

Inspection report for High Flyers Children's Centre

Local authority	Stockton-On-Tees
Inspection number	365686
Inspection dates	14-15 April 2011
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Centre governance	Local authority
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Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected
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Linked school if applicable	Not applicable
Linked early years and childcare, if applicable	High Flyers Early Support Nursery EY313452 Little People Montessori Centre EY396955

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.

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Introduction

The inspection addresses the centre's contribution to:

- facilitating access to early childhood services by parents, prospective parents and young children
- maximising the benefit of those services to parents, prospective parents and young children
- improving the well-being of young children.

The report is made to the local authority and a copy is sent to the children's centre. The local authority may send the report to such persons it considers appropriate and must arrange for an action plan to be produced in relation to the findings in this report.

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

The inspectors held meetings with the centre managers, staff members, advisory board members, members of the parent forum, a range of providers, partner agencies, users and local authority officers linked to the centre.

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

Information about the centre

High Flyers Children's Centre was originally developed as part of the Sure Start local programme. It serves The Village & Stainsby Hill wards of Stockton-On-Tees. The centre has developed from the former Tedder School site and is situated adjacent to a newly refurbished town shopping centre, a local community centre and health centre. As a phase one centre, High Flyers provides the full core offer, including health and education services. A private day nursery on site offers full day-care, after school and holiday provision, plus an early support nursery which serves the whole of the Stockton area's needs. The private provider for the day nursery also provides a café service for the centre. Children enter the Early Years Foundation Stage with knowledge, skills and abilities well below those expected for their age, particularly in communication and personal, social and emotional development.

The centre serves a number of housing estates; the Holmes & Middlefield estate is situated opposite and consists primarily of social housing, whilst the nearby Bassleton & Stainsby estates consist predominantly of owner occupied housing, with a higher number of working parents. The centre serves a population of mainly White British heritage with 836 children aged under five years. Approximately 69% of children reside in the most disadvantaged areas and 33% live in workless households where parents rely on benefits.

Since October 2010 the centre has had a change of centre manager. The current area manager has been managing the centre since January 2011.

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

High Flyers Children’s Centre is a good and improving centre. Outcomes for users are good overall and the centre is fully aware of how to set targets for future developments. The outcome for being healthy is satisfactory overall. Many strategies are in place to support families in leading healthy lifestyles, however, the impact of these is not yet being realised. Consequently, breastfeeding rates are the lowest in Stockton and obesity levels in children remain higher than those found nationally. Additionally, the centre has had some difficulties in obtaining up-to-date health data specific to its reach area. However, the centre has had some considerable impact on other outcomes. It is effective in keeping users safe and protected through comprehensive risk assessments of all areas, which ensure high levels of safety in the centre, and the clear understanding with partner agencies of how to keep children and adults safe.

Adults and children are enjoying and achieving in many respects. Children and their parents and carers engage in a wide range of exciting and stimulating learning opportunities and are becoming confident in their learning and development. Children are progressing well, although the centre has not yet established strong links with all schools in the area in order to secure effective transition arrangements for all children and track the progress and achievement of those who have accessed the centre’s services. Centre staff are adept at signposting adult users to appropriate agencies for help and advice on a wide range of issues. Adult users are also very effectively supported and guided to access appropriate training which will help them gain qualifications to improve their employment prospects. A small number have embarked on long term training and have successfully secured employment or are undertaking higher education courses to degree level.

Leadership and management are strong and managers competently supervise the work of the centre and ensure that appropriate targets are set for future development. Self-evaluation is used effectively to assess what the centre is doing

well and what could be improved further. Detailed data, together with the centre's self-evaluation, is used to accurately evaluate the effectiveness of activities on outcomes. The leadership team, together with the centre's staff, advisory board and professional partners ensure the centre offers high quality provision and services. Staff are highly motivated and hardworking, ensuring the centre is a welcoming and exciting place to be.

The centre gives high priority to safeguarding all children and their families and offers good quality care, guidance and support. Centre staff and partner agencies work well together to ensure that families, particularly those whose circumstances make them vulnerable, benefit from a range of good quality services that are carefully tailored to meet their particular needs. The centre is fully inclusive to all members of the community and staff show great understanding and respect, valuing difference and celebrating diversity. As one parent commented, 'Everyone is welcome and is made to feel special'. The range and quality of the provision on offer meet the needs of users well.

There are many opportunities for parents and users to express their views through feedback forms, questionnaires and the 'you said, we did' board. Parents are involved in decision making through membership of the parent forum and advisory board, which also includes partner agencies representatives and members of the local community. However, some members of the advisory board are not yet fully comfortable in their role of challenging the centre and management team. Despite this, the advisory board and the parent forum ensure the centre continually develops and improves in order to meet changing local needs. Because of this, together with effective partnership working, good leadership and management and a proven track record, the centre has good capacity to improve further.

What does the centre need to do to improve further?

Recommendations for further improvement

- Improve collaborative working with health at a strategic level to ensure better communication and information sharing in order to further improve breastfeeding rates and reduce obesity levels in children.
- Work with all school partners in the reach area to further improve transition arrangements and track the progress and achievement of children who have accessed the centre's services.
- Offer greater support to members of the advisory board in order to empower them to more effectively challenge the work of the centre and the management team.

How good are outcomes for users?

2

The centre provides a wide range of activities which are developed well in partnership with other agencies and professionals. Healthy lifestyles and healthy

eating are promoted by all and early referral and intervention ensures that families who may be more vulnerable than others are appropriately supported. Activities, such as 'baby massage' and 'stay and play' are used to help enhance the relationship between parent and child and to promote users' mental health. The centre offers a welcoming environment to new mothers and breastfeeding mentors have recently been introduced to encourage more mothers to continue to breastfeed their babies for longer. Early signs indicate that this initiative is well received, however, the impact is not yet being fully realised and the rates for breastfeeding remain low. Parents and children are beginning to benefit from the wide range of activities on offer, such as the support for weaning, the promotion of healthy eating and dental health. Free fruit is available to all children using the centre and healthy, low cost, nutritious food is available in the centre cafe. Despite this raft of supportive and encouraging strategies, childhood obesity remains higher than the national average.

The centre is effective in ensuring that parents and children keep themselves safe and free from harm and children's safety is improving. This is demonstrated by a wide range of preventative measures and advice including the supply of home safety equipment to those that are eligible. Staff model safe practices well and the centre is a very safe and welcoming place to be due to the vigilance of all adults and the completion of comprehensive risk assessments of all areas and activities. The Common Assessment Framework has been re-launched and is being used effectively by all agencies to ensure that families are given the support and help that they need, thereby preventing situations from reaching crisis point.

There are many activities where parents and children play, have fun and learn together. The range of good information and advice on all aspects of child development is helping parents understand how they can help their children progress and develop their learning. Centre staff have a comprehensive knowledge of the Early Years Foundation Stage and activities are planned with children's development and learning in mind. The centre is working with some schools in the area to ensure children are affectively supported during their transition to school and give feedback on children's progress, although some other schools have yet to engage with the centre. The centre has been proactive in supporting external providers in developing their own knowledge of child development through training and advice offered by the centre teacher. As a result, there are more effective learning opportunities for young children linked to the Early Years Foundation Stage principles. Speech and language therapists and the Early Support Nursery ensure that children with speech and language delay and special educational needs and/or disabilities are given impressive additional support. As a result, in 2010 56.9% of children reached 78 points across the assessment scales of the Early Years Foundation Stage Profile, which is an improvement on previous years.

Children's behaviour throughout the centre is good. They show consideration for others and are learning to share and take turns. Parents express their views through regular evaluations of activities, questionnaires and the innovative 'you said, we did' board where parents write comments about what they want and the centre replies with what they have done in response. Children also express their views using the

talking tree, leaving messages on the tree about what they like about the centre and what they would like to do or see happening. Parents are engaged in the decision making and governance of the centre through the parent forum and by participating on the advisory board. However, some members of the advisory board are still developing their understanding of their roles and responsibilities.

The centre very effectively helps to promote economic stability, for example, by encouraging users to access local training, helping them to secure benefits and giving them access to independent advice. In addition to developing their parenting skills, a number of users take advantage of the many opportunities to further their own education and readiness to return to work. Some adult users have successfully completed courses in basic skills in numeracy, literacy and at NVQ Levels 2 and 3 in childcare and education. Some have successfully secured employment and one is currently studying for a degree.

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, and 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 and employment	2

How good is the provision?

2

The centre uses assessment well in order to identify individual needs and provides good quality services with sensitive care, guidance and support. There is a wide range of additional services and the centre meets its core offer well. Local knowledge, comprehensive data from the local authority and suggestions from staff and individual users inform the programmes presented at the centre. Assessment is used effectively to determine the needs of children, parents and users. As a consequence, the centre has a good knowledge of local families and the community and strives to ensure that services successfully meet the needs of users. The Common Assessment Framework is being used well to ensure that assessments of all children, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities are thorough and the resulting support is very effective.

A midwifery service is based at the centre and is used well by mothers-to-be and the

booking-in clinics introduce new families to other services on offer. Home visitors actively promote the engagement of more users through leaflets, home visiting and by word of mouth. They gain the trust of individuals and provide practical support as well as advice about the services available. Case studies show they are successful in encouraging new users to take advantage of the positive atmosphere offered by the centre. There are many examples of good quality outreach and support work, including the regular stay and play sessions, parenting classes and the High Flyers lounge which provides an area for families to call into the centre and meet with others.

Free crèche facilities have made it possible for users to access training and development opportunities easily. Jobcentre Plus provides opportunities for users to enhance their educational and personal development and offers effective help and support with training and employment. Users also benefit from the support for writing job applications and advice on how to be successful in an interview.

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

Leadership and management are consistently good at all levels. Senior leaders have a clear vision and are determined to ensure that the centre is effective in improving the life chances of families within its reach area. All staff are committed to the centre's work and know how they contribute to its effectiveness. For example, customer care workers understand how important a warm welcome is and they ensure all users and visitors are greeted on arrival and are given any help and support they need. Clear, effective partnership arrangements ensure that all users' needs are met well and relationships between centre staff and their partner agency staff are strong. Morale is high and everyone works together to improve outcomes for users. The centre runs efficiently with a close regard for financial security. It focuses on activities that are sustainable, building upon existing provision and sharing costs and resources where possible, thereby ensuring good value for money.

Centre managers are held accountable through regular meetings with the local authority, the advisory board and the annual conversation. Minutes of meetings demonstrate a clear commitment to continuous review and improvement and reflect the integrated approach established by the centre with its key partners. The centre's

comprehensive data collection system is now enabling the centre to measure its success specific to the centre’s reach area, although the full impact over time is yet to be fully realised. However, the senior leadership team respond to what the regular data updates from the local authority show in terms of growing or fading impact. Consequently, the centre knows its strengths and areas for development well and demonstrates good capacity for sustained improvement.

Inclusion is well embedded throughout the centre’s work. Staff are effective in ensuring that all children and parents, regardless of background, aptitudes or other differences, have the same access to the range of experiences on offer. The information displayed promotes equality and diversity and translation services are available if needed. The centre is fully accessible for people with disabilities and the centre offers a well equipped and resourced nursery provision for children with additional needs.

There are good arrangements in place to safeguard all users. The procedures for vetting staff are robust and relevant training is up to date. All staff are fully aware of their responsibilities and are vigilant in identifying and responding to any concerns as a result of their thorough knowledge of the safeguarding procedures. Clear procedures and protocols for sharing information, together with effective partnership working, ensure that children and families at risk and in need are prioritised effectively. Parents and users of the services spoke with confidence about how well their children are protected and that they wholeheartedly trust the centre with the care of their 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	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	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	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
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Any other information used to inform the judgements made during this inspection

Not applicable.

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Summary for centre users

We inspected the High Flyers Children’s Centre on 14-15 April 2011. We judged the centre as good overall.

As part of the inspection we visited a number of activities, looked at the centre’s documentation, and talked with a range of children and adults including parents, staff, local authority representatives and partnership workers. We were pleased to speak to so many of you and to listen to your views. We really enjoyed talking to you around the centre and in the activity sessions you were engaged in. You made your views very clear to us and we appreciated your honesty in telling us how things really are.

We are pleased to tell you that your centre is working hard to support you and your families. Your centre does many things well, such as the way everybody works together to make things better for you and the way you are encouraged to keep safe and learn how to help your children progress and develop. You told us that you and your children are well cared for and that staff offer you good levels of support and encouragement and we agree with you. Some of you told us how you have made friends by coming to the centre’s activities and how you have been helped to increase your own skills through effective tailored learning programmes. We could see for ourselves how the centre is making a real difference to improving your lives.

We saw your children behaving very well in the centre, thoroughly enjoying their play and learning in the good quality activities they were engaged in. Many of you told us how the stay and play activities and parenting sessions have helped you to understand about play and how children learn. We were pleased to hear that these activities help you support your children’s learning at home.

We were very pleased to see how well the centre staff work with others to provide good care and support to you. The home visitors and the information, advice and

guidance worker work well with others to support you in developing your confidence and raising your aspirations for your own futures.

It was clear to us that staff are working very hard to make the centre as good as it can be. They regularly consider how best to improve services for you and your children and want to encourage as many families as possible to come to the centre. You can help by talking to friends about the exciting things on offer at the centre, including the centre café and lounge where parents and children can meet and make friends.

We have suggested they work with others to support more mothers to breastfeed their babies for longer and to encourage more children to eat more healthily. We have also asked that they work closely with all schools in the area to help children move onto school with ease. By working closely with schools the centre will also be able to see what difference it has made to children's learning over time.

We know that many of you have ideas about how the centre can make things even better and would encourage you to become involved in helping to make decisions about what activities should be offered and where. You can do this by becoming involved with the parent forum and the advisory board or by using the suggestions boxes to tell staff what will make things better. We have asked the centre to offer more support to members of the advisory board so that more of you feel able to challenge the work of the centre and the management team.

Thank you once again for your welcome and your willingness to talk to us. We can see why the staff love working with you and wish you every success in the future.

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