

Inspection report for Hadfield Children's Centre

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| Local authority | Derbyshire |
| Inspection number | 365676 |
| Inspection dates | 26–27 May 2011 |
| Reporting inspector | Lois Furness |

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| Centre governance | Derbyshire County Council |
| Centre leader | Karen Foster |
| Date of previous inspection | Not previously inspected |
| Centre address | Off Queen Street |
| | Hadfield |
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| Linked school if applicable | Hadfield Nursery School |
| Linked early years and childcare, if applicable | Hadfield House Day Nursery EY348573 |

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.

An inspection of the maintained nursery was carried out at the same time as the inspection of the centre under Section 5 of the Education Act 2005. The report of this inspection is available on our website www.ofsted.gov.uk.

This inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors.

The inspectors held meetings with the centre coordinator, a local authority representative, staff, groups of parents and carers, a number of representatives from partner agencies and the chair of the advisory group. They also spoke informally with centre staff and users. The inspectors observed the centre's work and looked at a range of relevant documentation.

Information about the centre

Hadfield is a phase two children's centre which, although gaining full designation in March 2008, did not begin its full service delivery until January 2009. It is housed in a purpose-built extension to Hadfield Nursery School, and provides the full core offer to a community comprising seven super output areas of Hadfield. There are approximately 786 children aged 0–5 years living in the reach area, with 144 of these children living in the 30% most deprived area (Hadfield North). Nearly all families are White British. Approximately 20% of children are living in households dependent upon on workless benefits. Children's skills and knowledge on entry to Early Years Foundation Stage provision broadly matches that expected for their age.

Governance is by the local authority, and an advisory group contributes to the strategic management and direction of the centre. The advisory group is made up of representatives from the local community, professional agencies and parents. In April 2010, the advisory groups for three local centres combined (Hadfield, Glossop and Gamesley), and the centre staff mainly work across all three centres.

The centre's full day-care provision is provided by Hadfield House Day Nursery. The nursery is managed privately and is subject to separate Early Years Foundation Stage inspection arrangements. It was last inspected in 2008 and the inspection report can be found on the Ofsted website.

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

3

Capacity for sustained improvement

The centre's capacity for sustained improvement, including the quality of its leadership and management

3

Main findings

Hadfield Children's Centre provides satisfactory support to children and their families. The centre is still establishing its presence in the community but has made significant improvements to change users' attitudes and engage families. Much of the focus of the work of the coordinator, staff and partners has been to gain the trust of the community. This has been necessary before being able to reach the point of analysing information about the different users. Improvements are evident in the increasing number of families that now use the centre, and access its services. Good provision effectively promotes users' enjoyment, purposeful learning and their personal and social development. Children in the reach area are achieving good outcomes and most are exceeding the national expectations for five-year-olds by the end of the Reception year. Parents and carers speak very positively about what the centre provides. 'It is brilliant here,' and, 'I cannot imagine what my life would be like without the centre,' are typical comments from users.

Care, guidance and support are strengths and the centre rightly prides itself on the welcome it extends to all. Trusting relationships are formed and early intervention work makes a big difference to improving some users' lives. Safeguarding procedures are rigorous and applied effectively. The staff know users well. Parents and carers, including fathers, say they feel safe, and that they are treated as individuals. Secure partnerships exist with other agencies and clear protocols regarding working practices, such as general information sharing, safeguarding procedures and effective signposting to each other's services are clearly established. The targeted work for families in need is effective, through the appropriate use of the Common Assessment Framework (CAF). However, despite these strengths, there is limited involvement of parents and carers in designing the activities provided by the centre and they do not have a strong voice in determining the overall strategic direction of

its work.

The level of engagement with the centre's reach area is improving but there is not enough precise information and data about different groups within the reach. This means that staff are not able to increase engagement particularly of any specific group not well represented; for example, lone parents and black minority ethnic parents and carers. However, once families attend the centre, the staff's ability to assess their needs is thorough, as good local knowledge, alongside discussion and assessment toolkits, ensures the needs of those who attend the centre are met well.

The centre manager and staff form a supportive team that is committed to improving services and outcomes for families in the reach. Governance and accountability arrangements are clear and supervision systems are well established. The advisory group includes a wide range of partners. The Chair, a parent, is knowledgeable and has a good understanding of her role. She knows the strengths and the development areas required through the advisory groups' work on constantly reviewing and discussing the centre's self-evaluation document. She knows, for example, that the centre's business plan lacks precise measurable targets, in order to hold the centre to account for its work.

The local authority has been aware that more precise data was needed, and consequently the information it provides has been improving. However, the centre is not using this well enough to monitor the impact of its work on users' outcomes. Also, the electronic system for collecting information about user engagement does not hold accurate information. Therefore although equality and diversity are promoted satisfactorily through an inclusive ethos, the centre cannot be certain of how equitable its service delivery is, as it is unable to monitor the effectiveness of all the services it provides. Nevertheless, outcomes are improving and leaders are well aware of where further improvements are required. This, alongside the good commitment of staff, means that the centre has satisfactory capacity to improve further.

What does the centre need to do to improve further?

Recommendations for further improvement

- Use data more efficiently in order to show the effect of the centre's work on users' outcomes and to enable the advisory group to hold staff to account for their work.
- Improve the involvement of parents and carers in decision-making about the centre's development and in shaping the services provided.
- Increase the numbers of families that use the centre, particularly those belonging to groups that are not currently well represented.

How good are outcomes for users?

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Most parents and carers have a satisfactory understanding of the importance of leading a healthy lifestyle and take full advantage of the services on offer. The

weekly 'Stay, Play and Weigh' clinic and the support from the link health visitor ensure parents and carers are able to monitor their babies' weight and get advice about feeding, weaning and minor health ailments. Courses such as 'Baby Massage' effectively help parents and carers to soothe and relax their baby. One parent commented how the course has helped her to alleviate her baby's stomach cramps. HATS (Healthy Active Tots), the healthy living programme covering nutrition, oral health and exercise, is another course greatly appreciated. Although the prevalence of breastfeeding at six to eight weeks has exceeded national targets, health data is mostly limited; for example, in relation to the impact of smoking cessation or information about child obesity. This prevents the centre from gaining a clear understanding of targets and necessary improvements.

The centre is a safe environment and there is good attention to keeping users safe through regular advice and signposting to other agencies. Risk assessments are undertaken for activities and for the different parts of the centre. Child protection is given a high priority. The centre follows the local authority's guidance ensuring all partners and volunteers act accordingly to safeguard children's safety and well-being. During home visits, parents and carers are made aware of home and personal safety. Parents describe how they feel safe in the centre and they verify how home visits have helped them to keep their children safe. For example, one parent stated, 'I do not have hot drinks near my baby anymore, because I know how dangerous it is.' There are good links with Women's Aid where women are signposted and supported to attend the 'Freedom Programme'. Courses and support have been provided on first aid and positive parenting, for example.

Users say the parenting courses are effectively helping them to keep their children safe whilst supporting them in recognising their children's emotional needs. The 'You Make a Difference' course results in an edited digital video disc (DVD) for each individual family. Parents and carers find this useful and, as one parent said, 'I go back to this when my child is difficult and it reminds me of how to be more consistent in managing my child.' Young children and users who have specific learning difficulties receive satisfactory support. Vulnerable families are identified early and health professionals and social care are very prompt in providing appropriate support. Outreach support for a significant number of families has helped them in a time of difficulty or crisis, and the centre involves other partners effectively. The CAF is used well when specialist intervention is required.

Children enjoy the activities the centre offers and have fun playing with a good range of toys and equipment. The 'Messy Play' sessions are great fun as children explore paint, sand, water and play-doh. The extent to which children enjoy and achieve is good. Children's achievement at the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage has been improving overtime and is currently above average. Through good communications with the feeder Nursery and Infant schools a priority has been to improve children's communication skills through 'Baby Babble'. This course is effectively helping parents and carers to understand how children's communication skills develop. Many parents and carers say that they enjoy attending groups regularly at the centre. They think the sessions are 'fun, educational and enables

them to meet with others.’ They particularly value the ideas they gain to play with their children at home, as well as the guidance they receive about managing their children’s behaviour.

Children relate well to others, and behave well. Staff treat all with respect, and model good practice that parents and carers mirror effectively. Through their observations of children’s play, staff make adaptations to the toys and resources available. Parents and carers have opportunities to verbally comment on sessions they attend and, at the end of courses or programmes, they are asked to complete a feedback form. However, senior leaders are aware that the role of parents and carers is not strong enough in decision-making and governance of the centre.

Some users have been able to study for qualifications as a result of the centre’s assistance. The Citizens Advice Bureau offers individual guidance, for example, with benefits, debts and housing. Jobcentre Plus also visits the centre to provide advice. Volunteers are satisfactorily encouraged to work within the centre. However, the centre does not keep an accurate record of users directed onto courses or gaining certifications and, consequently, is unable to show the impact of this work.

These are the grades for the outcomes for users

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| The extent to which children, including those from vulnerable groups, are physically, mentally and emotionally healthy and families have healthy lifestyles | 3 |
| The extent to which children are safe and protected, their welfare concerns are identified and appropriate steps taken to address them | 2 |
| The extent to which all users enjoy and achieve educationally and in their personal and social development | 2 |
| The extent to which children engage in positive behaviour and develop positive relationships and users contribute to decision-making and governance of the centre | 3 |
| The extent to which children are developing skills for the future and parents are developing economic stability and independence including access to training | 3 |

How good is the provision?

2

There is a good range of services and activities, including outreach support, which meet the requirements of the core offer and the needs of those who use them. All are made welcome, and recognising the important role fathers play in children’s development, they are welcomed at all groups, although numbers attending are low. One father commented ‘I was nervous at first, but soon made friends and really enjoy the sessions.’ Once engaged, all partners including health visitors, social care workers, childminders and centre workers work together effectively to assess the individual needs of users. This multi-agency approach is used carefully to assess the level of intervention or support that is required to improve the lives of vulnerable families. Good safeguarding procedures prevent various family issues from escalating. Case study evidence shows that rigorous assessment has led to

intervention and improvements in outcomes for identified families. Increased access to live-birth data is enabling the centre to identify families earlier and make an assessment of their needs. In addition, the assessment of individual cases is more secure due to the manner in which the CAF is used for both prevention and intervention strategies.

The staff are passionate about their responsibilities and are committed to the families with which they work. This is very noticeable and users have trusting relationships with staff. Consequently, users express high levels of satisfaction with the centre and say, 'Staff really care' and 'do not speak down to you'. In times of crisis, the support that is provided is good and leads to improved outcomes for families. There is a raft of good-quality information available throughout the centre, including sensitively-placed contact numbers in regard to domestic violence. Children centre workers and other partners work seamlessly to provide a cohesive programme to support users. The centre is aware that there are families which they are not reaching, as in the past there has been a perception that the centre was only appropriate 'for families experiencing difficulties.' Leaflets have been made more parent-friendly and other ways are now being sought to ensure families do not miss out on the benefits the centre has to offer.

Children's early learning and development are good and a wide range of activities are planned well to take account of the needs of users. These include the popular 'Stay and Play' courses, baby clinics and maternity services, baby massage, counselling, Citizens Advice Bureau and parenting courses. In 'Stay and Play' all activities are planned around the Early Years Foundation Stage. Parents' knowledge on child development has vastly improved due to simple advice given with ideas on learning and behaviour. Holiday play-schemes, held during the Easter and summer holidays, have been successful in promoting the centre's services to the wider community. The focus on communication, language and literacy is promoted well by partnership work, particularly with the library service and local schools.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

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| 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?

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Centre leaders are committed to securing improvement and are beginning to focus the work of the centre more clearly on priorities and outcomes. They work effectively with other agencies and professionals to improve the life chances of all users who

access the centre. Even so, they are aware of their shortcomings; for example, they acknowledge that do not identify all potential users in the area, including any groups or individuals that may find it difficult to access services. The staff regularly ask parents and carers to evaluate the services provided, but the evaluations are mostly celebratory with few suggestions for improvement. Involving parents and carers more, through a parents' forum is an identified area for development.

Governance and accountability arrangements are increasingly clear and understood. Priorities are identified at local authority level and are fed into the centre's business plan. However, targets for success are not clear and the advisory group knows that this makes it difficult for it to hold the centre to account for its performance. The centre coordinator knows where there are gaps in the data, and the information that would help the centre to move forward and make self-evaluation more rigorous. Close working with the local authority has resulted in good plans to rectify this, as the local authority is providing the centre with more specific information about its families. The centre promotes equality and diversity satisfactorily. There is a clear commitment towards the inclusion of all users, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, but the lack of information to demonstrate the impact the centre is having on outcomes for children and families results in value for money being satisfactory.

Safeguarding procedures are good and the environment is welcoming and safe. The centre keeps detailed records about staff which contain valuable information on, for example, their qualifications and courses attended. Records indicate that all staff working at, or with, the centre have been subject to statutory checks. A strength of the centre is the comprehensive manner in which risk assessments are conducted across all services. The coordination of family support and outreach work and improving systems for sharing information about families most at risk, are beginning to impact on their willingness to engage in a wider range of services and therefore prevent risks escalating.

Partnership working is a considerable strength of the centre's work. The staff are proactive in sharing information. Inter-agency working is growing steadily and links with childminders are strong. Protocols and practices for referrals are used carefully by staff. The centre's analysis of how the most vulnerable are supported is evidenced well through case studies offered by the centre' coordinator. Provision is integrated effectively and funding for two-, three- and four-year-olds is used astutely to promote learning for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage.

These are the grades for leadership and management

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| The extent to which governance, accountability, professional supervision and day to day management arrangements are clear and understood | 2 |
| The extent to which ambitious targets drive improvement, provision is integrated and there are high expectations for users and the wider community | 3 |
| The extent to which resources are used and managed efficiently and | 3 |

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| effectively to meet the needs of users and the wider community | |
| The extent to which equality is promoted and diversity celebrated, illegal or unlawful discrimination is tackled and the centre fulfils its statutory duties | 3 |
| 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 | 3 |
| 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 | 3 |

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

The inspectors took into account the inspection findings for the linked provision at Hadfield Nursery School which took place at the same time as the children's centre inspection. The inspection judged the school's overall effectiveness as outstanding.

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaining about inspections', which is available from our website: www.ofsted.gov.uk. If you would like us to send you a copy of the guidance, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

Summary for centre users

We inspected Hadfield Children's Centre on 26–27 May 2011. We judged the centre as satisfactory overall.

Thank you to everyone who took the time to come and speak to us. You gave us lots of useful information. We are pleased to know that you feel the centre is making a difference to your life and it is a safe place where you receive good quality care, guidance and support. We agree with you that the centre is a friendly and welcoming place, with staff you can trust to help and support you. We found the centre was really good at helping people at times in their lives when they most need it. This is because action is taken quickly and different people and organisations work well as a team to support you and your children. Comments such as, 'It is brilliant here,' and, 'I cannot imagine what my life would be like without the centre,' show how much some of you appreciate the services of Hadfield Children's Centre.

The staff take great care to ensure that the courses and programmes they offer are appropriate to your needs, and those of you who spoke to us were full of praise for the centre's work. Many of you enjoy the 'Stay, Play and Weigh' sessions where you receive good advice about how to take care of your children. You told us how the positive parenting programmes such as 'You Make a Difference' have developed your confidence, and taught you better ways of managing your children's behaviour. The DVD seems to be a very useful resource for you to refer to when your children demonstrate difficult behaviour. Our observations confirm how much you and your children enjoy attending activities such as the 'Messy Play' sessions.' Children quite clearly love using paints and their hands and feet to make patterns and marks on paper. Although those of you we spoke to commented very favourably about the activities and the courses on offer, we think that not enough of you are involved in making decisions about the range of courses and activities that are provided. As yet, too few of you are members of the advisory group in order that you can have more of a say about how the centre is run.

There is no doubt that everyone who works at this centre want to make it as good as it can be. The centre coordinator and the advisory group do a good job, and know exactly the services that are working well and what needs to be improved. We have asked them to find out more about the different groups and individuals who are not yet attending the centre, particularly those who are hard to reach, and try hard to involve them in the activities. We have also asked them to check carefully that the services and activities they provide are really making a difference to your lives. To do this, we want the centre staff and the advisory group to use the up-to-date information provided by the local authority to measure its successes in detail.

Finally we would like to thank everyone who was willing to speak to us. It was a real pleasure to meet you and your children. We hope you continue to thrive and enjoy your time at Hadfield Children's Centre.

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