Activities such as 'Baby Explorers' and a 'Young Parents Group' are well attended and meet the diverse needs and interests of the local community. Other services such as counselling support and a childminder drop-in, meet the needs and interests of other groups within the community. Staff have an excellent understanding of the challenges of serving an area that has pockets of deprivation yet is in parts quite affluent. The centre manager is very astute at adapting provision to ensure the correct balance is achieved between offering universal and targeted services.

The quality of care and support at the centre is excellent. Staff make a noticeable and positive difference to the lives of families. They are fully committed to doing their utmost to improve the lives of families and this is recognised by both users and partners. One parent said, 'The children's centre is a place you can go to for help.' Many case studies demonstrate the practical impact of the support of staff in, for example, helping families move to better accommodation, gain advice about benefits or about employment and training. Centre users also benefit from being able to access counselling support at the centre. Foster carers also feel well supported. One carer said, 'We couldn't function without the centre.'

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

Leadership and management are good. There is a clearly defined structure for management and accountability and excellent liaison with local authority staff. Arrangements for performance management of staff are well established and highly effective. Staff are well cared for and encouraged to further develop their skills, knowledge and understanding. For example, some staff are being supported by the centre to complete foundation degrees to enhance their professional knowledge and expertise.

There is ongoing and highly effective monitoring of the work of the centre from both the local authority through the annual conversation and also through the local primary school which is responsible for the employment of centre staff. At a strategic level, the centre manager is actively involved with various local partnerships within the reach area such as a multi-agency cluster of organisations which includes representatives from social care, health and youth work. Representation of the centre on a range of local networks and partnerships enables staff to keep well informed of issues affecting the reach area. It also helps them play an active and often leading role in developing services and provision that respond well and flexibly to local priorities.

The centre manager conducts regular reviews of provision and monitors, through supervision meetings, the extent to which the work of staff contributes to agreed targets, aims and objectives. Detailed analysis of registration data and evaluations from users are also used by the centre manager to inform planning and development of provision. Self-evaluation is reflective and identifies key strengths and areas for development. Recent improvements have been made at local authority level to ensure a clearer link between the self-evaluation form and the service development plan.

The centre offers outstanding value for money and there is very good use of resources. Accommodation at the centre is well used and attendance rates are very high. Some staffing resources are shared with the primary school and with extended services. This has enabled the centre to offer an excellent package of integrated provision and support for users, and for professionals that support families to share

information efficiently and effectively. The impact on outcomes is good and in some areas outstanding. Satisfaction rates with the service are very high.

There is a strong culture of inclusion at the centre. Support is arranged as appropriate for users who speak English as an additional language and services are adapted to meet the needs of users who have disabilities. The centre has recognised the need to try and engage more fathers in activities with their children and carried out a consultation exercise to determine fathers' needs and interests. The results from the consultation are being used to precisely inform planning of how best the centre can engage more fathers in future activities. Staff are personally committed to promoting equality. However, formal and regular training in equality and diversity to ensure practice is informed by knowledge and understanding of a range of equality and diversity issues is insufficient.

Safeguarding is very well promoted at the centre and is a clear priority of the local authority. A wide range of safeguarding policies inform practice and users are actively involved in the implementation of policies such as the 'hot drinks policy'. For example, after consultation and discussion with users, this policy was adapted to allow users to have hot drinks in cups with lids. Staff supervision is explicitly linked to safeguarding and reviews of staff performance routinely monitor the progress and work of staff in relation to safeguarding issues.

The centre has excellent relationships with a range of partners from the statutory and private sectors. Case studies from partners demonstrate how their collaborative work with the centre has led to early intervention, early referrals and effective support for users. Comments from partners are highly complimentary about the effectiveness of their joint work with the centre. One partner from the social care team said of the centre that, 'it is an essential resource in supporting several families I work with where their children are subject to a child protection plan.'

Users have excellent opportunities to be involved with the work of the centre through representation on the advisory board and through the parents' forum. Users are given the responsibility to have direct input into developing services and provision at the centre. For example, parents were given the responsibility to design the sensory room and to organise the purchasing of resources for the room. The parents' forum is relatively new but is already actively involved in decision making and has a constitution and a bank account which is used to fund trips for families.

*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>1</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>1</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>2</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>1</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>1</b>

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

Outcomes from Broadgate Primary school inspection which was carried out at the same time were taken into consideration

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## **Summary for centre users**

We inspected the Horsforth Children's Centre on 30-31 March 2011. We judged the centre as good overall.

During our visit we looked at the centre's activities and documents, and spoke to many of you as well as staff and other professionals who work at the centre. We appreciate the time you took to talk to us during our visit.

We believe that your children's centre is well managed and that the way the staff work with staff from other organisations is excellent. You all spoke very highly of the centre and told us how much the staff have helped you and your families. We looked at some of the comments that you made about the centre in your evaluations and

one comment reflects what we believe is the views of many users, 'If it was not for the children's centre, I would be lost and not have had the confidence to interact with other parents.'

When we met with staff from other organisations who work with the centre, they also spoke very positively about the centre and about its role in the community.

We felt the quality of care and support the centre offers to parents and their families is a real strength of what the centre offers to the community. The outreach workers provide an exceptional service to users at the centre but also to members of the community who are still discovering what the centre has to offer.

The centre also provides some excellent opportunities for both you and your children to learn and develop. We know from talking to you and also from your evaluations that you and your children enjoy attending sessions at the centre. We know from talking to staff at local schools that your children are doing well in their learning and have been better prepared for school because of their attendance at the centre. As adults, many of you have also done exceptionally well in gaining qualifications and also in volunteering.

You told us how safe you felt at the centre and about how you feel the centre offers a safe environment for you and your children. We feel that safeguarding in the centre and also safety in the home is well promoted by centre staff.

We know that staff at the centre do not want anybody to be excluded from participating in activities and work hard to remove any barriers that could prevent a child or adult from using the centre. However, we feel that if the staff received more training about equality, they could be even more effective in their work. We have therefore asked the local authority and the manager to review the training that is offered in equality and diversity.

Thank you once again for all your input into the inspection process. We wish you all the best for the future.

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