

Inspection report for Headingley Children's Centre

Local authority	Leeds
Inspection number	367810
Inspection dates	15-16 June 2011
Reporting inspector	Jean-Marie Blakeley

Centre governance	Shire Oak Church of England Primary School governing body.
Centre leader	Ann Hunter
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected
Centre address	Headingley Children's Centre Shire Oak C of E Primary School Wood Lane Headingley Leeds LS6 2DT
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Linked school if applicable	Shire Oak Church of England Primary School
Linked early years and childcare, if applicable	EY338290 Headingley Pre-school EY339483 Kidzone

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 registered early years/childcare provision Headingley Pre-School was carried out at the same time as the inspection of the centre under Section 3 of the Childcare Act 2006. The report of this inspection is available on our website www.ofsted.gov.uk

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

The inspectors held meetings with staff and senior managers from; the centre, the pre-school and the school. Inspectors also met with parents and carers, members of the governing body and the advisory board and representatives from Leeds local authority as well as a number of partners from health, education and Jobcentre Plus. They observed the centre's work, and looked at a range of relevant documentation.

Information about the centre

Headingley Children's Centre is located two miles north of Leeds City Centre in the North West of Leeds. It serves an area consisting of privately owned houses, rented houses and flats and student accommodation. The centre, a small prefabricated building, is situated on the site of the Shire Oak Church of England Primary School. A satellite centre, shared with the extended services team and St Chad's out of school provision, is located in the Bungalow on the site of St Chad's Church of England Primary school. Governance is by Shire Oak Primary School governing body with input from the advisory board. A subcommittee of the governing body oversees the work of the centre.

It is a phase two children's centre, designated in 2008. The centre provides the full core offer of services other than integrated childcare. A centre manager, supported by a senior outreach worker and two outreach workers, leads the centre. The centre manager is line managed by the headteacher of the primary school.

The centre serves a relatively affluent area with none of the wards ranked below the 50% most deprived nationally. Unemployment rates in the area are low. An average of 29% of families in the area are in receipt of the child care element of working tax credit ranging from 13% to 83% across the super output areas. Forty-five children aged nought to four years live in workless households.

The majority of local families are of White British heritage with an increasing number of Indian, Pakistani and Japanese families living in the area. Many local residents are students and an increasing number of users are the families of mature international students or former students remaining in the area after leaving university.

Children enter Early Years Foundation Stage provision with skills and abilities that are at or slightly below those found nationally. The centre does not have a specific agreement with a day care provider but refers users to local day care providers or childminders depending on their needs. The centre is open Monday to Friday, 8.30am to 4.30pm each day for 51 weeks of the year, excluding bank holidays.

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

Headingley Children’s Centre is satisfactory overall. Some aspects of the centre’s work are good. In particular, skilled outreach workers provide good support and guidance for vulnerable families in times of crisis. As a result, the isolation of users, a key issue in this area, is reduced.

Outcomes for users are satisfactory overall and improving. Parents, carers and children enjoy coming to the safe, friendly and welcoming centre. Users particularly enjoy the good quality sessions provided at the centre and as a result, children’s progress is good. Adults develop confidence and their personal development is good because of the support they receive from staff and peers. The popular stay and play sessions are over subscribed for the capacity of the centre’s accommodation. Some provision is offered in outreach venues but there are few links with partners and

community venues to extend the opportunities for users. One user said 'The staff are amazing- the only thing that needs changing is the building. It's just too small for the number of families wanting to attend.' Families enjoy the fun activity sessions, such as 'First Friends' where children and adults learn and make new friends.

Sessions run by volunteers are a key success of the centre. One session, 'Wa!' led by a Japanese parent, attracts a good number of Japanese and other families, from across the city, to sing, play and learn together. Another good parent-led session 'Little Hiccups', provides learning through play for children with disabilities and gives support to their parents or carers. Courses such as the '0-6's Parenting Programme' helps users develop positive behaviour management techniques. The partnership with Jobcentre Plus provides appropriate support for adults. Anecdotal evidence indicates that many users return to work but the centre does not carefully monitor and record users' destinations.

Staff have a satisfactory understanding of child protection procedures. They are well-trained and ensure they share any concerns with relevant agencies. Policies and procedures for safeguarding including the recruitment and vetting of staff are satisfactory. Parents and carers told inspectors that they and their children are safe at the centre and that the support they receive helps them stay safe.

Working closely with most of its partners, the centre offers a range of appropriate services to the community. The partnership with health services is improving and is resulting in an increase in the registration of new babies at the centre. However, the health authority's lack of local outcomes data limits the centre's ability to target families and demonstrate its impact on health outcomes.

Community cohesion is encouraged through the well attended English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) courses; the Japanese themed morning and 'Little Hiccups' stay and play sessions. However, equality and diversity is no better than satisfactory, as the centre does not have a clear strategy for identifying and engaging with its different groups of users nor does it have systems in place to fully measure the impact of its work.

Leaders and staff are ambitious to continue improving the provision, building on its strengths and reaching more users through strategies, such as door knocking. The number of users registered is increasing, but the centre recognises that they need to do more to identify and support the most vulnerable families. However, the lack of available data or detailed needs analysis make it difficult for the centre to target its provision successfully. Although evaluation is systematic, it lacks challenge and a rigorous analysis of outcomes leading to precise and measurable targets.

The current strong leadership provided by the primary school headteacher, the Chair of the school's Governing Body subcommittee and the chair of the advisory board are instrumental in the improving provision. They communicate a clear strategic direction for the centre and have a good understanding of its current performance. They are driving forward a more targeted system for monitoring the impact of work

of the centre on the community and the lives of its users.

Satisfactory and improving outcomes including the quality of provision and leadership and management, together with a secure understanding of strengths and areas for development demonstrate a satisfactory capacity for sustained improvement.

What does the centre need to do to improve further?

Recommendations for further improvement

- The local authority should ensure that the centre has access to management information and data, including that from health services, in order for:
 - the centre to target its provision to improve outcomes for the most vulnerable families
 - the governing body and the advisory board to rigorously monitor and challenge outcomes.
- Improve systems to measure the full impact of the centre’s work on users.
- Extend the range of provision for users by increasing partnerships and use of community venues.

How good are outcomes for users?

3

Families benefit from advice and the promotion of safety by the skilled outreach workers. As a result, they have a better understanding of how to keep their families safe. However, the centre lacks local data on the impact of its work on stay safe outcomes. Some families have benefited from home safety visits and free safety equipment, although this national scheme has now ended. Timely support for families with children identified as at risk or in need is helping to keep children safe and is supporting their progress. Timely support is provided for children through effective use of the Common Assessment Framework (CAF) and as a result, they make good progress.

The centre is welcoming, enabling children to play and adults to develop their skills. Play and development sessions make a good contribution to children’s and adult’s enjoyment and achievement. Children are developing useful skills for the future, such as cooperation and independence and parents and carers gain confidence and parenting skills. Although, the centre does not carefully monitor its full impact on children’s achievements, it is clear that those who attend the centre benefit from their involvement. Transition into school is good for those children that attend the transition sessions run by the centre.

The centre promotes healthy living well but lacks centre-specific data on outcomes to monitor its success. Families increase their understanding of how to stay healthy. The centre recognises that too few babies are breastfed beyond six to eight weeks and that they need to do more to promote healthy living to minority ethnic families.

Increasing partnership work between health professionals and outreach workers is having a positive impact on users. As a result, health professionals have fewer concerns over the health and well being of children.

With low unemployment rates in the area and a high number of professional users, promoting economic well-being is not a centre priority. Although the centre is aware that many users return to work and access day care provision, they do not monitor and record all positive outcomes. Outreach workers give effective guidance and signpost users to adult learning on an individual basis. One parent said 'I had a demanding job and when I became "a stay at home mum", I quickly lost confidence. Having someone to talk to at the centre made a big difference.' The take up of services provided by Jobcentre Plus is, however, low.

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, their welfare concerns are identified and appropriate steps taken to address them	3
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	3

How good is the provision?

3

There is prompt and effective use of the CAF to provide support and services to families. Assessment of adult's needs is effective as a basis to plan individual learning on ESOL courses. Good partnership working, with Leeds City College, ensures good opportunities for these users to develop English skills. Informal assessment and user feedback enables the centre to develop learning and development provision for existing users. However, there is insufficient identification of the needs of families not registered with the centre.

Activities and support to help children to learn and develop are good. The centre promotes learning well and activities are of a good quality. There is a positive impact on those children accessing learning and development opportunities. The flexible range of services provided by the centre generally meets the needs of most users

who access it, but there is insufficient targeting of services to meet the greatest need. Participation is satisfactory overall and has increased during the last two years.

Case studies show that good support from the centre is making a difference to families, who may be vulnerable due to their circumstances. Parents and carers told inspectors how their involvement with the centre has helped them. One mother said 'The staff and the other parents have really helped me be a parent. They all give good advice. I have learned how to play with my baby'. 'I did not have any friends when I moved here. I never went out of the flat and my child was bored at home. Now we have lots of friends and go to as many sessions as we can' said another user.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The effectiveness of the assessment of the needs of children, parents and other users	3
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	3
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?

3

Leadership and management are satisfactory overall. Governance and accountability arrangements are clear. The subcommittee of the school's governing body and the advisory board have a good understanding of their differing roles in supporting and monitoring the provision. There are links between strategic planning and service provision leading to improvements. Staff have a good understanding of their roles and responsibilities. The current leadership and governing body have a good understanding of the key issues facing the centre and give a strong strategic direction to its work although they are restricted by the lack of available data.

Leaders, managers and staff are motivated to seek further improvements and are increasing their effectiveness in focusing the centre's efforts on its priorities. They know the centre's major strengths and areas for development but recognise that they need to do more to identify all of its key target groups. Most partners are involved in planning and services are generally integrated. However, the lack of management information and data limits the centre's ability for precise target setting and rigorous evaluation of outcomes.

The use of resources is having a satisfactory impact on outcomes for users. The centre building, although a welcoming environment, is small and cramped, which restricts the number of users attending and the activities the centre can provide. ESOL provision, in a satellite centre, extends the services provided. However, there are few links with partners and community venues in order to extend services and increase participation. As a result, existing resources are stretched and not sufficiently prioritised on meeting the needs of the potentially most vulnerable families.

The centre meets its statutory duties for equality and diversity. Inclusive practices are promoted for children and parents and carers with disabilities. Action to promote greater equality has resulted in increasing the number of families from minority ethnic groups engaging with the centre. However, there is little analysis of the centre's impact on community cohesion or narrowing achievement gaps. Working parents have access to a limited number of services, as there is little provision after 4.30pm or at the weekends.

Safeguarding meets current statutory requirements. The centre has effective systems in place for recording information related to the vetting and recruitment of staff. Staff and partners have a clear understanding of policies and procedures to ensure the protection of users. They understand their role in identifying and reporting concerns and do so promptly. As a result, users' ability to stay safe is increasing. The centre collaborates with other key agencies to reduce the risk of harm to children. Users say that they and their children feel safe at the centre.

Self-evaluation is systematic and supported by some evidence of the impact on outcomes. There are clear links between the centre's on-going evaluation of its services and priorities set out in its delivery plan. The local authority, the governing body's subcommittee and advisory board monitor and evaluate the work of the centre. However, evaluation lacks challenge, as the focus is mostly on the extent, quality and enjoyment of services and not sufficiently on outcomes or narrowing the gap between different groups. The centre has not fully developed systems to evaluate the longer-term impact of the provision on improving outcomes for children and adults.

Partnerships with other services contribute to outcomes for users. However, some partners do not evaluate the impact of their work on a local basis. Services are mostly integrated and generally deliver cohesive provision for users. The good partnership with the on-site primary school and private pre-school enables good transition arrangements for children. The centre seeks and makes use of feedback from users to develop the range of provision. Some users make a good contribution to the advisory board but others are unaware of how they can communicate their views at a strategic level. Those engaging with the provision express high levels of satisfaction.

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	3
The extent to which resources are used and managed efficiently and effectively to meet the needs of users and the wider community	3
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	3
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	3
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

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Summary for centre users

We inspected the Headingley Children's Centre on 15-16 June 2011. We judged the centre as satisfactory overall.

Thank you for talking with us and contributing to the inspection of your children's centre. Those of you we spoke with told us you enjoy coming to the centre.

The centre offers good support to all of you that use it. You said that family support workers 'give good support and advice' and quickly respond if any families are in crisis. They offer you practical help and advice on parenting that you appreciate. We found that staff understand child protection procedures and that they are well trained. You said that you feel your children are safe at the centre. Some of you told

us how the support you have received at the centre has helped you improve your parenting skills.

You enjoy the sessions such as 'First Friends' with your children. Some parents and carers attend and enjoy courses such as '0-6's Parenting Course,' which helps you to manage your children's behaviour in a positive way. We found that children benefit from accessing services at the centre and make good progress from their starting points. The centre is working with Jobcentre Plus to help give you access to information and support in order to help you to gain employment. The small centre struggles to find space for all of you that want to attend. We have asked the centre to increase its range of partners and use of community venues to extend opportunities for you.

Your children behave well and you learn more about how to stay healthy. However, the health authority does not provide enough local information to the centre on such things as how many children have had their immunisations or if children's obesity levels are reducing. The centre knows that too few mothers breastfeed their babies. The centre listens to you and asks you what you think of the services and activities they offer. They change how and when they do some things because of what you say. Some of you are involved in making decisions about your centre through being on the advisory board. We suggest that the advisory board, local authority and centre staff monitor the outcomes more closely and really challenge the centre to improve further.

We found that managers, staff and partners are keen to promote equality and community cohesion. Families are enjoying and benefiting from English courses in the St Chad's centre. The 'Wa!' session attracts a good number of Japanese and other families from across the city. The centre is fully accessible to families and children with disabilities and the centre is helping these families a lot. However, the local authority does not provide sufficient data to help the centre target its work centre to identify the families most in need of support and measure the impact of its work. We have asked them to improve this.

The local authority, advisory board and the centre staff really want to improve the centre. Because the centre has been improving and it knows what needs to improve further, we are confident that it will continue to do so.

A special thank you to those of you who took the time to come in and talk to us and for letting us join you in some of your sessions. You were all having a lot of fun. 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.