

# Inspection report for Hallcroft (East Retford North & part of Welbeck) Children's centre

Local authority	Nottinghamshire
Inspection number	365677
Inspection dates	6–7 July 2011
Reporting inspector	Lois Furness

Centre governance	North Nottinghamshire College
Centre leader	Sharon Christiansen
Date of previous inspection	Not applicable
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Linked school if applicable	Hallcroft Infant and Nursery School
Linked early years and childcare, if applicable	Claremont House Nursery School

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, Hallcroft Infant and Nursery School 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](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk).

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

The inspectors held meetings with parents, staff, outreach workers, health workers, representatives of the North Nottinghamshire College, a representative of the local authority, members of the local advisory group and the area coordinator for children's centres in Bassetlaw. They observed the centre's work, and looked at a range of relevant documentation.

## Information about the centre

This small, phase two children's centre shares a site with Hallcroft Infant and Nursery school. It opened in February 2008 and provides the full core offer. There are approximately 265 children aged 0–5 years living in the reach area, with 210 of these living in the 30% most deprived areas. The vast majority of families are White British. Approximately 15% of children are living in households dependent upon on workless benefits. Most services are run on this site, but there is also some outreach provision at other local schools. There is no Jobcentre Plus surgery on site, but parents and carers are 'signposted' to provision in the nearby town. Children's skills and knowledge on entry to the Early Years Foundation Stage is below that expected for their age.

The local authority has delegated governance to North Nottinghamshire College. An advisory board known as a local advisory group contributes to the strategic management and direction of the centre. The centre's full day-care provision is provided by Claremont House Nursery School. The nursery is managed privately and

is subject to separate Early Years Foundation Stage inspection arrangements. It was last inspected in March 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

Hallcroft Children's Centre provides good levels of care and support to all families that access its services. There is a calm welcoming atmosphere where children, parents and carers feel safe, valued and listened to. They regard the centre as a haven. Good provision for children's learning and development is offered, and those users who regularly visit the centre report they enjoy attending and feel safe during activities. Activities such as 'Stay and Play', 'Dads Days' and 'Parent Zone' are well attended and appreciated by families. Safeguarding arrangements meet current requirements and all procedures are in place to safeguard the health and well-being of families. Relationships between staff and users are friendly, encouraging and productive. Parents and carers value the guidance and support on offer. As one parent commented, 'The family support worker always listens and I wish I had had the same support with my older children.'

The centre meets its statutory responsibilities for the promotion of equality and diversity. However, although those who engage with the centre are pleased with its work, there are still too many families not engaging in the centre's activities. There is limited involvement of users who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, and therefore the promotion of equality and diversity is satisfactory. Staff are committed to inclusion and strive to improve the life chances of all users that are known to them, whatever their circumstances. This means that outcomes for users are improving notably in users' enjoy and achievement. Therefore the capacity to improve further is satisfactory.

Detailed information about the proportion of potential users in the community, including those groups who are not currently accessing the centre, has started to emerge. However, the use of this information is not rigorous enough to enable senior leaders to evaluate whether services are as effective as they could be, and whether

the centre is targeting the right groups of people. Much of the evidence the centre holds, although useful, is anecdotal or about enjoyment and increasing participation rates. Self-evaluation is not linked well enough to performance management and the use of quantifiable data. This means that the centre is not able to demonstrate effectively that its work is having a sustained effect on the outcomes of families within the community.

Although governance is satisfactory, challenging targets are not set to hold the centre to account for its work. The local advisory group is still developing but not all members are certain of their roles and responsibilities in contributing to the management of the centre. A good range of partners are involved and this means there is regularly sharing of information across agencies. However, although a parents' forum has been established there are few parents and carers who regularly attend and, at the present time, none are members of the local advisory group. Senior leaders are aware that there are not enough opportunities for users' views to be used routinely to inform planning and they are not sufficiently involved in governance and decision-making processes.

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

### Recommendations for further improvement

- Increase the numbers of families that use the centre, particularly those belonging to groups that are not currently well represented such as those with special educational needs and/or disabilities.
- Strengthen leadership by:
  - ensuring the governing body sets challenging targets in order to hold the centre to account for its work
  - ensuring the advisory group is clear about its roles and responsibilities
  - increasing the contribution parents and carers make to the governance and decision making of the centre and its future direction.
- Use self-assessment, performance management systems and qualitative data effectively to record, evaluate and measure the full impact of the centre's work.

## How good are outcomes for users?

<b>3</b>
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Children behave well and thoroughly enjoy sessions at the centre and the many trips available. For example, one father told the inspectors how much his child had enjoyed the trip to Idle Valley when they went searching for caterpillars and ladybirds. Another father said how he was always made to feel welcome and how different courses had helped him to improve his parenting skills. Structured parenting programmes such as 'Incredible Years' are used effectively in supporting users who are experiencing difficulties with their children's behaviour. One parent commented 'This course has really helped me to manage my child's behaviour in a more positive way.'

The centre has not been providing services for long enough to measure accurately its impact on children's Early Years Foundation Stage profile scores by the end of their

Reception year in local primary schools. Even so, personal development is good, as children learn to share and take turns during activities. They also learn to be kind and respectful of others. This was seen when one child who was upset was patted on the back by another. Parents and carers who use the centre report that their children enjoy socialising with others and the work that has been done to improve their children's language skills has proved successful. Users respect one another and in group sessions all users' contributions are valued. Parents comment enthusiastically and one said, 'The centre has been brilliant for my child and helped him to get to know other children.' However, the centre cannot provide evidence that it is reaching all families, especially those who are known to be potentially vulnerable such as families with special educational needs and/or disabilities.

An extensive range of courses are available through the good links with North Nottinghamshire College. These include cake decoration, food hygiene and more academic courses. Some users have been able to study for qualifications as a result of the centre's assistance and, for example, one user now goes to university. However, the centre does not collect information rigorously about users and the courses they have completed and so it does not have a full understanding of exactly how many have successfully returned to paid employment.

Health outcomes are satisfactory and most parents and carers spoken to say that the centre has helped their children to eat more healthily. For example, one child now eats kiwi fruit as a result of healthy snack time. Obesity levels are declining. The emotional health of users is promoted appropriately through the personalised support offered by the centre's staff. An above-average proportion of mothers take up breastfeeding but this declines sharply after the first six to eight weeks. Fitness levels of children are promoted satisfactorily through the good use of the outside area, and sports week helps to ensure all users are involved in health-promoting activities.

Children using services at the centre are effectively safeguarded and clearly feel safe as they tackle activities with confidence. They learn to use equipment safely for example, when using scissors. Parents and carers confirm that they have the utmost faith in staff at the centre and groups such as the 'Daisy' project help them in times of crisis. Courses such as first aid help parents to keep their child safe but, although risk assessments are completed appropriately, staff do not regularly incorporate users' ideas. There are no looked after children attending the centre currently and none has a child protection plan, a statement of special educational need, or has been assessed under the Common Assessment Framework (CAF).

A satisfactory range of opportunities are provided for users to offer their views, for example, through the parents' forum, the 'You said, we did' evidence, questionnaires and a suggestion box. Despite this, only five parents and carers regularly attend the parents' forum. Recognising the need to increase involvement in the forum, leaflets have been recently distributed throughout the area. No parents and carers currently attend the advisory group meetings, although the five members of the forum have expressed an interest in doing so. This lack of representation means they are not

fully involved in making decisions about the centre's work. In addition, although in the past there have been volunteers working at the centre, there are no volunteers at the present time.

*These are the grades for the outcomes for users*

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

## How good is the provision?

**2**

The centre effectively promotes purposeful learning, development and enjoyment for all who attend. All activities are of good quality and achievements are celebrated through the good use of displays. The hard working children's centre teacher has made effective and positive links to the local primary schools and nurseries. Effective transition is seen to be a high priority and the centre successfully ensures that children are ready for school. Courses are also available to help parents and carers support their children's literacy and numeracy skills. There is evidence of good quality early intervention work regarding speech and language through the 'Every Child a Talker' programme.

The good range of services supports users' emotional as well as physical well-being. There is close attention to child protection, and all staff have been trained in the use of the CAF. The good links with midwives, who hold a weekly clinic on site, ensures good antenatal and postnatal advice, Outreach work is good and the Family Support Worker provides a valuable link between vulnerable families and the centre. The 'All about Me' records provide useful evidence of progress. Parents and carers enjoy the group sessions, which support them in developing their parenting skills such as baby massage and managing boys' behaviour. Day trips and celebrations for example, the recent Independence Day celebration, help to raise the profile of the centre and encourage users' engagement. There are good plans to encourage the centre staff to be more involved in the on-site school events, so to further publicise the work of the centre and attract those families who are not yet using this facility. Assessment of need is satisfactory as the centre is beginning to use emerging data to inform future priorities.

There are appropriate links with a range of agencies such as Jobcentre Plus, the Citizens' Advice Bureau, local training providers, employment agencies, the Families Information Service, community groups and sports development groups. Nevertheless, the engagement of some families, especially the more vulnerable, is not effective. This is a current focus for the leadership and links directly to the lack of rigorous evaluation available to aid the assessment of families' needs. The 'Pathway to Provision' system is improving the way centre staff identify partners available to improve the life chances of families and measure more effectively the impact of outreach work on users' outcomes.

The care, guidance and support for children and families are strengths of the centre's work. Reception is very welcoming and staff know the families who use the centre well. Families approach staff with confidence and recognise the centre as a place of safety. Guidance information is available in the form of leaflets and posters and visitors are invited to the centre to talk about issues of concern. Childminders are encouraged effectively to engage with the centre and use resources such as bilingual books and the 'talking pen' to communicate with the very few children in their care with English as an additional language.

*These are the grades for the quality of provision*

<b>The effectiveness of the assessment of the needs of children, parents and other users</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The extent to which the centre promotes purposeful learning, development and enjoyment for all users</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which the range of services, activities and opportunities meet the needs of users and the wider community</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The quality of care, guidance and support offered to users within the centre and the wider community</b>	<b>2</b>

## **How effective are the leadership and management?**

**3**

The centre runs smoothly day to day and financial resources are carefully managed. Senior leaders understand satisfactorily the centre's strengths and areas for development and links between long-term planning and provision are satisfactory. The centre's business plan identifies many detailed actions and appropriate success criteria. However, although leaders have a good view of individual outcomes, the evaluation of overall impact and a crystal-clear analysis of the 'bigger picture' are lacking. Long-term self-evaluation is not based securely on sufficient data showing trends over time. Governance is supportive but as yet it does not hold the centre to account for its work by setting challenging targets. The role of the local advisory group is embryonic although information-sharing is good. Parents and carers are not sufficiently involved in the local advisory group and therefore have limited input into making decisions about the centre's future plans. There are regular performance management arrangements and supervisions in place for staff who feel valued and able to develop their own professional expertise through regular training

opportunities. Taking all this into account, the centre provides satisfactory value for money.

Safeguarding arrangements are clear and understood by staff. All required procedures are in place to safeguard the health and well-being of all users, including the most vulnerable. Staff are caring and vigilant at all times. The centre's protocols and procedures for making referrals and the sharing of information, although satisfactory, are not consistent between all agencies.

Partnership working is a considerable strength of the centre's work and interagency working is steadily growing. A wide range of partners support the centre's work effectively. Equality and diversity are promoted satisfactorily throughout the centre, and the inclusion of all groups is promoted appropriately. Crèche facilities are effective in enabling parents and carers with younger children to attend courses. Although some groups, such as fathers who do not always readily engage in activities, have been encouraged to attend the centre, others, such as families with children who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, have been less effectively engaged.

*These are the grades for leadership and management*

<b>The extent to which governance, accountability, professional supervision and day to day management arrangements are clear and understood</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The extent to which ambitious targets drive improvement, provision is integrated and there are high expectations for users and the wider community</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The extent to which resources are used and managed efficiently and effectively to meet the needs of users and the wider community</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The extent to which equality is promoted and diversity celebrated, illegal or unlawful discrimination is tackled and the centre fulfils its statutory duties</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The effectiveness of the centre's policy, procedures and work with key agencies in safeguarding children and, where applicable, vulnerable adults</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The extent to which evaluation is used to shape and improve services and activities</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The extent to which partnerships with other agencies ensure the integrated delivery of the range of services the centre has been commissioned to provide</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which the centre supports and encourages the wider community to engage with services and uses their views to develop the range of provision</b>	<b>3</b>



## **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 Hallcroft Nursery and Infant School which took place at the same time as the children's centre inspection. The inspection judged the school's overall effectiveness as good.

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](http://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](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk).

## **Summary for centre users**

We inspected the Hallcroft (East Retford North & part of Welbeck) Children's Centre on 6–7 July 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. It was clear from those who spoke to us that you appreciate the staff and are all strong supporters of the centre and its work. We found that the centre makes everyone who attends feel welcome and staff are always willing to listen to you. The staff work hard to ensure activities and group sessions are interesting and worthwhile and we know that many of you enjoy and have benefited from sessions such as 'Stay and Play', 'Dads Days' and 'Incredible Years'. We agree when some of you told us how well your children had developed personally. We saw this for ourselves as children took turns and shared resources willingly. It was good to know how the centre has helped some of you to gain qualifications and has helped you to go to college and university. Many of you particularly appreciate the good value trips that the centre organises. For example, several of you told us that the trip to Idle Valley was great fun for everyone. We know that your children enjoy coming to the centre and playing with their new friends. It is good that you think the centre is helping them to eat healthy foods, such as fruit and vegetables, and that you all feel safe when attending activities.

We found that partnership working is good and many different agencies such as health, midwifery, speech therapists and adult education work closely together to help you and your children. You say that staff will always listen to you and we think that the care guidance and support offered to you are good. However, although the centre is satisfactory, it does not meet the needs of the local community effectively enough. We have asked the centre to improve the quality of its leadership and management by improving its self-evaluation and how it uses data to check how well

it is doing and how best it can reach more families who are most in need. We have also asked that the governing body set challenging targets for the centre and all members of the local advisory group fully understand their role in helping the centre to improve. In addition, there are not many parents, carers or other local users on the local advisory group, so the centre does not have a clear picture of the sort of services potential users would like it to provide. We have asked the centre to encourage more of you to join the group.

Once again, thank you to everyone who was willing to speak to us. It was a pleasure to meet you and your children. We hope you continue to thrive and enjoy your time at Hallcroft Children's Centre.

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