

Inspection report for Haxby Road Children's Centre

Local authority	City of York Council
Inspection number	365680
Inspection dates	25–26 May 2011
Reporting inspector	Jean-Marie Blakeley

Centre governance	City of York Council
Centre leader	Juliet Burton
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected
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Linked school if applicable	Haxby Road Primary School
Linked early years and childcare, if applicable	n/a

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 one additional inspector and an early years inspector.

The inspectors held meetings with staff and senior managers from the centre, parents and carers, members of the advisory board and representatives from York local authority. Inspectors also met with a number of partners from health, education, Jobcentre Plus and private organisations. They observed the centre's work, and looked at a range of relevant documentation.

Information about the centre

Haxby Road Children's Centre is situated in the north locality of York. It is close to the city centre and serves a mixed area consisting of privately owned houses, student accommodation and social housing. It is a phase 2 children's centre and was designated in 2008. The centre is adjacent to Haxby Road Primary School. Governance is by York local authority.

The centre provides the full core offer of services and is part of a cluster that includes two other children's centres. Outreach provision is delivered in community venues and through a mobile 'Toy Bus'. The centre is led by a locality manager, responsible for five centres in York, and is managed by a team leader who is responsible for two centres. Centre-based staff provide services for users. Some other provision such as adult education and mental health services are delivered on site.

The centre serves an area of deprivation with 25% of children under five-years-old living in wards that are in the 30% most deprived nationally. Unemployment rates are slightly above the unemployment rates for York. The majority of local families are of White British heritage.

The percentage of children aged from birth to five years who are living in households where no one is working is high at 22% and the number of low-income families in receipt of family tax credit is similarly high.

Children enter Early Years Foundation Stage provision with skills and abilities that are much lower than those found nationally. The centre does not have a specific agreement with a day-care provider but refers users to day-care providers or childminders depending on their needs. The centre is open Monday to Friday, 8.30am to 5pm each day for 52 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

Haxby Road Children’s Centre is satisfactory overall. Some aspects of the centre’s work are good. Skilled staff provide good support and guidance for vulnerable families and children, particularly in times of crisis. Outcomes for users are satisfactory overall and improving. In particular, children who have accessed services with the centre achieve better than the average for children in the reach area across the Early Years Foundation Stage Profile scales. For these children, because of good support and early intervention, the gap between the lowest achieving 20% and the rest is narrowing.

Staff have a good understanding of child protection procedures. They are well trained and ensure they share any concerns with relevant agencies. Parents told inspectors that they and their children feel safe at the centre and that the support they receive helps them stay safe. One parent said, ‘The centre was a lifeline to me; It has helped keep us safe.’

Working closely with most of its partners, the centre offers a range of appropriate services to the community. However, the partnership with health services is a weakness, despite the centre’s efforts. The local health authority’s lack of sharing of information limits the centre’s ability to target families vulnerable due to their circumstances and demonstrate its impact on health outcomes.

Parents, carers and children enjoy coming to the safe, friendly and welcoming centre and using the mobile 'Toy Bus'. They enjoy the fun activity sessions, such as 'Under 1's' where they can make friends and adults improve their parenting skills. Through courses such as 'Dinosaur School', users develop positive behaviour management techniques. Partnerships with Jobcentre Plus and Credit Union provide appropriate support for adults. However, take-up of these services is low. The centre has little evidence to demonstrate the number of adults gaining qualifications, progressing to training or gaining employment.

Health professionals give good support to teenage parents through city-wide provision delivered at the centre. The city-wide English for speakers of other languages (ESOL) provision, based in the centre's accommodation, provides good opportunities for users. However, there is little monitoring of the participation and achievement of families in the reach area on ESOL or other family learning courses. The number of users registered with the centre is increasing but the centre recognises that more needs to be done to identify and register more families with children under five-years-old.

Leaders and staff are ambitious to continue improving the provision, building on its strengths and reaching vulnerable families through developing outreach provision. However, the lack of data or a detailed needs analysis makes it difficult for the centre to target its provision successfully. The lack of data also means that, although evaluation is systematic, it lacks sufficient rigorous analysis of outcomes.

The local authority provides clear strategic direction. The advisory board, however, is currently under reorganisation, as it has few community representatives.

Satisfactory and improving outcomes, 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 health authority should improve its partnership with the children's centre to ensure that:
 - services are cohesive and meet users' needs by delivering more services in the centre, leading to improving health outcomes
 - the centre receives sufficient information to be able to demonstrate the impact on health outcomes and to target its provision and increase engagement with the families most vulnerable due to their circumstances
- Strengthen the role of the advisory board by securing greater representation of the local community.
- Increase the monitoring and evaluation of outcomes to improve target-setting

and outcomes for users.

How good are outcomes for users?

3

Families benefit from home safety visits, some free safety equipment and advice. As a result, they have a better understanding of how to keep their families safe. Timely support for families with children identified as at risk or in need is helping to keep children safe. Children in care or on child protection plans receive good support which helps them progress. One mother said, 'Staff at the centre are a great support; I don't know what we would have done without them.'

The centre is welcoming, enabling children to play and adults to develop their skills. Play and development sessions contribute to children's and adult's enjoyment and achievement. Early intervention to promote communication, literacy and language development is having a good impact on children's outcomes. Children are developing useful skills for the future such as cooperation and independence.

The centre promotes healthy living but lacks centre-specific data on outcomes to monitor its success. The centre recognises that too few babies are breastfed. Feedback from users and centre staff indicates that relocation of health professionals is having a negative impact on improving health outcomes. Users told inspectors that they cannot get their babies weighed in the centre because the health visitor is not based there. Centre staff recognise that this limits the number of mothers and babies coming into the centre and engaging with them.

The centre maintains links with Jobcentre Plus and a notice board keeps users informed of local job vacancies. One user has benefited from volunteer training to help improve their economic well-being. Some users have gone on to courses, employment or volunteering. However, the centre and its partners do not closely monitor local users' engagement and achievement on family learning courses or their progression into training or employment.

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	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
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How good is the provision?

3

There is prompt and effective use of the Common Assessment Framework. Early identification of children with learning difficulties enables timely intervention. As a result, parents and children receive good support, advice and guidance. Assessment of adult's and children's needs is used effectively as a basis to plan their learning and to develop the provision for existing users. However, there is little identification of the needs of families not registered with the centre. Efforts to engage users by providing services in the areas of most deprivation have had low take-up.

Activities and support to help children to learn and develop are good. The centre promotes learning well and activities are of good quality. There is a good impact on those children accessing learning opportunities. Adult users are encouraged to take up learning and development opportunities across the locality. The flexible range of services provided by the centre meets the needs of most users who access it. Participation is satisfactory overall and has increased during the last two years. The centre seeks registered users' views through a broad range of methods to inform planning of provision to meet their needs. For example, children's views inform the changing theme of the story corner in the reception area.

Case studies show that good support from the centre is making a difference to vulnerable families. Parents and carers told inspectors how their involvement with the centre has helped them. 'They have helped me be a parent to my first child; it was really difficult for me because I did not have any friends when I moved here' said one parent. On-site specialist provision helps support users with mental health issues.

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

There are clear links between strategic planning and service provision. Staff have a good understanding of their roles and responsibilities and the centre runs smoothly on a daily basis. Some users contribute to decision making through membership of the board, although community representation is low. The centre makes use of feedback from parents to develop the range of provision. As a result, outreach provision is encouraging the community to engage with services, although the impact is only satisfactory overall.

Policies and procedures to ensure the protection of users on the site are effectively implemented and updated. Staff have a clear understanding about 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. The centre has clear systems in place for recording information related to the vetting and recruitment of staff. Activities are risk assessed and include the views of users. The buildings are secure and reception staff are vigilant in checking visitors to the centre. Users say that they feel safe at the centre.

Self-evaluation is systematic and is supported by some evidence of the impact on outcomes. There are clear links between the centre's ongoing evaluation of its services and priorities set out in its development plan. There is insufficient evidence of other services, such as health, evaluating outcomes. The lack of precise data on outcomes means that evaluation and target-setting lack rigour. The centre is starting to develop its systems to evaluate the longer-term impact of the provision on improving outcomes for children and adults.

A strength of the provision is the good partnership between the centre and the adjacent primary school that enables good transition arrangements for children. However, the partnership with health is a weakness and does not lead to cohesive services or good outcomes for users.

Centre staff and partnership agencies are committed to promoting the inclusion of all children and their families. Inclusive practices are promoted particularly well for children and parents with disabilities through close partnerships. However, although the numbers registered with the centre are increasing, a high number of families with children under five-years-old are not registered. Recent staff reductions, because of local authority cutbacks, have limited the centre's capacity to increase engagement with users and provide services.

The accommodation, which provides a bright and welcoming environment, is used effectively and the centre extends its services through outreach provision. Provision is planned across the cluster of centres which avoids duplication and aids the sustainability of services. The use of resources has a satisfactory impact on outcomes for users and as a result, the centre provides satisfactory value for money.

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	3
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	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	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

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 Haxby Road Children's Centre on 25 and 26 May 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 to 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 such as safety equipment and advice on parenting that you appreciate. We found that staff have a good understanding of child protection procedures and that they are well-trained. You said that you feel your children are well cared for and that you are safe at the centre. Some of you told us how the support you have received at the centre has helped you be better parents and improve your lives. We found that because health services are not provided in the centre it restricts the number of families using the centre. You told us that you are unhappy that you cannot get your babies weighed at the centre because the health visitor is not based there. We recommend that the health authority improves its partnership working with the centre so that it meets your needs.

You enjoy the sessions such as 'Under 1's' with your children. Some parents attend and enjoy courses such as 'Mellow Parenting' which helps them extend their skills as parents. 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 to gain employment. However, there is little evidence to show that people are getting jobs. Family learning provides courses in the centre and in community venues, but, the centre is unsure how many of you have benefited from them, gained qualifications or progressed to work or training.

Your children behave well and you learn more about how to stay healthy. However, the health authority does not provide enough 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 more mothers could 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 would like the centre to make sure more members of the community are on the 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. The centre is fully accessible to families and children with disabilities and the centre is helping these families a lot. However, more than half the families with children under five-years-old in the area are not registered with the centre.

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 develop 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. 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