

Inspection report for Crosland Moor Children's Centre

Local authority	Kirklees
Inspection number	365668
Inspection dates	24-25 May 2011
Reporting inspector	Priscilla McGuire

Centre governance	Local authority
Centre leader	Tracey Fitzgibbon
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected
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Linked school if applicable	Crosland Moor Junior School Dryclough CofE Voluntary Controlled Infant School
Linked early years and childcare, if applicable	EY285066 Sure Start Links 4 Children's Centre, Thornton Lodge Nursery

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, representatives from the local authority, representatives from the advisory board and health services, frontline workers, representatives from partner organisations, schools and users. They observed the centre's work, and looked at a range of relevant documentation.

Information about the centre

Crosland Moor Children's Centre is a phase one centre which was designated in 2004 and shares its site with two schools, one junior and one infant. Day care provision managed by an external provider is also offered at the centre. The reach area covers parts of south Huddersfield and includes Crosland Moor, Netherton, Thornton Lodge and Lockwood. The centre serves an area that has pockets of significant deprivation and is in parts densely populated. Housing within the reach area includes private rented accommodation, privately owned properties and local authority housing.

The Crosland Moor reach is diverse. In parts of the reach area, the population is mostly White British. In others parts, a large number of residents are of Pakistani heritage. There are also families with Black and dual heritage and a growing Polish community. The reach area also has the second highest number of asylum seekers within Kirklees. The percentage of children who achieve a total of at least 78 points across the Early Years Foundation Stage Profile is below the national average. There is also low uptake of nursery provision in the reach area.

The unemployment rate is above the average for Kirklees with a high percentage of families dependent on workless benefits. Domestic violence incidents and the number of children on child protection plans are also higher than many other parts of Kirklees. Obesity rates of children in the Reception Year are lower than the national average. Governance is provided by the local authority and there is an advisory

board with representatives from the children's centre, local schools and external agencies.

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

Crosland Moor Children's Centre is a lively and attractive centre which is well established in the community. It offers a warm and welcoming environment for users and visitors. Space and display areas are well used to promote centre activities, to advertise job vacancies, to celebrate achievement of users and to provide useful information and guidance to users through posters, leaflets and a wide range of booklets. Display areas are also used to share minutes from the Parents Forum to invite suggestions from users.

The passion of the centre manager and the staff to do their very best to help families, is evident from the success of the centre in helping users, particularly many who face multiple barriers, to achieve positive outcomes. One of the key strengths of the centre is the outstanding support and care that is given to families, particularly during times of crisis. 'The support I had has been a Godsend – my life would have been in pieces without it', was the comment from one user who could not speak highly enough about the personal care and support she received from staff. Centre staff have an excellent understanding of the needs of users. They use tools effectively, such as the Common Assessment Framework, together with their experience and expertise to make accurate assessments of the needs of children and families.

Although the overall Early Years Foundation Stage profile score of children within the reach area is lower than the national average, the centre has started to take some positive action to respond to this. For example, effective liaison with early years specialists is helping the centre to deliver activities that are explicitly linked to planned learning and development outcomes for children.

Users feel safe at the centre and are being supported to stay safe when they are outside the centre. The safeguarding agenda is promoted at a strategic level by the local authority and practice across all centres is subject to continuous review. Multi-agency work and effective information sharing is also a key part of the centre's safeguarding practice. A 'safeguarding champion' acts as a key resource to help centres implement robust safeguarding policies.

The impact of the partnership arrangements that the centre shares with partners from a wide range of organisations including the health services, education, Jobcentre Plus, the voluntary sector and many more, is outstanding. Links with the local 'Community Ranger' are also used exceptionally well to provide local intelligence about issues affecting particular families or the community in general. The 'One Stop Shop' is also very effective in bringing services from a wide range of partners together in one place and at one time to meet the needs of users.

The positive contribution of users to the centre and the local community is excellent. Volunteers are involved with the centre at different levels, such as through their participation on the advisory board and the Parents Forum. Operationally, volunteers help out with the running of the centre and, for example, help to prepare rooms for activities. One group of volunteers are formally constituted and have been very successful in raising money to fund activities for users and the wider community. Volunteers are well trained and supported through regular meetings held at the centre which are facilitated by a member of staff.

The centre's work to improve the economic well-being of users is impressive. In spite of the impact of the recession on the availability of jobs, the centre manager and staff vigorously pursue opportunities to help users develop the skills and knowledge that will increase their employability. For example, the centre now offers a series of 'Skills for Work' adult learning courses that are clearly linked to employment opportunities and which also offer progression routes into further education courses. One user said 'I now know how to do a CV so I can start applying for jobs.' Other users comment on the increased confidence they have gained to apply for jobs.

The centre manager and staff have made an excellent response to the increasing diversity within the community. They use local intelligence and data well to monitor registration and participation rates by ethnicity, disability, gender and deprivation levels and take decisive action to encourage user participation from any underrepresented groups. Targeted and successful one-to-one work is being done to engage more fathers in centre activities and to help them become more involved in the lives of their children. The recent expansion of the reach area to include Netherton, an area that is a two bus journey from the centre, presents a challenge for centre staff. However, work has already been undertaken to attempt to increase the number of registrations from this part of the reach area.

The effective management of the centre, the good outcomes and the effective use of evaluation to improve the quality of provision demonstrates that the centre has good capacity to improve.

What does the centre need to do to improve further?

Recommendations for further improvement

- Continue to increase registrations and participation rates from harder to reach areas and groups.
- Continue to work with the local authority and schools to develop strategies to improve the progress of children during the Early Years Foundation Stage.

How good are outcomes for users?

2

Outcomes for users are good. Health promotion is effective and multi-agency work with partners from the health services to improve health outcomes is successful. Users benefit from being able to access health advice and guidance from the weekly and well used 'One Stop Shop' which offers a weekly baby clinic for weighing, as well as personal health advice from health visitors, a nursery nurse and midwives. One user said, 'I'd much rather attend a SureStart centre to get my daughter weighed and checked by a health visitor than go to my GPs'. Parents' and carers' understanding of how to improve their own health and that of their children is good. For example, some Polish users registered with dentists for the first time after attending a support group at the centre and learning that they could access free dental health care. Breastfeeding rates are not available for the reach area but within South Kirklees, of which the reach area is a part, breastfeeding rates are improving.

Data and local intelligence indicate that domestic violence is a significant problem within the reach area. The centre has, therefore, made a concerted effort to respond to this issue and the most recent data shows that the number of domestic violence incidents is reducing over time. Centre staff have been appropriately trained in domestic violence and also work well with the local domestic violence unit to support families. Case studies demonstrate the vigilance of staff in responding swiftly and appropriately to crises that occur within families. In one case, the centre worked sensitively and very effectively with the local social care team and the police to provide practical support to a user and her children who had to leave a home where there had been a history of domestic violence.

The reach area also has a high number of children on child protection plans. The centre uses links with external agencies such as social care teams, to support the families of these children and to help them access universal and targeted services. This has led in many cases, to children being removed from child protection plans. The Common Assessment Framework (CAF) is also used well by family support staff to identify vulnerable families who need support.

Children make good progress from their starting points at the centre. Data from the local junior school shows that children who attended the children's centre are making better progress than those that did not. Children make a successful transition through to nursery provision and onto school. They enjoy their learning. The centre works effectively with local schools and the local authority to monitor the progress of children and activities for children are now clearly linked to Early Years Foundation Stage and Every Child Matter outcomes. Children enjoy sessions and achievement of both children and adults is well celebrated. Centre staff and their partners are implementing 'The Child's Journey', a framework developed by the local authority to promote key areas of a child's development. This is already having a positive impact on the quality of sessions delivered at the centre.

There is very good partnership working with Kirklees college to promote learning opportunities that meet individual needs but which also contribute to a wider community agenda to increase employment rates and the skills of the community. The college reports that attendance and retention rates on adult learning programmes delivered at the centre are very good. Evaluations and comments from parents and carers demonstrate that they enjoy their learning and are achieving their personal learning goals.

Children and their parents and carers make an outstanding contribution to the centre and their local community. Users are integral to the decision making process at the centre and contribute views and challenge decisions through the Parents Forum and through the advisory board. The centre is well established in the community and promotes community cohesion. One user commented about the centre's success in 'bringing people together who would not normally speak to each other on the street.' Volunteering is actively promoted and the contribution of volunteers to the centre and the community is highly valued.

Adults make outstanding progress towards becoming economically active and independent. Through the 'Skills for Work' programme offered in partnership with Kirklees College, adults have become more employable. For example, they learn job searching skills and also have the opportunity to practice interview skills with local charities. Children are also making excellent progress in developing their skills for the future.

Advice on benefits and welfare is excellent. Some users have completed a 'Moneywise' training course which has helped them develop their understanding of money management. Evaluations about the impact of the course from users include one who said, 'I am going to write down my weekly budget and use all the helpful information given to me.' A significant number of users have progressed to employment and further education. One member of staff carried out research to identify from local companies, the skills and qualifications they require from potential employees. The information gathered from the research was then used to provide guidance and advice to users and also to inform planning of adult learning courses.

These are the grades for the outcomes for users

The extent to which children, including those from vulnerable groups, are physically, mentally and emotionally healthy and families have healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which children are safe and protected, their welfare concerns are identified and appropriate steps taken to address them	2
The extent to which all users enjoy and achieve educationally and in their personal and social development	2
The extent to which children engage in positive behaviour and develop positive relationships and users contribute to decision-making and governance of the centre	1
The extent to which children are developing skills for the future and parents are developing economic stability and independence including access to training	1

How good is the provision?

2

The assessment of the needs of users is excellent. The centre staff know their community well and work very effectively with a wide range of partners to make a personalised and sensitive response to the individual needs of users. The Common Assessment Framework is used very well to identify how services and support can be matched to needs. Case studies and personal testimonies from users demonstrate that assessment is accurate and leads to positive outcomes for users.

The extent to which learning and development is purposeful is good because of effective planning and good quality provision. Aspiration raising and a 'can do' attitude is a strong feature of the centre and when users do achieve success, this is celebrated. Activities are carefully planned to ensure outcomes for children and for adults are positive. For example the 'Jolly Babies' session during which many parents enjoy singing with their children, is linked to communication and language development of children. Parents and carers who attend the session receive a booklet which contains songs and brief instructions to promote attachment and bonding between parents and their children.

Provision is well matched to the needs of users and the wider community. The centre manager uses data and local intelligence constructively to identify how best the needs of users and the community can be met with services. Services and activities are developed and improved in response to feedback from users, the advisory board and others and evaluations are used well to improve the quality and range of services.

'They saved my life' was the comment from one user about centre staff. Her comment was typical of other users. Case studies demonstrate that when support and care is most needed, the response from the centre is outstanding. One father wrote as follows about the support he received from staff, 'I have been let down so

many times. I feel a lot happier getting out of this hole and into my own property. You have done more for me in a few months than anyone has been able to do in the last four to five years.' The centre uses its resources exceptionally well to respond to families in crisis. For example, the multi-lingual skills and cultural knowledge of one member of staff has been used with great effect to deal sensitively with safeguarding issues that arise within the Asian community. Multi-agency work is also effective in providing support for users at the time they most need it. Members of staff and partners demonstrate a strong empathy with users and are committed to helping them achieve positive outcomes. Guidance is also outstanding with a range of partners visiting the centre on a regular basis to offer guidance and advice on health, education, training, benefits, welfare and money management. The centre also runs a 'twice as nice' shop which families can use to both donate and obtain clothes.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The effectiveness of the assessment of the needs of children, parents and other users	1
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	1

How effective are the leadership and management?

2

Leadership and management are good and the strategic direction for the centre is clearly articulated and well understood. The centre is priority led. Priorities are linked to Every Child Matters and Early Years Foundation Stage outcomes and also to user and community needs. Centre staff, the advisory board and partners share a strong common purpose to improve the lives of users and the community. Support from local authority managers for the centre is good. There is a culture of continuous improvement which is driven at a strategic level and implemented at centre level. The advisory board is also actively involved in performance management and representation on the board of partners is good. Some parents and carers are also members of the board but centre staff are trying to recruit more of them onto the board. The quality of data provided to the centre is good and used well by the centre manager to constantly review performance against priorities and targets.

Safeguarding is a key priority for the centre and evidence shows that the centre is contributing well to reducing the number of children on child protection plans. Families also recognise and appreciate the centre's rigorous approach to safeguarding. Staff are well trained at a level appropriate to their responsibilities. The

centre also recognises the safeguarding of staff as a priority and, for example, operates a 'buddy system' to ensure staff are monitored when making lone home visits.

The promotion of inclusion and equality of opportunity is excellent. Actions are taken to remove language, cultural or any other barriers which could inhibit participation of existing or potential users. For example, English for speakers of other languages (ESOL) classes for parents and 'Baby ESOL' classes have been successful in helping parents who do not speak English as a first language, develop and improve their English language skills. This has led to their being able to integrate better within the community. Positive comments from a group set up to support Polish members of the community, demonstrate the centre's success in reaching groups that are at risk of social or cultural isolation. Posters and information are displayed around the centre in a variety of languages which reflect the diversity of users and of the community. Participation rates are systematically monitored to ensure groups, such as fathers, families with disabled children, users from black and minority ethnic groups and other groups are not excluded from services. Parents and carers from a range of social and racial backgrounds are excellent advocates for the centre and encourage others from their respective communities to use the centre.

Partnership arrangements are outstanding. The centre works productively with a wide range of partners who all share the centre's ambition and vision. 'We couldn't function without the centre' was the comment from one health visitor. Another partner said that 'Best value comes from partnership working'. Partners contribute significantly to the success of the well attended 'One Stop Shop' which offers users a cohesive package of support, advice and guidance about health, education, benefits, welfare and other topics. Partners have high levels of respect for centre staff and greatly value their expertise, their support for users and their high levels of commitment.

Evaluation and monitoring of provision is systematic and effective in raising standards of delivery. Centre staff have a good knowledge of their strengths and areas for improvement as a service. Customised pre- and post-evaluations of activities and interventions are systematically used to assess and monitor impact. Partners also contribute to the self-evaluation process, mainly through their representation on the advisory board. The local authority has recently implemented an outcomes based accountability system which the manager has started to use to monitor impact. User engagement is good and determined outreach work is being undertaken to try and engage users from the harder to reach parts of the wider community.

Participation rates are high overall and accommodation at the centre is well used. Attendance and retention rates on adult learning courses are also high. This, along with the effective financial management and the positive outcomes for users, demonstrates that the centre provides good value for money.

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	1
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	1
The extent to which the centre supports and encourages the wider community to engage with services and uses their views to develop the range of provision	2

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

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. If you would like us to send you a copy of the guidance, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

Summary for centre users

We inspected the Crosland Moor Children's Centre on 24 and 25 May 2011. We judged the centre as good overall.

During our visit we talked to some of you, to centre staff and to staff from other organisations that work with the centre. Everyone we talked to was very enthusiastic

and positive about the centre and its work. Just like you, we found the centre to be a very welcoming place. In fact, someone we spoke to said that 'walking into the centre is like walking into a home.'

We saw from your evaluations and also learnt from talking to you, that you and your children really enjoy attending the centre and going on trips that are sometimes organised. We know that unemployment is an issue in the community but we were very impressed with the way the centre organises training to help you find jobs. Some of you have already found jobs as a result of the confidence and skills you have gained from attending courses. We were also impressed with the amount of advice and guidance you can get from the centre about education, jobs and how to manage your money better.

We also liked the way the centre works with other organisations and found this to be a real strength of how the centre operates. We met staff from many of the organisations that are involved with the 'One Stop Shop' and they were very enthusiastic about their work with the centre.

The care and support that the centre offers to families is excellent. Some of you shared your personal stories with us and we thank you for being so open and honest with us. We were very impressed with the way the staff provide the right help at the right time, particularly when problems seem to be overwhelming.

We met some of you who are involved with the centre as volunteers and this is something else that impressed us. The support and encouragement the centre gives to volunteers is excellent but also the fact that as volunteers you are encouraged to take responsibility for the way things are done at the centre and can contribute to decisions that are made.

We know that centre staff would like even more people to use the centre so we have asked them to look at how they can increase the number of registrations. We have also asked them to continue working with the local authority and others to help children make even better progress with their learning and development before they start school.

Many thanks for your contribution to the inspection and for taking the time to talk to us. 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.